

Daily Devotional

365 Days

January

Day 1

As we begin a new year there are a few things to ponder.

First, let's ponder the great things that have happened in the last year. How has God blessed us? Maybe everything did not go as we had hoped. However, there have been some great things also. We can choose to meditate on the not-so-great things, or we can celebrate the good things. Find one thing that has been good and rejoice.

Second, what could we have done differently last year? Let's not get into condemnation about this but use it as a catalyst for change. Probably, we can't change past events and decisions. We can, however, learn and go on as a better person, learning more to lean and depend upon the Holy Spirit.

Last, many make "new year's resolutions." This is great but sometimes can be hard to achieve. Has the Holy Spirit authored our resolutions? If so, no matter what the days ahead look like, trust and obey and watch the intervention and leading of the Holy Spirit work things out. If the Holy Spirit did not speak to us about the resolution, drop it right now and seek Him.

Psalm 118:24, "This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it."

Day 2

How do we begin our day. Some wake up and say, "Good lord, it's morning." While others say, "Good morning, Lord." It's all a matter of anticipation.

Psalm 5:3, in the NIV says, "In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly."

Let's begin each morning seeking the Lord for the day ahead. Rejoice in the Lord, make requests (asking the Holy Spirit for direction for the requests), then wait in excited expectation to see the goodness of our Lord.

Day 3

Many situations are a matter of perspective.

We have all seen airplanes flying overhead. They look so small. A few years ago, I was flying overseas in a Boeing 747; that thing was huge. The same airplane that was so humongous when standing beside it seems very small when far away.

That's the way mountains are. We can shrink from the size of mountains in our lives, or we can rejoice in how big our God is; it's a matter of perspective.

A little boy was playing in the backyard with his bat and ball. "I'm the greatest baseball player in the world." Then he tossed the ball in the air, swung, and missed. Undaunted, he picked up the ball, threw it into the air, and said to himself, "I'm the greatest player ever!" He swung at the ball again, and again he missed. He paused a moment to look at the bat and ball carefully. Then once again, he threw the ball into the air and said, "I'm the greatest baseball player who ever lived." He swung the bat hard and again missed the ball. Not missing a beat, he then said, "Wow! What a pitcher." PERSPECTIVE.

Day 4

I can still hear the booming bass voice of John Hall, affectionately known as “Big John Hall”, singing the song *How Big is God*.

The last verse says,

“As winter’s chill may cause the tiny seed to fall
To lie asleep till waked by summer’s rain
The heart grown cold will warm and throb with life anew
The Master’s touch will bring the glow again”

Ah, the Master’s touch. Let’s not only “not” forget the Master’s touch, let’s anticipate it. Remember, it was one act of faith that caused us to become “new creations” in Christ Jesus. It was one encounter with Jesus that caused the Gadarene demoniac to be set free. It was one encounter that caused the lame man at the Gate Beautiful to be healed.

Never, never, never underestimate what our God can do.

Day 5

This is longer than the usual devotional, but this song is too great to omit any verses.

... I love You, Lord
Oh, Your mercy never fails me
All my days, I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

... And all my life You have been faithful
And all my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God

... I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
And in darkest night You are close like no other
I've known You as a Father
I've known You as a Friend
And I have lived in the goodness of God, yeah

... And all my life You have been faithful, oh
And all my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God, yeah

... 'Cause Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now

I give You everything
 'Cause Your goodness is running after, it's running after me, oh-oh
 'Cause Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
 Your goodness is running after, it's running after me
 With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now
 I give You everything
 'Cause Your goodness is running after, it keeps running after me

... And all my life You have been faithful
 And all my life You have been so, so good
 With every breath that I am able
 Oh, I'm gonna sing of the goodness of God
 I'm gonna sing, I'm gonna sing
 Oh, 'cause
 'Cause all my life You have been faithful
 And all my life You have been so, so good
 With every breath that I am able
 Oh, I'm gonna sing of the goodness of God
 Oh, I'm gonna sing of the goodness of God

This song has been sung by Southern Gospel groups, Country soloist, Contemporary singers, and Praise and Worship teams. Whatever genre you prefer, just sing it. Sing it over and over. Meditate on the lyrics and let the Holy Spirit minister to you.

Day 6

Paul, in the eighth chapter of Romans, spoke about some struggles. He ended Romans 8 by stating, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

Yes, we are more than conquerors.

If it is raining outside, we may want it to stop. However, I have not accomplished changing the weather. I have learned how to open an umbrella. An umbrella does not change the circumstances, but it changes us in the middle of the circumstances. The wetness no longer controls us.

God's grace opens up an umbrella during the rainy seasons of life so that we may overcome and have victory even when everything around us is wet.

Day 7

On June 11, 1963, the Governor of Alabama, George Wallace, tried to defy the United States Government. He stood outside the front doors of the University of Alabama to keep two black students from entering. "You'll enter in over my dead body," he said. He was maintaining a system of segregation.

The only problem was that the U.S. government sent down U.S. marshals to escort the two students. They said, "Governor Wallace, you have two choices. You can remove yourself from in front of these doors, or we can remove you. But one thing is going to be the case: you're not going to block the law of the United States, which says that you must not maintain segregation at this University. Things are

going to change today. Now, you decide whether you're going to get out of the way, or whether we're going to get you out of the way, but you need to know you will be out of the way."

When God joins you in the lion's den, and Satan has taken his stand against you, and your boss has stood against you, your friends stand against you, your family stands against you, and everybody is standing against you, God wants you to know that's not the final decision. There is another court up in heaven, and when that court sends in the marshals, this court can overrule whatever system is holding you down.

Day 8

King David experienced some trying situations. One of which was the betrayal and pursuit of his mentor and father-in-law, Saul. In the middle of one these pursuits he wrote Psalm 18:35&36, "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. 36 You enlarged my path under me, So my feet did not slip."

When I was a little boy one of my friends had a punching bag. It was really a blown-up balloon with sand on the inside at the bottom. The sand acted as a weight. We would hit that thing, kick it, dive into it trying to knock it down. It just kept getting back up. The reason was what was on the inside.

That's us. 1st John 4:4 says, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Day 9

James gives us some things to "scratch our heads" about. If we don't understand that faith always has a corresponding action, we would think that James was contradicting Paul; not so.

James 2:14, "What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"

Paul told the jailer in Philippi, "So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

James went on in chapter two to say, "But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (verse 18).

Faith always has a corresponding action. Read Hebrews 11 and notice how many time the writer says, "by faith he" did some kind of action.

May we have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and may He manifest Himself through us in good works, or fruit.

Day 10

Have we ever just not liked someone? I mean, they "get on our nerves" quickly.

Always remember, the ones we don't like, Jesus loves. He loved them so much that He gave His life for them.

Romans 5:6-8, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Life is much easier and enjoyable when see EVERYONE through the eyes of Jesus.

Day 11

Paul tells us that God has given all of us faith. Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

Paul goes on to tell us that faith can grow. Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The Hebrew writer tells us that, as we behold Jesus, our faith is perfected. Hebrew 12:2 ESV, "Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

The best and purest way to behold Jesus is through the Word of God.

As you are reading this you are reading three different quotes from the Bible. Your faith is growing and maturing.

Day 12

"Waiting" is hard for most of us. We like fast food, fast banking, fast pickup and delivery, etc.

The Bible says there is great value in waiting. Isaiah 40:31 says, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

We are told here that our strength is renewed, we can soar like eagles, we can run without becoming weary, and we can walk without fainting.

This doesn't happen automatically; it is contingent upon who we focus on while waiting. We can sit and worry while waiting or we can focus on God. Psalm 91:1&2, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, *He is my refuge and my fortress*; My God, in Him I will trust."

Day 13

Faith opens the door to God's promises for us; and patience keeps it open until that promise is fulfilled.

Hebrews 10:35&36 says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. 36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

Patience can come two ways, tribulation or as a fruit of the Spirit. Learning to live from the presence of the Spirit of God is better. Galatians 5:22 ESV, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,"

Day 14

God is the great “I Am.” “Am” is in the present tense. He is ready to do it now, so when we pray, let’s believe that the promises of God are “yea and amen” in Christ Jesus.

2nd Corinthians 1:20 says, “For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

Rees Howells said that faith was equal to current coin. In other words, faith in what God says is true causes us to say “thank you” even when there is no manifestation.

Hebrews 11:1, “Faith is the underlying ingredient that makes hope come to pass.” Faith is like a giant magnet that draw hope from the future into the present.

Day 15

Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again until we can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other.

James 2:17 NLT, “So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.”

In Genesis we read the account of two of Adam’s sons, Cain and Abel. As you know, Cain killed Abel. God asked Cain about his brother and Cain answered, “Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). The answer is “yes.”

We are called and anointed of God to be blessings to the world, and especially our own family. 1st Timothy 5:8, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

Sometimes people get upset and angry at their church for not taking care of their family. As in the quoted scripture, it is the responsibility of the family to take care of their own.

Day 16

Romans 8:11 says, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

AND

Philippians 2:5 CSB, “Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.”

We do not have the spirit of a quitter living inside of us; we have the Spirit of the only man in history to conquer death. We have the spirit of a winner—the Spirit of Jesus Christ inside of us.

Yes, sometimes life is hard. But never give up on God. He will never give up on us. On my desk is this poem: *When things go wrong as they sometimes will, when the road you’re traveling seems all uphill. When the funds are low and debts are high, and you want to smile, but you have to sigh. When care is pressing you down a bit. Rest if you must, but don’t you quit.*

Day 17

Not long ago I heard something or someone knocking at our front door. When I answered, no one was there (Actually, the wind had blown a wreath off the door and then blew it against the door).

That is what faith does to fear. Fear knocks on our door but when we answer with faith, there is no one there.

Psalm 112:7, in the NIV, says, "They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD."

AND

Isaiah 55:11, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

God's Word, spoken through our lips of faith is more powerful than fear.

Day 18

Martin Luther once said, "He can give only according to His might; therefore He always gives more than we ask for."

Philippians 4:19, in the Amplified Bible, says, "And my God will liberally supply (fill until full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Many of us live far beneath the provision of God. He will not fulfill our lust, but He *will* give us the desire of our heart as our heart lines up with His.

Will we dare believe that our God will "fill until full" every need in our lives, according to HIS RICHES?

Day 19

This really hit home with me. John Wesley said, "I have so much to do that I must spend several hours in prayer before I am able to do it."

Matthew 14:23, "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there."

We don't need to add a "guilt trip" to our lives. But it does us all good to take inventory at times.

We also don't need to set quotas for prayer or Bible reading and study. We do, however, need to make prayer and the Word a priority.

Day 20

Andrew Murray was a great man of faith and prayer. It would do us well to read his biography and some of teachings.

He once said, "Faith keeps itself occupied only with His omnipotence."

The great feats we read in the Bible were accomplished through people just like us. People who believed that God really meant what He said, and means what He says.

James 5:17, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months."

Let's take "baby steps" in faith until we learn to take "giant steps." Start where we are and allow the Holy Spirit to grow us.

Day 21

According to scientists, fat cells never really disappear. When someone starts losing weight, the size of the fat cells decreases or shrinks. They do not 'burn' away. That's why it is so easy to gain back the weight we lost.

The human spirit, once stretched by an adventure of faith, will never return to its original size.

Psalm 18:29, "For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall."

Let's allow one adventure of faith to be the floor for our next adventure.

Day 22

When Jesus was teaching His disciples, and us, how to pray, He said, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

"Heaven" doesn't come to earth cheap. It never has! It takes prayer and faith.

We have faith as an endowment from God. Prayer is a choice.

James 5:16b, "...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Day 23

We don't serve a dead God. We don't serve a God who has no power. Our God is still God.

We all have read about Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Part of the account says, "And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." (1st Kings 18:27).

God is the same God as He was at the time of Elijah. Let's listen to Him and step out in faith and obedience in whatever He tells us to do.

Day 24

Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding."

We cannot go by what everything looks like We have to go by what God's Word says and trust God. If we cannot trust God, who can we trust?

Trusting God is the act of believing in God's reliability, strength, and ability to help us, even when our feelings or circumstances might lead us to believe otherwise. It's a choice to have faith in what God says about himself, the world, and us, and to live a life of obedience to him.

Trusting can feel scary, like bungee jumping from a bridge and hoping the cable will hold. It means letting go of control, willingly placing our well-being in the hands of another. How do we know that God can be trusted? We look to His Word, His character, and His faithfulness in our lives.

Day 25

Will God really speak to us?

First, God speaks to those who belong to Him through His holy Word. The authors of Scripture made it clear that God was speaking to them and through them. More than 3,000 times they said, “Thus saith the Lord” or its equivalent. And because “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), we are taught what is right and wrong. God’s purpose is to train us in His righteousness. We must not let anything, or anyone take the place of the Bible to guide our lives.

Second, God also speaks to us in nature. When He created the heavens and the earth, He gave us an incredible, complex, beautiful, orderly universe. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Romans 1:20).

Lastly, God speaks through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is revealed for us in the pages of the Bible. He is the Word of God incarnate (Hebrews 1:2), and He speaks to us by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:1). This may be the “still small voice” of the conscience that will not let us go until we do what is right—or it may be a loud, clear conviction of what God wants us to do. We must never silence that inner voice. We must check what we believe it is saying against the Scriptures to be sure that inner voice is true to God’s Word—and then we must obey, “heeding the voice of His word” (Psalm 103:20).

Day 26

The Bible is true, no matter how vehemently some people try to deny or prove it wrong; it is God speaking to us.

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.

Let’s determine to make Bible reading and study a priority in our lives. Also, make listening to the Word taught a priority.

Day 27

How important is prayer to a believer?

We cannot find any time in the scripture where Jesus taught His disciples how to sing, how to preach, or how to play. We can find Him teaching them how to pray.

Prayer is saying to God, “this is too big for me, I need Your help.” Prayer is saying, “Father, I don’t know what to do, I am listening for Your voice.”

Jesus invested so much time communicating, both speaking and listening, with the Father that He didn’t have to go fast and pray every time a situation arose. He knew what to do, what to say, and where to go.

Day 28

A friend told me about planting some corn. He said he became impatient and dug up the seed to see what the problem was. When he dug up the seed, he killed it; there was no growth.

Don't dig up in doubt what we have planted in faith. Let's say what we pray. Let's sing what we pray.

James 1:6 says, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."

Jesus taught, "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, "and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." (Mark 4:18-20)

Day 29

The Holy Spirit says in Psalm 130:5&6, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. 6 My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning— Yes, more than those who watch for the morning."

It is in the quiet times in His presence worshipping, waiting, praising, and listening that we enter the highest levels of prayer.

Jesus taught us, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6).

Day 30

Corrie ten Boom said, "Faith is the radar that sees through the fog."

We all have gone through times when it seemed the "heavens were brass." We all have gone through times when we could not feel the presence of God. Corrie ten Boom calls this fog, when visibility is limited.

It is in these times that we learn to live by faith. Faith in what God says in His Word and faith in what God has told us in the past.

Ephesians 6:13, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

Day 31

Marvelous victories have been won, then have been lost through "loose talk"—words spoken that were not needed.

Proverbs 10:19 TLB, "Don't talk so much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth. Be sensible and turn off the flow!"

Sometimes we just need to keep our mouths shut or at least speak in love. Solomon said, "A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1).

February

Day 1

1st Peter 1:7 KJV, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

Have you ever had your faith "tried?" Have you ever been at a place in your life when you just didn't think you were going to make it?

Exercising our faith and walking in the victory of God is sometimes hard, through some of the hardest tests that we have God has a way of leading us into a deeper place with Himself.

Someone has said, "Without a test, there is no testimony."

Day 2

Someone said to me a few years ago, "I have read the Bible every day for a month, and nothing has changed." Hmmm.

Paul told us in Romans 12:2a, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Our minds do not stay renewed any more than our hair stays combed. Our minds require constant input of the Word of God. As we read, study, listen, and meditate on God's Word, we will discover that our thought processes have changed and that our lives are going much better. Go ahead, try it. As Malachi said, "...Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty..."

Day 3

Charles Spurgeon said, "A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul."

At Bancroft Mission, every Sunday morning the children lead us in what's known as "The Lord's Prayer." Part of it goes like this, "So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done **On earth as it is** in heaven."

Philippians 4:7 says, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

God wants us to go to heaven when we die. But he wants us to have peace, righteousness, and joy while we are alive. Our faith in Jesus for initial salvation and for our daily lives provides these.

Day 4

In Romans chapter 7, Paul talked about a war that was going on in his mind, verse 23. In the last verse of Romans 7 (verse 25) he told where he found the victory—it was in faith in Jesus.

Let's stop sweating, stop wrestling. It is not TRY, but TRUST.

This sounds pretty easy, and it is. However, it takes a constant renewing of our minds through the precious Word of God. Ephesians 4:20-24, in the NLT says, “But that isn’t what you learned about Christ. 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 **Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.** 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.”

The tool that the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish this is the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit. Ephesians 6:17, “...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;”

Day 5

For a few years I have the honor and privilege to meet with a few outstanding young men. It has truly been one of the highlights of my ministry. For Christmas this year (2024) they bought me a “duck call.”

Their reasoning behind this was when ducks fly, they fly in a vee formation. The other ducks constantly quack behind the lead duck. They are letting him know they are behind them; it is encouraging.

The power of encouragement is great. Paul told us to encourage one another. 1st Thessalonians 5:11 NIV, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

Yes, if we never receive another “attaboy”, we will go on and live in victory. However, encouragement really helps and is much appreciated.

Go ahead, begin today by finding someone to encourage.

Day 6

Speaking of “one another.” The scripture tells us to love one another, to encourage one another, to accept one another, to give preference to one another, to not judge one another, to be patient with one another, to receive one another, to admonish one another, to serve one another, to bear with one another, to be kind to one another, to submit to one another, to forgive one another, to teach one another, to comfort one another, to exhort one another, to not grumble against one another, to confess our trespasses to one another, to pray for one another, to have compassion toward one another, to be hospitable to one another, to You get the point.

The overwhelming majority of the time we are told to love one another. As a matter of fact, we are to love one another as Jesus loves us. This is the key. Instead of memorizing all of the “one another’s”, let’s cultivate a relationship of love with Jesus and the rest will be covered.

Day 7

120 disciples were gathered in an upper room. They had been confused and scattered after the crucifixion of Jesus. Some had followed Him for three years. Jesus had resurrected and given them an assignment that was seemingly impossible; “go into all the world with the Gospel.” Then He told them not to go until they were empowered. The Bible does not record that they were praising in the upper room, or singing, or praying; they were waiting, just as Jesus had told them. Then SUDDENLY...

Acts 2:2, “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.”

Their lives would never be the same. Peter changed from a “denier” to a proclaimer.

Have you ever been bewildered or disillusioned? Don’t give up, your “suddenly” may be just another wake up.

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas had been beaten, put into chains and thrown into the lower dungeon. While they were singing, “**Suddenly** there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.”

The Holy Spirit can do more in one “suddenly” than we can ever do in our natural thinking.

Day 8

In 1887 A. E. Hoffman wrote a song that is still good today. Part of it says,

O how sweet to walk, In this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Many times the Bible talks about the “right arm” or the “right hand” of God. Almost every time this is referring to God’s strength.

Twice, in the Song of Solomon, Solomon, speaking of our relationship with Jesus, says, “His left hand is under my head, And his right hand embraces me.” (2:6 and 8:3).

His “left hand under my head” is speaking of God’s covenant is the foundation of my life. His “right hand embraces me” refers to God’s ability to make His covenant alive in our lives.

Let’s enjoy the FOG (Favor OF God).

Day 9

Do we understand that God values us? Luke 12:7 says, “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

When God created the heavens and the earth, He said it was good. The word “good” means valuable. When he created man, He said we were “very good” or “very valuable.”

God values mankind so much that He sent His Son to die in our stead.

Zechariah 2:8 says we are the “apple of His eye”, “For thus says the LORD of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.”

“Apple of His eye” is an idiom of that culture. It refers to “the little man in the eye.” In other words, if we could look into God’s eye, we would see ourselves. We could see His love for us and His favor that He wants to give us.

If God had a refrigerator, our picture would be on it.

Day 10

Psalm 19:14 gives us two perspectives that we want to make acceptable to God. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer."

"Words of my mouth" and "meditation of my heart."

When David says "words of my mouth" he is not talking about saying words that are unacceptable to society. He wanted what He said to agree with what God said. That's what we want too. We want our words to agree with God's word. Many prayers are nullified because what we say is different than what we pray. Our words of doubt and defeat cancel out our prayer of faith. We can't pray for good days in our lives and then sing, "just a few more weary days."

The key is our heart; our innermost being. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard and keep watch over your innermost being, it is the source that produces life."

Jesus said, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45).

As we guard our heart against "stuff" that is anti-Godly, and fill it with "Godly", our mouth will speak in agreement with Godly.

Day 11

Galatians 5:25 says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

We are called to walk in the Spirit.

Making a decision to do this is the starting point, but I can tell you from the Word of God and from experience that it takes more than a decision; it takes a deep work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He "operates" on us with God's Word, which divides soul and spirit (see Hebrews 4:12). He also uses circumstances to train us in stability and walking in love at all times. These things we are called to do are not things that are just given to us; they must be worked in us. Just as leaven or yeast must be worked into dough—so Christ must be worked in us.

In Philippians 2:12 (KJV), Paul teaches us to *work out* our salvation with *fear and trembling*. That means we are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He begins in us a work of crucifixion or "dying to self." Paul said, *I die daily* (1 Corinthians 15:31 KJV). In other words, he was saying that he was constantly exposed to a "putting to death in the flesh." He was not speaking of physical death, but a death to his own will and ways. If we really want to live the life of the Spirit, we also have to put to death our will and ways and choose God's will. We can count on God to lead us, and we want Him to be able to count on us to obey.

Day 12

Zechariah 4:6, "So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts."

Too many times, we think we can do it ourselves. In some instances, that may be true, but if we're going to win continually over the attacks against our minds, we must realize that willpower alone won't work. What we need is the humility to turn to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to strengthen us.

Many people do not grasp how the Lord lovingly operates in their lives. Not only does God love us like a father, but He also has caring concern for every part of our lives. Our heavenly Father wants to intervene and help us, but He waits for an invitation to get involved. We issue that invitation and open the door for God's help through prayer. God's Word says, *You do not have, because you do not ask* (James 4:2 NKJV).

Perhaps we can think of it this way. God is watching us all the time, and He is aware of the temptations, struggles, and hardships we face—and we all face them. If we think we can do it by ourselves, God takes no action. But He remains ready to jump in and rescue us as soon as we cry out, asking for the power of the Holy Spirit to operate in our lives.

Our victory begins with right thinking. We have to be convinced that God cares, wants to act, and waits for us to cry out. When we cry out, we understand the words quoted previously, that it's not by force or power, but by God's Holy Spirit that victory comes.

Day 13

Whatever we focus on, we become. Wherever we put our energies or our attention, those things will develop. Another way to say it is, "Where the mind goes, the man follows!"

If we focus only on the negative things in our lives, we become negative people. Everything, including our conversation, becomes negative. We soon lose our joy and live miserable lives—and it all started with our own thinking.

You might be experiencing some problems in life—not realizing that you are creating them yourself by what you're choosing to think about. I challenge you to think about what you're thinking about!

We might be discouraged and even depressed and wonder what caused it. Yet if we examine our thought life, we may find that we are feeding the negative emotions we are feeling. Negative thoughts are fuel for discouragement, depression, and many other unpleasant emotions.

We should choose our thoughts carefully. We can think about what is wrong with our lives or about what is right with them. We can think about what is wrong with all the people we are in relationship with, or we can see the good and meditate on that. The Bible teaches us to always believe the best. When we do that, it makes our own lives happier and more peaceful.

Let's focus on God's grace and give thanks for all the good things in our lives. Let's not focus on what we don't have.

An old friend used to quote this saying: "As you wander on through life, brother, whatever be your goal, keep your eye upon the donut and not upon the hole."

All of this is to say that our thoughts largely determine our destiny. Our thoughts also determine our happiness. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." Thoughts are powerful. They aren't just words that flow through our minds. So it is very important for us to decide what we will allow to rest inside our minds.

Day 14

Ephesians 1:17-19, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.”

More on thoughts and focusing.

Rather than focus on negative things in life, the Bible teaches us to see good things in Christ with the “eyes of your heart.” Ephesians 1:17–19 says that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation are important so we may:

- Have knowledge of God or know God Himself. This is not knowledge gained through education, but revelation.
- Know the hope of our calling, the eternal plan of God and how we fit into it. We can be thankful that God has called us to be His sons and daughters, and as such, we have an inheritance.
- Know that revelation knowledge of God’s power is available to us. We can do anything God asks us to do because of the greatness of His power.

Give thanks today that you can know God, have hope, and live in His power!

Day 15

There is a master key that unlocks the mysteries of the Old Testament: the Lord Jesus Christ. If you find a Christocentric approach to the Old Testament, it will burst into flame in your hands. As a matter of fact, if you read the Old Testament and you don’t find Jesus, you need to go back and reread it because you missed the message. The Old Testament is about the Lord Jesus Christ.

When people were challenging Jesus about His authenticity and His Messiahship, He looked them straight in the eye and said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). When Jesus Christ said that, the New Testament as we know it didn’t exist. It was being formed, but it was not yet written. He was talking about the Old Testament.

Without Jesus, the Old Testament is a list of unexplained ceremonies that won’t make sense. If you try to live by the Old Testament without the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not make it. If you try to read the Old Testament without Him as your lens, you are missing God there.

Day 16

Acts 12:8-1 is an amazing story, “Then the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and tie on your sandals”; and so he did. And he said to him, “Put on your garment and follow me.” 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I

know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.”

I still enjoy going through automatic doors; they amaze me. As amazing as that is, this is not an entirely new occurrence. Here in Acts chapter 12, this iron gate just opened of its own accord and Peter walked on out. It’s interesting that Peter’s deliverance came at the last moment.

Let’s see how God’s power is working here. Some people might have thought that God was weak or that God was unconcerned and did not care. You may say in your problems, “Where is God? Is God able? Doesn’t God care?”

If we’re in a situation and God doesn’t deliver us immediately, it’s not because He can’t. If God is not working according to what we can see, it doesn’t mean God is not working. And if evil seems to succeed, the success of evil is only temporary. When we hit a crisis, please remember these things: Don’t demand to understand; we’ll never figure it out. Remember the resource of prayer. Set our eyes on God, rest in His love, and expect God to move in His own time and in His own way. He will do it. He’s the Christ of every crisis.

Day 17

Romans 8:27&28, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Have you ever watched an artist paint a picture as he puts his colors on canvas? Sometimes I like to watch Bob Ross on TV. I think, He’s just splashing the colors on that canvas and mixing them. He says, “I think it needs a little more yellow.” And I say, “Man, that guy’s so good. How does he do that?” Everything just turns out good somehow. Then he will get some more colors and put them across the canvas I just admired. I’ll think, “You ruined it!” He put some big old splashy thing on it, and then, it just comes together; it’s a masterpiece!

Sometimes we look at what God does, as He puts His colors on the canvas, and we say, “Lord, You’re really doing good.” And then suddenly God adds that paint stroke we didn’t expect, one we can’t make sense of. So, we say, “Lord! You have messed things up.” Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever asked, “God, how did You let this happen?”

The painting process doesn’t make sense to me when I watch the artist do it, but it makes sense to him. And just because things are not making sense to you doesn’t mean they don’t make sense. And just because you can’t see God working doesn’t mean God is not working.

Day 18

Isaiah 14:12-14, “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”

What is self-centeredness? At its core it is pride. What made the devil the devil? Self-centeredness. Notice in this passage about the enemy? Over and over again he says, "I will." What did Jesus teach us to pray? "...not my will, but Yours, be done." What did Satan say? "Not Your will, but mine, be done." How did Satan get Eve to take of the forbidden fruit? He appealed to her pride. He said, "You can be like God." What causes unbelief in the Word of God? Pride. What made the devil the devil? Pride.

If we want what is real, we go to the Word of God; we lay your intellectual pride in the dust; and call out to Jesus for mercy. Pride may be satisfying for a little while, but the fruit of self-centeredness is bitterness and bondage.

Why do so many of us have trouble? Because we are bitter and in bondage. So many of us have met religion but have never met Jesus. We may have surrendered one area of our lives to Him, but we have not given Him our all. We are not lying broken at the foot of the cross daily. We are not constantly leaving our pride in the dust. The Spirit of God is not in these people, and they are troublemakers everywhere they go because their religion has never satisfied them, and it never can.

Day 19

Psalm 142:5-7, "I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, "You *are* my refuge, My portion in the land of the living. 6 Attend to my cry, For I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, For they are stronger than I. 7 Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name; The righteous shall surround me, For You shall deal bountifully with me."

What is the lesson we all need no matter what is going on in our lives? The lesson we need each day whether we are young or old? The lesson is this: love Jesus with all your heart.

If we are weak, say, "Lord, help me." If we can't give all to the Lord Jesus Christ and haven't given all to the Lord Jesus, say, "Lord, I want to. Please help me." He hears us; He will help us. Don't pretend to have a devotion that we do not have. Say, "Lord, here's where I am. Here's where I want to be. Help me to grow." God will start with us where we are and bring us to where we need to be. Just don't stonewall God. Don't be a big pretender. Don't lie to the Holy Spirit. Don't be superficial. Don't be hypocritical. Be real. God loves us. God will help us. God will strengthen us. God will guard us. God will guide us.

Day 20

Our obedience must be impassioned obedience; we must do the will of God from our hearts. Telling these men not to preach and not to share the Lord Jesus Christ was futile, because they were full of burning, blazing, emotional passion for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Day 21

This is longer than usual, but it is very important.

Acts 4:1-31 NLT, "While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. 2 These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. 3 They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning. 4 But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of believers now totaled about 5,000 men, not counting women and children. 5 The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and

teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. 7 They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, 9 are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? 10 Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. 11 For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says, 'The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.' 12 There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." 13 The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. 14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say. 15 So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves. 16 "What should we do with these men?" they asked each other. "We can't deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it. 17 But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again." 18 So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? 20 We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard." 21 The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God 22 for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years. 23 As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. 24 When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—25 you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, 'Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? 26 The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the LORD and against his Messiah.' 27 "In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. 28 But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. 29 And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. 30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness."

We are called to live for Christ no matter what it costs. We cannot compromise with obedience. This is inflexible obedience—when we obey God no matter what. These apostles knew that to obey God could mean death. They were preaching with the cloud of a death sentence over their heads.

Selective obedience is not obedience at all. A man was bragging about his dog. Someone said, "What kind of a dog is he?" He responded, "Oh, he's a very smart dog, very well trained." She said, "Show me what he can do." He said, "Well, when I go somewhere, all I have to say to the dog is 'Are you coming with me or not?' and either he does, or he doesn't." It is silly but that's the way some of us are. We

decide what we want to do. We make the decisions for ourselves, but at the end of the day, selective obedience is not obedience at all.

Day 22

Acts 5:40-42, “The others accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go. 41 The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. 42 And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: “Jesus is the Messiah.”

Never get the idea that the will of God is something we have to do; God’s not going to force it on us. The will of God is something we **get** to do. When we learn to obey, we will learn the joy people talk about in the Christian life. There’s no such thing as a happy, disobedient Christian. That is a contradiction in terms. Verse 41 says, “They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Obedience and rejoicing come together. It is a lie out of Hell that doing the will of God is painful and makes us miserable. The Bible says, “His commandments are not burdensome” (1st John 5:3).

Day 23

Acts 4:10-12, “let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Solomon’s temple was built without the ring of hammers and the sound of chisels at the worksite. The stones were designed, and the specifications were sent to the quarry. The stones were cut in the quarry and brought to the worksite to be assembled by the workers. One strange-looking stone was in the middle. Nobody seemed to know what it was for, how it would fit, and they kept stumbling over it. It was a stumbling stone; it was in the way. Finally, the project manager said, “Men, move that stone out of the way.” They took that stone over to the edge of the temple mount, rolled it over, and it went down into the Kidron valley.

They were almost complete when it was time for the cornerstone. They said, “bring the cornerstone, we’re ready for it.” But the cornerstone was not there. Where do you think it was? Down in the valley. That’s what this verse is talking about. That stone that the builders viewed as nothing became the cornerstone, the foundation stone for the temple.

Peter’s saying, Listen, you want me to tell you how this is done? That stone that you rejected, Jesus Christ the living stone, is the cornerstone—He is the One who has made each man whole. He is the risen Lord; He is the residing Lord. I want you to know that if you’re a Christian, Jesus, who is alive, lives in you. If we could only get that in our hearts.! We’re not just talking about someday; Jesus is alive and well now in us.

Day 24

Psalms 42:1-5 is something most of us can identify with, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, “Where is your God?” 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.”

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.” But we soon learn that David didn’t write this during a time when everything was going well. In fact, he writes of tears that “have been my food day and night,” (Verse 3) times when the question all his friends are asking is “Where is your God?”

In fact, David wrote Psalm 42 during a season of great need. He was facing turbulent times. But this psalm, more than many others, teaches us how to respond to God when we face difficulties. David begins by remembering God’s faithfulness in the past. Then he urges himself to hope in God based on the faith and belief he learned by experiencing God in days gone by. He’s reminded that we can place our faith and trust in God even when we are in need.

No matter what the situation may be, we should remember that we are not alone. When we remind ourselves to set our gaze on Jesus, He can remind us of what He has done for us before. And what He wants to do for us now.

Day 25

Genesis 13:5-12 gives us the account of the problem and separation of Abraham and Lot, “Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. 6 But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. 7 So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.) 8 Finally Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives! 9 The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I’ll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I’ll go to the left.” 10 Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. 12 So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain.” (NLT).

Lot had the choice land, but Abraham had the “promise” (see Genesis 12:1-3).

The promises of God are far greater than anything we can see in front of us.

Day 26

“Jesus, who made man, was made a man, so that He could make men.”

The Deity of Jesus and the Trinity are not easily understood. As with many other truths of the scripture, we believe by faith although we cannot understand.

We don't understand how Mary gave birth to a child even though she was a virgin, but she did. We don't understand how God raised Jesus from the dead, but we believe. Personally, I don't know how electricity works or how an engine operates; but I enjoy both.

Jesus had to become a man in order to die on the cross, for God cannot die.

When we, by faith, receive Jesus' death as our death and believe Jesus' resurrection was our resurrection, a miracle takes place. We become “brand new creatures that never existed before.” 2nd Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Day 27

I'm not trying to prove to you that Jesus is the Messiah. True faith is rooted in evidence, but it goes beyond evidence; true faith becomes its own best evidence. We can't find God based on human reasoning. Nothing will hold anything beyond its own capacity. Do we think we can cram God into our mind? Our mind doesn't have the capacity to contain God. So, don't try to eliminate God because we don't understand Him.

To have a God that we can worship, He must be a God greater than our mentality. If we could understand God, God would be no bigger than our intellect, which is far too small a god for us to worship. If we could understand God, we wouldn't need God, but we don't have to understand Him to know Him.

When I was a little boy, my dad used to go off to work. I didn't know where he went, nor what he did, but I knew he was my dad; I knew him personally; and I loved him. You don't have to understand how God runs the mighty Universe to put your faith and trust in Him. By faith you can know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Day 28

I heard of a missionary family who moved to a house on a mission's compound in a foreign country. When they arrived at their new home, the wife looked at the floor, and it was absolutely filthy. So, she decided to scrub the floor. She repeatedly scrubbed and rinsed, but it was still dirty. She kept cleaning until somebody came in and explained why she could not get the floor clean: it was a dirt floor! And that's the way our nature is.

We believe we can clean up our nature, but the problem is that we are sinful, and there's no way you can clean up what's at the core. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3)). And that's true. Here was a man who was a master in Israel. He had many degrees, but he was blind to spiritual things; he couldn't understand them. All the education, conferences, and books in the world cannot help you see spiritual things. We need a new nature. We need to be changed by Christ completely.

Day 29

Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

We need to keep company with God the Son. In this passage, the apostles were keeping company with the Son of God. We cannot walk in His presence and be a coward; we just can’t do it. The people asked, “How did this man get healed?” They said, “Don’t blame it on us. Blame it on Jesus. Give Him the glory. By Him—by His name, by His presence—this man was healed.”

One of my favorite hymns says, “I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses; and the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own.”

Jesus Christ is not up in Heaven peering through the clouds. Jesus Christ is here. That’s the reason we sing. That’s the reason we worship. That’s the reason we rejoice. He has not left us alone; He is here with us always.

March

Day 1

1st Peter 2:2, “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,”

Paul knew what it was to be received. He knew what it was to be encouraged. He knew how crucial it was to spiritual development. We have more than money to give—We can give relationship. Let’s ask God, “God, give me a new believer that I can encourage and disciple.”

A new believer is like a newborn in the faith. And newborn babies need love. There was a study that said that it is virtually impossible to spoil a baby in the first year of his or her life. You can’t give one too much love. Now you can spoil kids, but it is virtually impossible to spoil a baby in the first year of its life. All of the love, all of the attention, all of the hugging, all of the kissing, all of the coddling we want to do, just do it.

And, correspondingly, it is virtually impossible to spoil newborn Christians. Love them, encourage them, build them up in the faith. They need to be loved. They need to be included. Let’s step out of our comfort zones and talk to someone we don’t know; look for the person who is new or sitting on his or her own. God can use us in a mighty way to encourage the new believer and the newcomer.

Day 2

Some of the last words of Jesus are found in Mathew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.”

If we are wondering what our purpose is or what we should do, remember that our mandate has not changed. The Lord Jesus has never withdrawn the Great Commission. It is just as powerful, just as real today as it ever has been.

Not only has our mandate not changed, but our Master has also not changed. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He has as much power in the twenty-first century as He had in the first century.

The mandate has not changed; the Master has not changed; and the message has not changed. We don't need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. Paul didn't have a microphone; he didn't have electric lights; and he didn't have a car—those are the means. But the methods have not changed: prayer, truth, Holy Spirit anointing, sharing, witnessing, soul-winning, giving, loving, sharing—those are Bible methods! They're just as fresh today as they were two thousand years ago.

Some people say, "Men are so harsh today! People are so sinful today.": Adam was totally depraved, and you can't get worse than that. God has never had anything but sinners to work with. It is an insult to God to say we cannot have revival.

Day 3

Jeremiah 14:1-6 gives us a view of what life is like without the presence of God, "The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts. 2 "Judah mourns, And her gates languish; They mourn for the land, And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. 3 Their nobles have sent their lads for water; They went to the cisterns and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty; They were ashamed and confounded And covered their heads. 4 Because the ground is parched, For there was no rain in the land, The plowmen were ashamed; They covered their heads. 5 Yes, the deer also gave birth in the field, But left because there was no grass. 6 And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights; They sniffed at the wind like jackals; Their eyes failed because there was no grass."

Rain, or water, represents the anointing, or the presence of God. The presence of God, or the absence of, touches all of life; the land, the rich, the poor, the worker, and even the animal kingdom.

Jeremiah 13:11 gives us the cause of no anointing, and the remedy, "'For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the LORD, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.'"

Day 4

The Remedy

Jeremiah 13:11, "For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,' says the LORD, 'that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear."

"Clinging to the Lord."

Over and over and over, throughout the scripture, we see our heavenly Father desiring a relationship with His prize creation: man.

He sent His "only begotten Son" to die in our place to bring us into relationship with Him.

He chastises His children, us, to bring us into relationship with Him. (Read Hebrews 12:3-11).

Paul, the apostle who wrote almost half of the New Testament, desired to “know” Him in a more intimate relationship.

Jesus cried over Jerusalem desiring to gather them as “hens do to their chicks.”

The anointing begins with an intimate relationship with the Father. How??? Simply communicate with Him by speaking and listening.

Day 5

Jeremiah 13:11, “...My people...”

“My people” means to unite together with no particular identity other than “people of God.”

As of 2024 there are more than 45,000 denominations. 45,000! Jesus said the greatest method of evangelism is “that they may be one.” John 17:21, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

“My people” also means “one race.” Someone said the most segregated place on Sunday morning is the church.

Let us no longer be identified by our denomination, our race, or culture, our social standing, economics, etc. Let us “love one another even as He loved us.” John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

Day 6

Jeremiah 13:11, “...for renown...”

“Renown” means “a name.” To bring honor to the Father by exhibiting His character.

Character is who we really are. The character of God is not following a list of things and acts that Christians are supposed to do.

John Wooden was one of the best college basketball coaches of all time. He was loved by his players and highly respected among his peers. One of the things that he used to teach his players was about character. He said, “Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is who you really are while your reputation is merely who others think you are.”

To be “renown” in the sense of Jeremiah 13:11 is to point and attribute every righteous act to the power and glory of God.

Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Day 7

Jeremiah 13:11, “...for praise...”

Praise is to become so excited that we can’t stop talking about Him.

There are many “acts” of praise in the scripture. Raising our hands, clapping our hands, dancing, playing instruments, singing, shouting, to name just a few. All of these have one thing in common, they are

directed to God. We praise Him in the morning, the evening, any time we think about Him, we can praise Him.

Praise has to do with acknowledging the goodness of God.

Praise results in the miraculous. Isaiah 6:1-4, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" 4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke."

The miraculous in Isaiah 6 is repeated some 800 years later while Paul and Silas were in jail. Acts 16:25&26, "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed."

We don't praise God so He will "do something." We praise Him because He has already "done something." We don't wait until we "feel something", we initiate the praise.

Day 8

Jeremiah 13:11, "...for glory..."

"Glory" is the unrestricted presence of God. It is the yoke destroying anointing. It is the Holy Spirit working without resistance.

Isaiah 10:27 says, "It shall come to pass in that day That his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil."

Jesus, about 750 years later, when He began His ministry said, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;" (Luke 4:18).

When we give our Father free reign in our lives, seeking His will, and walking in relationship with Him, the ANOINTING is the result. Along with the anointing comes the destruction of bondages in our lives.

Day 9

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations just after the destruction of the temple, the place of worship for the Jews. To the Jews, the temple was the habitation of God. When Babylon destroyed the temple, the people had no reference for God. We know, in the New Covenant, that we are the habitation of God, Not so to the Jews.

When Jeremiah wrote Lamentations (weeping or deep sorrow) it was a dark time. This makes Lamentations 3:24 a profound statement. A statement that is good for us today. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" WOW.

When Jeremiah says "portion" he is referring to God's plan for his life. In other words, his destiny. Jesus told us, in Acts 1:8, to go into all the world and tell them "God has a plan for their lives."

No matter how “dark” life seems, God still has a plan. Never tell God how big the mountain is, tell the mountain how big God is.

Day 10

In Lamentations 3:24, Jeremiah speaks to his soul, his inner man. Victory never begins with circumstances; it always begins with God having control of us. When Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians 12, he had just finished telling them about the hard times he had gone through. (Please read 2nd Corinthians 11). He could say, by experience, “So I am well pleased with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, and with difficulties, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God’s strength].” (2nd Corinthians 12:10 AMP).

Read Lamentations 3:24 again, “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, **“Therefore I hope in Him!”**

“The Lord” is Jehovah; the self-existent causeless one. The Lord that is the ultimate God, above all gods.

Day 11

Romans 12:3 says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

How do we “see” ourselves. Paul said not to think of ourselves “more highly than he ought to think.”

However, don’t stop there. He went on to say, “but to think soberly.” To think “soberly” is to be honest in our evaluation. We don’t think of ourselves beyond what God says, but we do think of ourselves as God sees us.

For example: If we are convinced that we cannot learn, we will never grow. If we are convinced that we cannot “do”, we will never fulfill God’s purpose for our lives.

Paul said, in Romans 12:3, that God has given all of us faith. When we don’t “see” ourselves now as we know God wants us to be, and become, we have faith in God that he will finish what He started.

Philippians 1:6, in the NLT, says, “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

Day 12

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul was dealing with the infiltration of false teaching concerning law and grace. In 5:7-9 he said, “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

Earlier, in 3:1-3 he said, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

We begin by faith in Jesus alone. We “run” (5:7) by faith in Jesus alone. Paul cited a well-used, and well-known truth in 5:9, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

“Oh, but what’s wrong with this philosophy, or what’s wrong with mingling new age thought with the scripture?” It is worse than any evil we could imagine; it infiltrates the soul. Everyone knows murder is wrong. Everyone knows rape is wrong. Everyone should know stealing is wrong. But these philosophical ideologies sneak in and seem so innocent. NO! It will mesmerize, or hypnotize people into a false sense of peace. It not only damages our “run” but it will destroy the generation in which we are influencing.

Day 13

God asked Moses a profound question in Exodus 4:2, “So the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A rod.”

God had just given Moses an extremely large task (Read Exodus 3). Moses kept making excuses of how he could not do what God was calling him to do. Instead of bringing lightning, thunder, fire, or some other shocking proof of God being with him, he simply said, “What is that in your hand?”

God has given all of us abilities. There are no insignificant abilities. What we think is insignificant in the eyes of man is powerful in the hands of God. We must make steps of faith to use what God has given.

Moses threw down the rod and God turned it into a serpent. Moses put the rod into the Nile river and God turned it into blood. Moses held up the rod at the Red Sea and God parted it.

God will take what He has given, which may seem insignificant, and do mighty things.

Day 14

We all know the “Great Commission”, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matthew 28:19).

Here is a key; “God gives the direction; we choose to go.”

God has gifted all of us. God has given us His Spirit. God has given us His Word. God has given us faith. God has provided everything we need to “fulfill His purpose.” Now, it is up to us to go.

We are responsible for using what God has given. Read the entire event in Matthew 25:14-29. Matthew 25:29, in the NLT, says, “To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.”

Remember, the church is not the end of God’s purpose, the church is the facilitator of God’s purpose.

Day 15

Paul was in jail when he wrote to the church at Philippi. It’s amazing that the main theme is joy. There are only four chapters in Philippians; go ahead, read them all.

Philippians 1:27 is a mighty “Word” for the local church of today. It reads, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,”

In essence, Paul is telling them to establish their decision making and conduct after the gospel of Christ. Also, work together in attitude and will; having one purpose and not each doing “their own thing.”

Paul went on to say in 1:28 that this “working together” from a heart toward Jesus and each other would be used for unbelievers to see the Power of Unity in the church.

Day 16

Are we sure of our salvation? If our “rightness” with God is based on how good we are, we will all fall short and cannot be sure.

But if our righteousness is based on our faith in Jesus, we can “rest.”

Ephesians 6 tells us that we are in a warfare (verses 11&12). Paul, who wrote this letter, gave us how to maintain victory—the armor of God.

Part of the armor is found in verse 14, “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,” As a matter of fact, this “breastplate of righteousness” is one of the first pieces of armor that Paul mentions.

The breastplate is one of the most important parts to have in combat for it covers the heart. A soldier can be wounded in the leg or arm and still fight. But if a spear or arrow pierces his heart, he is done.

Because this is a spiritual battle, this is spiritual armor. Don’t let anything penetrate your heart. Solomon said in Proverbs 4:23, in the NIV, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Day 17

The last of the armor in Ephesians 6 is prayer for the teachers of the Word of God. Verses 19&20, “and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

The Hebrew writer said that the leaders guard the soul of the church. 13:17, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch (guard) out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

The teachers are responsible for keeping the “wolves” out of the church. Acts 20:29, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Yes, praying for the “shepherd” is part of the armor of God.

Day 18

Paul mentions more than once about the “mystery of God.” In Colossians 1:26&27 tells us what the mystery is, “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

In the Old Covenant or Old Testament God dwelt in “temples made with hands.” The temple was so revered by the Jews that it was referred to as the place where heaven met earth. Jesus said He would destroy this temple in three days and raise it up. He was referring to His death, burial, and resurrection.

Now, to we that have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit, He dwells in us. This was hidden from the Old Covenant saints but is made known to us.

Day 19

What if we took an inventory of our lives and could only make one priority? Paul did this. He was an apostle, a mentor, a teacher, and a pastor. But his first passion was to “know” Jesus in an intimate relationship. (Please read Philippians 2:8-15).

In the sixth chapter of Acts there was a problem in the early church. The widows and the needy were not being taken care of. The solution arrived to by the apostles was to choose seven men to take care of this need so they could give themselves to fellowship with the Lord and delivering the Word of God to the church. Fellowship/known first, ministry second.

If we would make fellowshiping and relationship with the Lord first, we would be better parents, pastors, servants, etc.

Day 20

Timothy had been mentored by Paul. He had been with Paul for approximately 18 years but now Paul was in jail. To have our mentor, one that we had served and learned from for this long, since Timothy was a youth, can be distressing.

Paul wanted to encourage Timothy and to motivate him to go on with the ministry. He wrote in 2nd Timothy 1:5-7, “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. 6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

He reminded him of his faith, his heritage, and his gifting. He then told him that God had given him power to accomplish the task, love to motivate him, and self-discipline (sound mind) to get it done.

Saints, we have these attributes. Let us not be timid (fearful) but confident in a Great Big God.

Day 21

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will lead us into hard situations. Paul, writing to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians 11:23-33, “Are they ministers of Christ? —I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting’s often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was

guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.”

Citing, in part, from Oswald Chambers from his devotional *My Utmost for His Highest* (without permission), “If we obey God, it is going to cost other people more than it costs us, and that is where the pain begins. If we are in love with our Lord, obedience does not cost us anything— it is a delight. But to those who do not love Him, our obedience does cost a great deal. If we obey God, it will mean that other people’s plans are upset. They will ridicule us as if to say, “You call this Christianity?” We could prevent the suffering, but not if we are obedient to God. We must let the cost be paid.

When our obedience begins to cost others, our human pride entrenches itself and we say, “I will never accept anything from anyone.” But we must, or disobey God. We have no right to think that the type of relationships we have with others should be any different from those the Lord Himself had.”

Day 21

There are two dominant motivators in this world: Fear and desire.

Fear panics, forces, restrains, moves forward determined by the past, as well as many other negatives. Fears says, “I can’t, I wish, too risky, I failed, etc.

Desire reaches, encourages, looks positively to the future, etc. Desire says, “I can with the Holy Spirit, I want to, I see opportunity, and many other possibilities. Desire looks for solutions, not problems.

Fact: optimism/hope produces antibodies that fight sickness. It is said that 60 to 70 percent of people that visit the doctor imagine they are ill because of emotional problems. That is why Solomon said in Proverbs 17:22, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones.”

Paul wrote, from jail, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

A good friend of mine, who is now 90 years old, writes down something every night that he wants to accomplish the next day. Try it!

Day 22

I enjoy meeting with my high school friends. We laugh, cry, and talk about the things we did “back in the day.” I really enjoy meeting with them.

However, if we live in the past, we will soon have no present. Someone has wisely said, “Yesterday is gone, tomorrow is in the future, we have today as a gift, that’s why it’s called the “present.”

Another wise saying is, “we can’t go forward looking through the rear-view mirror.”

Hebrews 6:18&19 says, “that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,”

Hope is an excited anticipation of something in the future. Maybe our past was not so good. Let’s look to the future with faith and trust in God, “who cannot lie.”

Day 23

God is faithful. Although, at times, we wonder where He is. How do we activate the faithfulness of God in our lives? We step out in faith.

Matthew 6:33, "Seek first...all these things will be added.

Isaiah 1:19, "If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;"

Joshua 1:8, "...meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Hebrews 11, By faith the worlds were framed by the word of God, by faith Abel offered, by faith Noah...prepared an ark, by faith Abraham obeyed, by faith Sarah conceived, by faith Abraham offered, by faith Jacob blessed, by faith Joseph gave instructions...

Faith always has a corresponding action. Faith is an action word.

What is God saying to us? It may seem small, or it may seem large. Let's obey and see the faithfulness of God.

Day 24

Many of us want to be mature Christians, and we want it NOW! That's because we live in a fast paced, "now" world.

A friend of mine tells the story of when he was a child a visiting evangelist came to their church. This evangelist had a beautiful beard. He taught that one could acquire what they wanted by prayer and fasting. My friend told his mother, on Monday morning that he, a child, was going to pray and fast for a beard like the evangelist. On Monday he did not eat. Tuesday, the same. That night his father, after his mother had told him what my friend was doing, wanted to speak with him. His dad gave him some great counsel. He said, "Son, some things we can only get through maturity."

Paul said in Philippians 4:11, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:" while he also said that he "pressed forward." How can these be compatible? We are satisfied with where we are in the Lord and at the same time we are growing in maturity.

Day 25

Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."

We need to be faithful in the small things. All big things are made of little things. For example, our body has various members; these members have various parts; and these parts have cells, which are made up of molecules. Vast as the ocean is, it is made up of drops; the drops are made up of molecules; and the molecules are made up of atoms. All the millions and billions of years that may have been or ever will be are made up of ages; the ages are made up of years; years are made up of days; days are made up of hours; and hours are made up of minutes and seconds. Everything big is made of something small. So, if we'll be faithful in the small things, the big things will take care of themselves.

The big things in life are made of little acts, little words, little thoughts. We can't have "the much" without having the little. We need to ask God to grow our faithfulness. We must be faithful in the small things and the secret things because who we are in secret is who we are—nothing more; nothing less.

Day 26

Ephesians 4:15&16, "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

The way all parts of the body work together is beautiful. Joints connect different parts of the body to be a whole. When Paul spoke about the joints, he spoke to not only unity but flexible harmony. My elbow is a joint—it's what connects my forearm to my upper arm. So, it keeps me connected, but it's also flexible and enables me to bend my arm. That is how the Body of Christ should be, but some people get stiff. We get spiritual arthritis. And rather than having this flexibility, we become rigid.

We have synovial fluid that lubricates these joints. When the cartilage becomes dry and the synovial fluid is not there, the joint gets inflamed, swollen, stiff, and painful. Just like our physical bodies need the right amount of synovial fluid to keep our joints healthy and moving, the Body of Christ also needs "synovial fluid" to keep it healthy and active.

The synovial fluid in the Body of Christ is love. When we love one another, we don't inflame one another, and we don't become immobile. We become mature in stature: we become like Christ. We become mature in stability: we're not blown about. We become mature in speech: we know how to speak the truth in love. And we become mature in service: we serve one another, and the Body works together to serve others.

Day 27

Pompeii—the ruins of a magnificent civilization. Pompeii was buried under volcanic ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted back in biblical times. The scenery truly captures the moment: You can see how people lived in that culture by examining the buildings, but you can also see the bodies of people who lived in this place and were caught by this devastating eruption. You can even see the remains of a man and woman on the floor of their home who died surrounded by and clutching gold coins and expensive jewelry. In seeking to hold worldly treasures, they lost their lives.

Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?". The truth is, that thing we're holding onto instead of God will not get us far; it is temporary. I want you to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. And once you know Him, you start a new investment in eternity with riches that will never fade or spoil. Is there something we are holding onto instead of God?

Luke 21:1-4, "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 "for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

Day 28

Ephesians 5: 21 says, "submitting to one another in the fear of God."

We lay our lives down for one another. Christians are to submit ourselves to God first, then to one another. Biblical submission is one equal willingly and lovingly placing himself or herself under the authority of another equal so that God may be glorified. The various members of our body have to submit to the other parts of our body sometimes. We're in the Body of Christ, and we care for one another. Therefore, I must sometimes submit to you, and you must submit to one another. We all will come to a time when it is right to submit and right for somebody to lead. Every part of our old selves, including our self-centeredness, is crucified with Christ, and we need to learn how to yield to, love, and to submit to one another.

Question for us all to ponder: When was the last time we loved someone in a sacrificial way?

Day 29

The foot and the hand both belong to the body. Our hand is relatively attractive. Some care for their hands with polish on nails and adorn their hands with jewelry. Feet are not as noticeable as hands, but we would have difficulty getting around without them. Each member of the body is important, and God made us where we need one another. We belong to one another. We can't be in competition with one another, nor should we live in isolation from one another.

Some members of the body that don't seem necessary are very necessary. When was the last time we ever said, "Lord, I really do thank You for my pancreas," or "Bless God for my wonderful spleen"? Most of us probably don't do that. We tend to take these things for granted.

We also don't know who does all the little things around the church to make our services run smoothly. Who opens the doors of the church on Sunday morning so we can come inside? Who does so many things we take for granted? What if they all stopped, and we arrived at church on a Sunday morning to find all the lights off, the doors locked, and the building cold? Then, maybe we'd begin to say, "Thank God for the members of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ." We are one Body, and all the members are necessary and vital to the Church.

Who are some of the members of our church that serve behind the scenes? How can we start paying attention to who does the little things?

What have we contributed to the Body of Christ?

1st Corinthians 12:12, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

Day 30

In 1956, George T. "Dad" Speer wrote a song entitled "Sing Me a Song About Jesus." The first verse says:

Sing me a song about Jesus	Sing me a song about His love	Sing with all your might
Ev'ry day and night	Make the hallelujahs roll	Sing out the blessed old story
Tell how He gave the victory	Dying on a tree	All for you and me
How He came and made me whole		

Beautiful isn't it. Some of you know it, go ahead and sing it.

I like the part that says, "How He came and made me whole."

Day 31

Thinking about old songs, I like this one too: *Oh How I Love Jesus*. This one was written in 1865 by Frederick Whitfield

1 There is a name I love to hear,
I love to sing its worth;
it sounds like music in my ear,
the sweetest name on earth.

Refrain:

O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
because he first loved me!

2 It tells me of a Savior's love,
who died to set me free;
it tells me of his precious blood,
the sinner's perfect plea. [Refrain]

3 It tells of one whose loving heart
can feel my deepest woe;
who in each sorrow bears a part
that none can bear below. [Refrain]

This comes from the scripture in 1st John 4:19, "We love Him because He first loved us."

April Attitude

Day 1

Philippians 4:4 NLT, "Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!"

I am not a morning person. I usually don't speak until I have a glass of orange juice and a couple of cups of coffee. However, early one summer morning I was awakened by birds singing outside my bedroom window. I thought, "this must be a beautiful day." I got up that morning with a smile and looked out the window to discover it was pouring with rain. The birds didn't care, they sang anyway. This taught me a great lesson. A good day begins with a good attitude. We can face the day with joy in our heart if we keep our focus on Jesus. Paul, the Apostle, wrote this letter to the Philippians while in prison. His life was not going very well. But He kept his eyes on Jesus and was able to rejoice in spite of the circumstances. We don't rejoice about the situations; we rejoice in the situations. I am reminded of the hymn: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of his glory and grace. "

Thought for the day: A good attitude is a choice. We can choose to dwell on the situation, or we can choose to dwell on our Wonderful Lord, Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Father, help me to keep my trust in You, in spite of what life throws at me.

Day 2

1st Peter 5:6 NLT, "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor."

Humility is an inner quality; it is not just going through the motions of "doing humble things." When we do humble things with the goal of being exalted, this is not humility. An old friend told me a story of a small-town hardware store owner who owned a parrot. The parrot always perched beside the cash register. One day a city official came into the store. The parrot immediately began to squawk, "you're a thief, you are taking bribes, you are only interested in self-promotion." The city official stomped over to the owner in outrage and demanded exoneration. The red-faced owner apologized and said he would take care of the parrot. He went to the parrot and asked him, "what were you doing? If you don't quit this, I will pluck you and have you for dinner." When the official was leaving the store, he glared at the parrot. The parrot squawked, "You know."

As we travel through life let us choose to exalt others. Let's seek to serve and not to be served. Jesus said, in Luke 14:8, "When you are invited to a wedding feast, don't sit in the seat of honor..."

Thought for the day: Humility is a result of an attitude of servitude.

Prayer: Father, please help me to always put others first.

Day 3

John 13:14, "If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Jesus had just humbled himself to the degree of servanthood; he washed the dirty feet of his followers. He then told them that it was mandatory that they do likewise. The word "ought" means to owe a debt. Was Jesus teaching them to literally wash other's feet? Maybe. A greater lesson is one of love and humility. He was teaching them that if the purposes of God were going to be accomplished, it must be by loving people. One of the greatest ways to love people is by serving. A dear friend of mine related to me about visiting an elderly, bed-fast member of his church. My friend asked if there was anything he could do to help. The elderly gentleman said, "yes, my false teeth really need to be cleaned." Now, my friend is kind of a "germaphobe." He retrieved the gentleman's teeth and went to the sink and gave them a good scrubbing, gagging the whole time. The dear gentleman was so appreciative.

Serving is not always fun. Sometimes it requires washing dirty feet and sometimes it requires cleaning someone's teeth. Mostly, it requires the inner quality of a good attitude.

Thought for the day: Serving is not always fun, but it is always rewarding.

Prayer: Father, thank you for giving me a good attitude.

Day 4

Numbers 13:30, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

This is the story of Moses sending out twelve spies to "spy out the land." As you know, ten of the spies saw the giants and the seemingly impossible task. Joshua and Caleb, the two other spies, saw the possibilities.

We face many seemingly impossible tasks in life. Attitude plays an important role in our decision making. We may not be up to the task, but we have a heavenly Father who is well able. In Matthew 19:26 Jesus said, "But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Thought for the day: Whatever we face, God is able.

Prayer: Father, help me to have an attitude of trust.

Day 5

1st Thessalonians 4:12, "that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing."

Does anyone ever focus on what you don't have rather than what you do have? This kind of thinking tends to "snowball." We may look at others around us who "have" many things and look at what we don't have.

Let's change our focus. Find one thing in our lives that is good and be thankful 100%. Many "must haves" of life are really not. Hebrews 13:5 says, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Here are at least three things in which to be thankful; Food, Clothing, and the ever-faithful presence of the Holy Spirit.

Thought for the day: I will be thankful today for what, and who I do have.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for an attitude of gratitude.

Day 6

Philippians 4:13, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,"

Paul was referring to his trust in the Law of Moses and his persecution of Christians.

Many go through life living in regret of the past rather than the hope of the future. Many years ago, I was working at a department store. My job this day was operating the cash register. A young lady was checking out her items and I noticed she had four or five young, happy, rambunctious children with her. I commented that she and their dad must be very proud. She said, "they don't have a daddy in their lives but that's all under the blood." Wow, what a great attitude.

WE ALL have made decisions, did things we regret; if we could change them, we would. Always remember that it is “under the blood” of the crucified Savior, Jesus Christ.

Thought for the day: Our past is just that; past.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your grace and that **ALL** of my sin is forgiven.

Day 7

Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The massive elephant strained against the thick rope around its ankle, trying in vain to break free. A young girl noticed the elephant’s distress and approached the handler. “Why does this elephant not just use its strength to break the rope and escape?” she asked. The handler smiled and replied, “When this elephant was just a baby, it was tied with the same rope. At that time, the rope was strong enough to restrain the little elephant. It has grown up believing the rope can still hold it, even though now it could easily snap the rope.” The elephant’s limited belief in the power of the rope had imprisoned it for life. Like the elephant, many of us go through life trapped by false beliefs and self-imposed limitations. We become accustomed to thinking in a certain way and continue to see the world through that lens, even after we have outgrown it.

The elephant can teach us an important lesson: we are only as trapped as we believe ourselves to be. With the power of the Spirit of God, using the mighty Word of God, we can be free of all that binds us from fulfilling God’s purpose.

Thought for the day: I will begin this day progressing in the Truth of what my Heavenly Father says.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for giving me wisdom from your Word.

Day 8

Romans 12:2 AMP, “And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [by the Word of God], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].”

The old man sat with his grandson by the fire, under a blanket of stars. “Grandson, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all,” he said. “One is evil. It is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.” “The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.” The grandson thought about this for a minute and then asked, “Grandfather, which wolf wins?” The old man smiled. “The one you feed.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will mediate on the Word of God.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for the life changing power of your Word. Help me to mediate on it.

Day 9

1st Corinthians 10:10, “nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

Excerpt from the song "Excuses" sung by the Southern Gospel song group The Kingsmen:

In the summer it's too hot. And, in the winter, it's too cold...Well, the church benches are too hard. And, that choir sings way too loud. Well, a headache Sunday morning and a backache Sunday night. But by worktime on Monday morning, you're feeling quite alright. While one of the children has a cold, "Pneumonia, do you suppose?" Why the whole family had to stay home, just to blow that poor kid's nose. Well, the preacher he's too young. Or maybe he's too old. The sermons they're not hard enough. Or maybe they're too bold. Well, the sermons they're too long. Or maybe they're too short. Well, that preacher we've got must be "the world's most stuck-up man." Well, one of the ladies told me the other day, "He didn't even shake my hand."

We have opportunities to hear complaints every day. All it does is demoralize us; it does not edify.

Thought for the day: Today, I will look at what is right instead of what is wrong.

Prayer: Father, help me to see the "goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalms 27:13)

Day 10

2nd Peter 3:18, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

Someone has said, "The only people that like change is a wet baby."

Change is inevitable. We are all changing physically, emotionally and, hopefully, spiritually.

Spiritual change is called growth and maturity. Some of the things that have shaped us spiritually are hymns, bad or good experiences, and traditions. Some of which are good, but some are not.

What is causing spiritual maturity and peace, and what is causing anxiety or criticism?

Thought for the day: I will assess the changes and embrace what is of God.

Prayer: Father, help me to discern what is of You, and what is not.

Day 11

Ephesians 6:7 Christian Standard Bible, "Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to people,"

Focusing on serving people can be very frustrating. Many do not seem grateful. Some even have an attitude of entitlement. This is why Paul encouraged us to keep our focus on the Lord. The New King James Version translates this verse, "with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,"

By having an attitude of serving God in our tasks, we will serve others with no expectancy. Yes, some will take advantage, and some will be appreciative. It makes no difference when our service is "as unto the Lord." Many have never been taught to say "thank you" while some simply forget.

I drove through the "drive-through" at a fast-food restaurant recently. The server did not say "thank you" or even count out my change; they just handed me my food and change. I thought, "they didn't even say thanks." Then I thought, "I did not come here to buy a thank you, I came for food. I received everything I paid for."

Thought for the day: Today, I will keep my focus on the Lord and not on people.

Prayer: Father, help me to focus on MY attitude and not on the attitude of others.

Day 12

Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,"

Notice Paul says here "let this mind." This means we have a choice. We can have the mind/attitude of Christ, or we can have the mind/attitude of self.

Perhaps a tragedy has hit you. Or maybe you are experiencing some great triumphs. To avoid the highs and lows of our mind, we keep our mind on Christ. In the tragedies, He will see us through. In the triumphs, He will keep us humble. You will not face any situation that Jesus has not faced; ridicule, loss, abandonment, worship (they laid palm branches down for him to ride on), etc.

By staying in fellowship with the Lord, we will avoid the "roller coaster" life. Yes, sometimes we cry, and sometimes we shout; that's great. All the while, we are focused on our Lord and Savior.

Thought for the day: I have the mind and attitude of Christ.

Prayer: Thank you, my Father, for always being with me.

Day 13

Philippians 1:12, "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,"

A few years ago, I read a story about a young lady by the name of Doris Mary Ann Kappelhoff. Miss Kappelhoff dreamed of being a dancer. On October 13, 1937, she was in a terrible auto accident. While lying in her bed recovering, she listened to the radio and began to sing along with the artists. Her mother listened to her and enrolled her in voice lessons. Due to her accident, Doris never became a dancer. She did, however, become a singer changing her name to Doris Day.

"Life" happens to all of us. What we do with it is determined by our attitude. Will we give up or begin to look at what God can do in our situation?

Thought for the day: Thank you Lord for a "never quit attitude."

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for giving me a new "plan A."

Day 14

Romans 15:5 NIV, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,"

What a blessing to be in relationship with a God who is steadfast, consistent, patient, and encouraging.

Most of us have experienced mistreatment from others. Sometimes it is intentional and sometimes it is not. Paul writes to the Romans and says for them to have the same attitude toward others that God has toward us: steadfastness, consistency, patience, and encouragement. Jesus tells us how this is

accomplished: Matthew 5:44, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

Thought for the day: I will look for ways to bless others.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your power that helps me to pray for others.

Day 15

Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones."

Sometimes it seems life cannot get any better, other times just the opposite.

When great times are here, enjoy them to the fullest. When tragedy strikes, face it head on. Feel the pain, anger, sorrow, and all the other emotions. Then, move on. If we remain in these emotions our spirit will be broken/crushed, and this will lead to deeper negative emotions.

How, some ask, can I move on? By first asking the Holy Spirit for His help. Then getting involved with life again. Maintain a relationship with our Lord by reading and studying His Word, communicating with Him in prayer, and by getting involved with people of faith and hope.

Thought for the day: Today, I will feel the full magnitude of life's events and begin the journey of moving on.

Prayer: Father, help me to experience Your peace and guidance.

Day 16

Philippians 2:14 NIV, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing,"

In 2nd Kings 5 we read the account of Naaman. Naaman was a commander in the army of the King of Syria; Naaman had leprosy. A young girl had been taken captive from Israel. She told Naaman about a prophet name Elisha who could heal him of this leprosy. When Naaman heard the instructions of Elisha, "go dip seven times in the Jordan river", he became very upset. His response, "But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the LORD his God and heal me! Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage." Of course, Naaman eventually followed Elisha's instructions and was healed.

Have we ever received orders from God, or maybe our boss, or even a church leader, and grumbled or argued about it?

Thought for the day: Today, I will have an attitude of obedience without grumbling or arguing.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your help with my attitude.

Day 17

Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

Attitude is HUGE. A bad one can ruin your day. A good one can make a disaster turn into a funny story. A bad attitude can completely ruin your health, and a good attitude can help you get through a very traumatic time. It's powerful and you get to choose the attitude you're going to have every single day.

Someone has profoundly said, "Attitude is the difference between an ordeal and an adventure."

When Paul writes "set your mind on things above" he wasn't just talking about going to heaven; he was speaking of heavenly things; the deliverance of the Lord, the help of the Lord, and the leading of the Lord, just to name a few.

By keeping our attitude fixed on the expectation of God's intervention, our day and our life will go much smoother.

Thought for the day: Today, I will stay fixed on heavenly things.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your interventions in my life.

Day 18

1st Corinthians 16:14, "Let all that you do be done with love."

Attitude is an inner quality. However, it must be manifested.

Here, Paul tells us to let all that we do be done with love. There are many types of love; love for our spouse, love for our children, love for our friends, and so on. The Greek word here is "agape." Agape speaks of the God kind of love.

This "God kind" of love can only come from a working of the Holy Spirit in our inner man; it is a "fruit of the Spirit."

It is unconditional but yet confrontational. It is forgiving but yet "calling to account." The "God kind" of love rebukes but then restores. This requires the leading of the Holy Spirit as well as the working of the Holy Spirit.

Thought for the day: Today, I will walk in the God kind of love.

Prayer: Father, thank you for Your leading and Your working.

Day 19

Psalms 121:1, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help?"

Attitude has different directions. This means it is vertical as well as horizontal.

David's attitude, in Psalms 121:1 was looking to the Lord for his help; vertical. He had previously said, in Psalms 20:7, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God." An attitude of first and foremost trusting in the Lord will take us through life's ups and downs. The first verse of the old hymn, *Jesus, Hold My Hand* says, "As I travel through this pilgrim land There is a friend who walks with me. Leads me safely through the sinking sand, It is the Christ at Calvary."

Thought for the day: Today, I walk hand in hand with my Savior.

Prayer: Father, thank you so much for Your help in life.

Day 20

Ephesians 4:32, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Not only is our attitude vertical, but it is also horizontal; walking with others in this world.

Paul wrote this to the Ephesians and says something similar to the Colossians—Colossians 3:13, “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

Unless we choose a hermit lifestyle, it is impossible to go through life without interacting with others. Not everyone, including us, always does the right thing. This has nothing to do with our reactions. Our attitude is one of kindness, forgiveness, patience, etc.—Surely, and faithfully, we must have the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Thought for the day: Today, I will harbor no ill feelings or unforgiveness.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your faithfulness in my life.

Day 21

1st Corinthians 5:10, “Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.”

Paul is telling us that there is sin in this world. “Dogs bark, fish swim, and sinners sin.” God never called us to “sanctify sinners.” We bring the Gospel to them with the love of Jesus. Yes, because we love the Lord and we love people, it hurts to know the natural repercussions of sin in people’s lives.

One of the parables of Jesus is about a treasure in a field; Matthew 13:44, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” One of the lessons we learn here is that, in order to acquire the treasure, we must engage the field. Sometimes the field, the environment of the treasure, is a mess. But the treasure is one that Jesus died for.

Thought for the day: Today, I have an attitude of seeing beyond the field and seeing the treasure.

Prayer: Father, thank You for giving me Your “eyes” to see the treasure.

Day 22

2nd Corinthians 2:7&8, “so that, on the contrary, you *ought* rather to forgive and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love to him.”

As a minister, one of the hardest things that John Newton (the author of the beautiful hymn *Amazing Grace*) faced was ministering to the people that had known him when he was a “wretch.”

Some people are saved on “first call.” Many are involved in “deep sin.” The age of the person, and depravity of a life does not matter to God; He saves all who will receive Jesus as their savior.

Our attitude should be one of acceptance for the one coming to Jesus. Not only of acceptance but of welcoming.

Thought for the day: Today, I will accept everyone that God accepts.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the wonderful application of grace in my life and the lives of others.

Day 23

1st John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

There are many scriptures concerning forgiving others. Let’s not forget to forgive ourselves. Condemnation and guilt are heavy burdens to bear. Thank God we have the promise of forgiveness when we confess our sins to Him.

Paul beautifully wrote to the Romans in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore **now** no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” For a believer in the Lord Jesus there is no reason to ever feel guilt over past sins; they have been removed from us. *“There is a fountain filled with blood... and sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilty stains.”*

Thought for the day: Today, I will allow the Word of God concerning my past to be stronger than my memory. Therefore, I have no guilt or shame.

Prayer: Father, thank You so much for the promise of forgiveness.

Day 24

2nd Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Several years ago, a friend of mine was grocery shopping. This friend had been a pretty rough character; he had been a bouncer in a night club, had been a business owner with shady business dealings, and so on. Back to the grocery store—my friend was pushing his cart down the aisle and passed two ladies talking. He nodded hello to them as he passed and went down the next aisle. He overheard one of them say, “wasn’t that *so and so* and didn’t he do *this and that*.” My friend hurried back to the aisle they were in and yelled, “yes, that was me, but that was the old me that died, I’m a new creature in Jesus now.”

Yes, we remember the old “me” but the new me is made in the image of Jesus; Praise God!

This is our attitude; we enjoy the new us and thank God that He has delivered us and made us into new creations.

Thought for the day: Today, I will keep my “knees low” in thankfulness and my “head high” in praise.

Prayer: Father, thank You that I am not the person I used to be.

Day 25

2nd Peter 3:18, “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

How many remember the old song *He’s Still Working on Me*? The first verse says, “He’s still working on me, To make me what I need to be, It took him just a week to make the moon and stars, The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars, How loving and patient He must be, ‘Cause He’s still workin’ on me?”

My dear aunt Rosalie Gibson gave me a note several years ago that said something like this, “Thank God I’m not who I was, but thank God I am becoming who I was meant to be.”

We need an attitude of patience with ourselves to know that we are growing into who God meant for us to be. We may not be there yet, but we are traveling.

Thought for the day: Today, I will progress more on the road of becoming who God created me to be.

Prayer: Father, thank You so much for your patience with me as I grow.

Day 26

2nd Corinthians 2:14, “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”

Waking up each day with an attitude of expectancy will determine our day. We can expect woe, or we can expect triumph.

Here, God promises triumph. He even says, “...God who always leads us in triumph in Christ...”

I love the rest of the verse, “...through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”

Wow, did you know you smell like God. Chanel no. 5 smells great but it is nothing compared to what God smells like. He smells like triumph and the odor is coming through you. “Out of your belly will come rivers of living water...this He spoke of the Holy Spirit.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will experience triumph and release the odor of victory everywhere I go.

Prayer: Father, I choose today to let You live through me.

Day 27

Micah 6:8, “He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”

Ever wonder what is good to God? Micah tells us here, and it has to do with attitude.

The attitude of doing what is right, the attitude of loving mercy, and the attitude of walking humbly with God. This attitude comes when we agree with God as to what is good.

We all want to submit to our Father from our hearts, not just in our outward posture. As we do, the attitude toward others—justly—ourselves—mercy—and God—humility come in line with Him.

Thought for the day: Today, I will agree from the heart with my heavenly Father.

Prayer: Father, help me not to make life so complicated and help me to agree with you.

Day 28

Matthew 5:3, "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Poor in spirit" is an attitude. It is an attitude of total helplessness in ourselves.

When Solomon was being made king of Israel a prayer he prayed is recorded in 1st Kings 3:7, "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I *am* a little child; I do not know *how* to go out or come in." Solomon realized that the task was too great for him, and he needed the help of God. By the way, Solomon's downfall came when he got so big in himself that he thought he no longer needed God.

What a lesson for us. Our attitude should always be our total dependence upon God.

Thought for the day: Today, I will depend on you in every phase of my life.

Prayer: Father, thank You for example of Solomon's prayer and I want to make it mine as well; "I am a little child."

Day 29

1st Thessalonians 5:16, "Rejoice always,"

This is one of the shortest verses in the bible, yet so powerful.

Someone has said, "There are two times we praise the Lord; when we feel like and when we don't." I agree with that.

Praise, or thanksgiving, comes from an attitude of faith. Faith that God is who He says is, faith that God will do what He said He will do, faith that God has done what He said He has done—in other words, praise is an acknowledgement of our faith in God.

We love it when we "feel" God. But God is God whether we feel Him or not. Maybe we should initiate praise from a position of faith, and then we might "feel" God. Thought for the day: Today, I will praise you from a position of faith.

Prayer: Father, thank You that You are always and in all ways who You say You are.

Day 30

Philippians 3:1, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe."

We have invested the last 29 days looking at "attitude." Paul says here that, although he is repeating himself, it was for their safety.

Psychologists say it takes 21 days to create new habits; we have invested 29. However, it is something that must be cultivated consistently.

Attitude is so vitally important to every aspect of our lives. Our home life, our social life, our work life, our daily life, and our church life.

Life with ourselves, with others, and with God is lived so much better with a Biblical attitude.

Thought for the day: Today, I will continue in my journey of cultivating a Biblical attitude.

Prayer: Father, thank You for opening my eyes to the need of an attitude “like Christ” and for your continuing work in me and through me.

May (Some of these are from Dr. Lynn Hiles)

Day 1

The first meal in the garden of Eden and their eyes were opened to know good and evil. The first meal after the resurrection their eyes were open, and they knew it was the Lord! What you are eating will determine what your eyes are seeing. If you feed on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you are feeding from the old covenant, if you are eating the bread and drinking the wine of the new covenant, you are feeding on the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, and it is the tree of life.

Thought for the day: Today I will focus my attention on the finished work of Jesus on the Cross.

Prayer: Father, show me the difference in my thought life of what are “good” thoughts and what are “God” thoughts.

Day 2

Helpless or Hopeless. These adjectives are very relevant to believers when we examine them scripturally. Psalm 116:6 says, “The Lord guards the inexperienced; I was helpless, and he saved me.”

The writer found himself unable to help himself. When this happens to us, as many find themselves today, we can become despondent/hopeless or turn to a source beyond ourselves. Psalm 121:2, “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” We not only trust God for initial salvation but we trust Him for every aspect of life. In this trust/hope, we are helpless but not hopeless.

Thought for the day: My total sustenance of life is from the Lord.

Prayer: Father, thank You for being all that I need and help me to reflect Your Glory.

Day 3

A favorite song of mine, written by Mylon LeFevre, is entitled “Without Him.” One of the lines says, “Without Him I would be drifting.” Conversely, with Him we are held solid and steadfast. Hebrews 6: 19 says that hope is an anchor for the soul. Whether we are “passing through the valley of weeping (Psalm 84:6) or at the apex of contentment (Philippians 4:11) we are anchored with hope; hope for today, tomorrow, and forever. “Our anchor holds and grips the solid rock, this rock is Jesus...”

Thought for the day: Today I will rejoice in that truth that I am anchored.

Prayer: Father, You are the Rock of my salvation and in you I live and move and have my being.

Day 4 From Lynn Hiles

It takes commitment to have a successful marriage, a job, a family, a house, to raise children or even own a dog. It also takes committed folks to do ministry and build the local church and to see the kingdom

advance. Don't be afraid to commit to what you value. What we value most will be the priority of our lives.

David said, in Psalms 5:3, "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct *it* to You, And I will look up." I don't know if king David was talking about a literal morning, but I do know he was talking about priorities.

Thought for the day: Today, I will examine my priorities and adjust what needs to be adjusted and reinforce what is pleasing to God.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your Word and Your Spirit that communicates to me.

Day 5

"Life defining moments" is a popular catch phrase today. As believers, we experience many of these. Of course, the most profound is when we received Jesus as our savior. There are many "life defining moments" in the bible: when Elisha met Elijah, David defeating Goliath, Isaiah chapter 6, Saul/Paul meeting Ananias, and Jesus at the marriage feast, just to name a few. What have been some defining moments in your life? Let's look for and expect times when our Father speaks to us. It may be an impression on our minds or maybe when a scripture comes alive in our hearts. When He speaks, it is an opportunity to be launched into another phase of His plan for our lives.

Thought for the day: Today, I will set my mind as a trap to receive God's thoughts.

Prayer: Father, thank You so much for the times that You have spoken to me, and I look forward to many more.

Day 6

Sometimes "culture" is hard to define because it is more of a spirit or attitude than a set system to follow. Basically, culture is a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them: it is in their core being. So it is with Kingdom Culture. Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." In other words, the Kingdom of God is who we are, not what we do or try to adhere to. It will undoubtedly manifest into our daily lives. If we want a "kingdom culture" in our sphere it must begin with a "kingdom culture" in us.

Thought for the day: Today, I give Jesus full reign in my life.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the aid and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Day 7

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). Notice He didn't instruct us to clean up first. He did not say act right, do right, talk right, smell right, etc. He simply said to come, and He would give rest. To rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross is to really rest; to cease from our own self effort to be "right" with God. To embrace man's concept of Christianity is religion and simply exchanges one burden for another. John 1: 12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:" Some say, "Legg, you make it too easy." My response is, "No, God made it easy, religion makes it hard."

Thought for the day: Today, I exchange my own works for God's rest.

Prayer: Father, I am so thankful for Your grace and the faith You give me to trust.

Day 8

You are so beautiful, to me, You are so beautiful, to me, Can't you see, You're everything I hoped for, You're everything I need, You are so beautiful, to me.

These are part of the lyrics of the song *You Are So Beautiful to Me* made famous by Joe Cocker.

I think a lot of people have a misconception of our Father. Someone led them to believe that He was a tyrant and would "get them" if they ever made a mistake. While I make no claim to have all the truth concerning God, I do know that He is not a tyrant. Romans 2:4, "...not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" The truth is, He does not want to cut us down but to pick us up. As we fellowship with Him and learn more of His character we can sing, "You are so beautiful to me, You're everything I hoped for, You're everything I need..."

Thought for the day: Today I will enjoy the presence of the Lord.

Prayer: Father, You are beautiful to me, help me see.

Day 9 LH

The New Covenant is not a hyped-up old covenant. It is not an addendum to the old one. It is a brand-new covenant full of Divine supply. It is not a bunch of requirements. It is a Divine enablement. It is God working in us both to will and do of HIS "GOOD PLEASURE". The old covenant was a bankrupt system given to a bankrupt fallen humanity that required everything and supplied very little. The new covenant supplies everything and demands very little.

Galatians 3:19-21, "What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one. 21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law."

Thought for the day: Today, I will mediate on Jesus, and not a list of rules.

Prayer: Father, thank You for making salvation and life free to all who would receive.

Day 10 LH

The gospel of Grace is inclusive. It embraces the broken. The truth is everybody is broken in one way or another. The good news is that it doesn't leave you in your brokenness. Nor does it celebrate your brokenness. It points you to a savior who loves you and is actively involved in your life to restore, deliver set free. Someone has well said, "God loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way."

Jeremiah 18 gives us a beautiful picture of how the potter doesn't throw the clay away, reshapes it.

“Empty and broken I came back to him. Vessel unworthy So scared with sin. But he did not despair
He started over again. I bless the day He didn't throw the clay away.”

Thought for the day: Today I am thankful that Father makes new and restores.

Prayer: Father, as I appreciate all that You have done in me, help me to remember that You want to do it to the “least of us.”

Day 11

The apostle Paul made it clear “where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more.” There is simultaneous operation of darkness and grace. The word “abounded” that Paul uses to describe sin signifies something that exists in abundance. It is growing larger and more extensive every day. The implication is that sin is never static but continually increases and expands. But wait; Paul goes on to say, “Where sin abounded, grace did Much More abound.” The words “much more abound” describes something that is growing out of control beyond proportion, and out of its banks. It is like a huge river that is flooding. Its water rises and rises until it finally begins overflowing its banks and begins to flood everything in sight. Paul is not distressed about the increase of sin and evil. He is impressed by the exponential force of grace. I think becoming obsessed with this present darkness is a greater evil than the evil itself. A paraphrase of what Paul said could be “For wherever sin exists in abundance and is constantly expanding, that is exactly the time and place where grace is poured out in a surpassing quantity.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will celebrate grace and not sin.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your superabounding grace.

Day 12

Some of the lyrics to the song *Ball of Confusion*: “People moving out, people moving in. Why, because of the color of their skin...Segregation, determination, demonstration, integration
Aggravation, humiliation, obligation to our nation...The sale of pills is at an all-time high
Young folks walking round with their heads in the sky...Evolution, revolution, gun control, sound of soul
Shooting rockets to the moon, kids growing up too soon. Politicians say more taxes will solve everything...Eve of destruction, tax deduction, city inspectors, bill collectors Mod clothes in demand, population out of hand, suicide, too many bills...”

Bad theology and bad politics plus division in the church and a news media you can't trust is a recipe for disaster! My hope is in Christ, my trust is in being led by the Spirit. It might be a good time to tune our ear to His voice.

Thought for the day: Today, I will listen to the voice of the Father.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your Spirit and Your Word as I navigate this present life.

Day 13 LH

When our gospel ceases to be relevant to the broken, addicted, bruised, broken-hearted impoverished etc. It probably isn't the gospel! It is just the latest argument to keep us distracted from being co agents in God's new creation project.

The creation groans for manifestation of the sons of God. That manifestation is not spooky or weird. It simply means we manifest his life and nature to His creation in a practical way. I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation. If it has no power and it doesn't bring salvation, it is not the gospel.

Many have discussed why Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. I believe one reason he wept was because of all of the other tombs there that housed people who died in their brokenness and were made aware that Father has a great plan for their life.

Thought for the day: Today, I rejoice in God's healing power.

Prayer: Father, help me to be a light and salt to other broken people.

Day 14 LH

Goliath had an entourage and an armor bearer and a lot of hot air. David was up against all of that with a slingshot and an anointing. The moral of the story is that the big shot was up against the little boy with the slingshot. The most important person on the battlefield that Day was the one who didn't have a lot. But the one who got the victory that day was not the one most people thought! When promotion comes from the Lord, it is irrevocable! God didn't send Goliath to destroy David, he sent him to promote him. We struggle when facing adversity but what an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work and our Father to be glorified.

Thought for the day: Today, I will look at adversity as an opportunity, not a setback.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your strength on a daily basis.

Day 15

Someone has said, "If you want to make everyone happy, don't be a leader, sell ice cream." This doesn't just apply to leaders but to everyone who shares the Gospel of our Lord. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18). Jesus was the epitome of love, yet He was hated.

Don't be upset when you are not on everyone's most popular list. Focus on pleasing and obeying the Holy Spirit and let Him settle all disputes.

Thought for the day: Today, I will seek to obey.

Prayer: Father, I pray for those who spitefully use me and cast my name out as evil; I pray for Your grace to engulf their lives.

Day 16 LH

If we continually bash the church and always point out what is wrong with her, how can we then expect people to want to be a part of her? She may not be perfect, but she is the bride of Christ.

I wonder how Jesus feels about us bashing his wife. She is made up of broken people, and make no mistake about it, we are all broken in some way or the other. God loves broken people because broken people is all there is.

Christ loved the church enough to give himself for her. Perhaps we should love her enough to find one we could be a part of and give ourselves and our gifting to make her better

Thought for the day: Today, I will encourage other “family members”; church family as well as “natural” family.

Prayer: Father, I lift up before you all the members of our church.

Day 17

1st Corinthians 15:3&4 ESV, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, “

“According to the Scriptures” is the basis of our faith. We believe the Scriptures, the Holy Bible, because of its validity and overwhelming proof of its integrity. There are over 2000 prophecies in the Old Testament alone; all of them have come true.

Based on the Scriptures, we have been completely forgiven of all sin simply by an act of faith. And above that, God gave us the faith.

Thought for the day: Today, I enter life with the assurance of salvation based on the Scriptures.

Prayer: Father, increase my faith as I explore and believe Your Word.

Day 18

Looking again at 1st Corinthians 15:3&4 ESV, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,”

Thank God for the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of all of our faith. The resurrection is the proof that the sacrifice of Jesus has been accepted by the Father. The resurrection of Jesus assures us of New Life here, and in the continuation of this life when our earthly bodies die. The resurrection of Jesus assures us that our loved ones who died with faith in Jesus as Savior are alive now. The resurrection of Jesus assures us that we will see our born again loved ones again.

Thought for the day: Today, I rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Father, thank you for your precious promise of eternal life.

Day 19 LH

One thing I have learned in the many years of traveling in many different circles is that if you nitpick everything you will enjoy nothing. Everyone is at a different level of understanding. There are different genres of music, sometimes people see scriptures differently. Sometimes people are blessed by songs and music and ministry, that you no longer embrace.

It is usually pride that keeps us from being able to simply enjoy different things. We sometimes wonder why people are always bashing the church. it might be because they’ve learned it from us. If we could just focus on the many good things that are good about the church and the people we meet instead of

focusing on the negative we might find some unity and probably more things that we find good than we do bad. Remember, some of the things that we are criticizing now we used to do. For such were some of us! If we bite and devour one another, we will be destroyed by ourselves.

Thought for the day: Today, I will celebrate the church.

Prayer: Father, thank You for making me a part of the greatest body in the world.

Day 20

You are cursed in the city, cursed on the job, cursed coming, cursed going, etc. WAIT; Galatians 3:13, "But Christ has rescued us from the curse..." God has been sending us messages throughout time. It is not a coincidence that the ark of Noah landed on Mt. Ararat. Ararat comes from two words: Arar (curse) and yarat (contrary). In short, Ararat means the "curse is reversed" or the "curse is nullified." Thank God, His promises are "yea and amen" (1st Corinthians 1:20). My friends, let's live in the FOG.

Thought for the day: Today, I expect the FOG.

Prayer: Father, thank You for sending Your Son to take away the curse and bring in the FOG.

Day 21

Philippians 2:4 says, "...not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Wow, what was Paul thinking when he wrote this? Didn't he know that we are just humans? I mean, Jesus could do this, but us? The key is in verse 1, "...fellowship of the Spirit..." You are correct; the "old man" cannot do this. But the "old man" is dead and all we have is his memory. As we join Paul in his desire to be intimate with Jesus (Philippians 3:10) and realize His death was our death, and His resurrection was our resurrection, the overflow is "loving one another as Christ loves us."

Thought for the day: Today, I will be a blessing to others.

Prayer: Father, thank You for newness of life and the opportunity to be a blessing.

Day 22

We all have a code that guides our lives. It may be "whatever feels right" or it may be a strict adherence to something or someone. For Bible believers it used to be the Mosaic law but now it is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit resides in believers in the Lord Jesus as a person that gives us checks and balances. We are not free to choose our own way, but we are free to obey. Obedience to the Holy Spirit is the greatest freedom that we will ever experience; He always knows best.

Thought for the day: Today, I will live in agreement with the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the precious Holy Spirit and His daily guidance.

Day 23

The next few devotionals deal with overcoming the "ites" in our lives.

Exodus 3:8, "And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the **Canaanites**, and the **Hittites**, and the **Amorites**, and the **Perizzites**, and the **Hivites**, and the

Jebusites. These six territories, or kingdoms, are mentioned together several times. Canaan has to do with self; our greatest enemy.

We overcome and live in victory over “self” by remaining teachable and correctible. 2nd Timothy 2:24, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, **apt to teach**, patient,” The phrase “apt to teach” does not just mean the ability to teach; it means “that can be taught.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will be teachable and correctible.

Prayer: Father, thank You for placing people in my life that will teach and correct me.

Day 24

The second “ite” is Hittite. The name “Hittite” has to do with fear and confusion. One of the fears that we all face is inadequacies. Father gives us tasks that are too big for us to accomplish. The good news is that He also gives us the ability to accomplish the task. A good example is Gideon.

Judges 6:7-16, “And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD because of the Midianites, 8 that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; 9 ‘and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. 10 ‘Also I said to you, “I am the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.” But you have not obeyed My voice.’” 11 Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, “The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!” 13 Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” 15 So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” 16 And the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.” Gideon saw himself as inadequate, but God called him a “mighty man of valor.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will see myself as God sees me.

Prayer: Father, thank You for reminding me of who I am in You.

Day 25

The third “ite” is the Amorite. Amorites refer to prominence or success. One of the greatest hurdles to experiencing the promises of God is how we handle success. Many times, success is harder than failure. Failure tends to make us try harder and depend on God more. Success causes many people to quit following and depending on God; people forget what brought them success.

Jesus gives us the greatest example. John 5:30, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” As we read through out the Old Testament concerning the children of Israel; God would bless them, then the

next generation would turn to idols. God would bring them to a place of depending on them and they would experience success. Yep, the next generation would turn to idols.

Thought for the day: Today, I will be thankful that it is God who makes me successful.

Prayer: Father, help me never to forget that my source of strength is You; when I am weak, then I am strong in the Lord.

Day 26

This brings us to the fourth “ite”; the Perizzites. The literal meaning of “Perizzite is “an unwalled village.” This has to do with having no defense system. Revelation 2:15 references the teaching of the Nicolaitans. “Nicolaitans” is actually two words that means to conquer the people. The teaching of the Nicolaitans is designed to turn God’s people from His way to another way.

Proverbs 4:23 NIV, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” When we don’t fill ourselves with the Word of God, we become an unwalled village and are susceptible to all sorts of lies. These lies will eventually destroy our life and vitality in our walk with the Lord.

Thought for the day: Today, I will rely on the truth of God’s Word.

Prayer: Father, show me where I am in error and guide me into truth.

Day 27

The fifth of the six “ites” is Hivites. Hivites has to do with complacency. Hivites refers to people living in a village going about their daily routines with no expectancy of God’s intervention or leading.

Jesus taught in Matthew 13:25, “But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” Notice “while men slept.” Complacency with God usually happens when our lives become busy with “life.” At the end of the day, we remember that we haven’t been in communication with Father; we’ve been busy. So, we throw up a prayer just as we are falling to sleep, and plan to do better tomorrow.

I heard something a few years ago that went something like this, “My day is so full that I don’t have time to seek the Lord.” Another person said, “My day is so full that I cannot possibly begin without talking to the Father.

Thought for the day: Today, I will not be complacent with my relationship with my heavenly Father.

Prayer: Father, Almighty God, help me to seek you in every area of my life.

Day 28

The last of the “ites” in our devotional is the Jebusites. Jebusites means a threshing place. Threshing is the process of separating edible from the non-edible.

We are all familiar with the “potter.” Jeremiah 18:3-6, “Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this

potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel!” Father is always “tweaking” us to make us a better version of ourselves. A better version of ourselves is when we are reflecting the Father. Somone asked Michaelangelo how he created the beautiful statue of David. He said he just chipped away everything that wasn’t David. In other words, Michaelangelo has a picture in his mind of David before he began.

Father receives us just as we are. However, He loves us too much to leave us that way. He “chips” away at us until we become who He created us to be.

Thought for the day: Today, I welcome the “chipping” of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Father, I give up all rights to myself and give You entrance into my life to make me who You see me to be.

Day 29

Every two years we are bombarded with political advertisements. Wouldn’t it be nice if those running for office would just say, “This is my agenda. If elected this is what I will attempt to do.” No bashing, no gimmicks, just the agenda. Then, if elected, they choose an administration that will help carry out that agenda.

That’s exactly what Jesus did. He laid out His agenda, then He left us to carry it out. His agenda:

To Evangelize, to disciple, to train, to release.

We are to evangelize OUR world with the Good News; the Gospel. Then we bring into the lives of believers what is necessary to change them into the image of Jesus; to change their nature. Then, understanding that all people have a Divine plan from God for their lives, we train them to carry out this plan. Finally, we release them to carry out their God given destiny.

Thought for the day: Today, I will carry out Jesus’ agenda.

Prayer: Father, help me to be sensitive to Your voice in my life so that I may fulfill Your purpose.

Day 30

Have you ever wondered why we are here? I mean, what’s “it” all about. We live 70 years or maybe 969 years as Methuselah. James 4:14 says, “whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

Ephesians 4:15 gives us an answer, “but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” We are growing up to be like Jesus in our nature, or character.

Sometime in eternity past, before there was man, before there was the sun and the moon, etc. there was the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In John 17:22, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.” Jesus was referring to the oneness that He had with the Father before He came to earth as a man. Now, we are on a journey to become “one” with the Trinity just as Jesus was. More on this tomorrow.

Thought for the day: Today, I will progress in this wonderful journey. Prayer: Father, I give myself to You to work Your wonderful work in me.

Day 31

When God created Adam, He walked with him “in the cool of the day” but he did not enjoy the internal communion with God that we have today. However, Adam still had a desire for “me”; that’s why he rebelled against God.

Jesus was the perfect example of a life devoid of “me.” As a man, Jesus was totally selfless. When we were born again, the Holy Spirit brought us out of the kingdom of Adam and brought us into the kingdom of Jesus. Colossians 3:13, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

My friends, we are totally forgiven, but not totally transformed. Romans 12:2, in the Amplified Bible says, “And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed *and* progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes] ...” More tomorrow.

Thought for the day: Today, I will put into my mind what will edify me.

Prayer: Father, thank You for forgiving me of all of my sin. I submit my mind to You.

June

Day 1

2nd Corinthians 3:18, in the New Living Translation says, “So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”

As we continue to get an accurate portrayal of Jesus, who He really is, the Holy Spirit does a wonderful work; He transforms us into that same person. Our nature becomes more and more like Jesus’; totally selfless. That’s why it is vitally important that we accurately “see” Jesus as He is.

The transforming work is done by the Holy Spirit. Our part is to give the “tool” of accuracy of Jesus into the Holy Spirit’s spiritual hands.

Thought for the day: Today, I will continue on my quest to “see Jesus as He is.”

Prayer: Father, thank You for showing me the path to take in my earth journey.

Day 2

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, in his famous *I Have A Dream* speech said, “Free at last! Free at last! Great God Almighty, we are free at last!” That’s our utterance when we realize the full payment of sin on the cross of Calvary.

One of the final utterances of Jesus, as He was dying on the cross, was, “It is finished.” The sin debt was fully paid and, by an act of faith on our part, we are delivered from the bondage of sin; He even gave us the faith to believe and receive. “Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?” If you have received Jesus as Savior, you are completely forgiven; you are “Free at last, free at last, Great God almighty, we are free at last.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will enjoy the freedom from the bondage of sin.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your redeeming grace.

Day 3

Decisions, decisions, decisions, we face them every day. The good news is the Holy Spirit will lead us. Psalms 73:24 says, "You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory."

James gives us insight as to making decisions. James 3:17, in the New International Version says, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

As we examine our decision-making process, we ask ourselves, "is my motive pure?" Is what I want to do motivated by "what's in it for me?" Or "this is what I believe the Holy Spirit is saying." More tomorrow.

Thought for the day: Today, my motive is to hear the Holy Spirit speak.

Prayer: Father, thank You for leading me.

Day 4.

Not only do we examine our motives, but we also ask ourselves, "does this decision give me peace?"

Peace is defined as, "the harmonized relationships between God and man." The Holy Spirit is such a precious companion. He speaks to us with "peace" and with "checks." We all want to experience the ultimate best on this earth journey and Father wants that too. The best life comes when we follow the peace that the Holy Spirit gives. "I'm trusting to the unseen hand..."

Thought for the day: Today, I will be sensitive to the peace of God.

Prayer: Father, my trust is in You. I know You want what's best for me.

Day 5

Our Father is so gracious. Not only will He give us His Divine counsel and wisdom here, but when our lives here are finished; He will receive us to glory (Psalms 73:24).

It is said of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, and others that when they left their earthly life, they were "gathered to their people." The Bible doesn't give much insight as to what the next life will be like. The scripture does talk about a "great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). Also, there is "rejoicing in the presence of the angels." (Luke 15:10).

Whatever it is like, it will be great, and we will rejoice and enjoy our loved ones. Some of the folks at Bancroft Mission even say there is a "Bancroft" section in heaven. Who knows, maybe.

Thought for the day: Today, I will enjoy this life and will also look forward to the next.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the promise of greatness now, and forever.

Day 6

Probably the most well-known hymn throughout the world is *Amazing Grace*. John Newton is the author of this great hymn and when he said, “saved a wretch like me”, he knew what he was talking about. Mr. Newton was a rebellious “slaver.” He was so vile that his fellow sailors threw him overboard and harpooned him back into the boat. Think about this, John Newton’s vileness was just a manifestation of the absence of God in his life. We all, at one time, experienced the “absence of God” and were just as lost as John Newton. That’s why we “must be born again.”

When we receive Jesus’ finished work on the cross; receive Him as our savior, the Holy Spirit does a miraculous work—He makes us a brand-new creature, a creature that never existed before.

Thought for the day: Today, I will rejoice in the grace of God.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your “Presence” in my life.

Day 7

Speaking of hymns, how about the chorus from *The Haven of Rest*--I've anchored my soul in the haven of rest, I'll sail the wide seas no more; The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep, In Jesus I'm safe evermore. Wow, the promise of being safe in Jesus no matter what happens in life.

While I dearly love these old hymns, the greatest assurance is from the Word of God. Matthew 28:20, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen. We don’t build our Theology on hymns; we build on Him. Hymns are only great when they reflect the truth of God’s Word.

Thought for the day: Today, I will enjoy the truth of the songs of the Lord.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the hymns that reflect the truth of Your Word.

Day 8

William Cowper had been convinced that he could never be saved. In depression over this, he tried to commit suicide on several occasions. He lived in constant depression and guilt. One day, our loving Father opened his eyes to see the truth of His saving power and grace. From this salvation experience, William Cowper wrote one the most powerful hymns that has ever been written: *There Is A Fountain*. The third verse says, “E’er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die:”

“Redeeming love” is the source of salvation; the “Fountain” of the blood of Jesus is the means.

Thought for the day: Today, I will rest in Father’s redeeming love.

Prayer: Father, I lift before You those who are blinded to the fact of Your redeeming love.

Day 9

Let’s invest the next few days thinking about Five Inevitable Events in Life and GRACE.

The first event is: Everything Changes and Ends.

All it takes is one glance in the mirror to know that everything changes; we change, seasons change, the world in which we live changes, everything changes. Sometimes we enjoy the changes, sometimes we don't. We can struggle, rejoice, or even deny changes; but they still happen.

Not only are there changes, but everything also ends. When we are in a struggle, we are thankful for the end. When we are in a good relationship, the end is not so good.

The good news is God's grace is sufficient. Grace is God's intervention in our lives bringing peace, rest, and direction. In 2nd Corinthians 12:9 Paul, after reviewing the struggles he had experienced, wrote, "but He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you [My lovingkindness and My mercy are more than enough—always available—regardless of the situation]; for [My] power is being perfected [and is completed and shows itself most effectively] in [your] weakness.'" Therefore, I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ [may completely enfold me and] may dwell in me." (AMP).

Thought for the day: Today, I will bask in the Grace of my Father.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your wonderful grace that carries me through the trials and triumphs of life.

Day 10

The second Event is: Things Do Not Always Go According to Plan. No one enjoys the disruption of well-made plans. However, many times problems crop up. Many folks get settled into a pattern of life only to have it interrupted. Some invest years into education to discover there is not much work in their field. Do we panic, do we quit, or do we go to plan B?

Here's the good news. Romans 8:28 says that God will enter into our lives work things out for His purpose and our good. More good news, there are no "plan B's", only new plan A's. Life is not over when things don't go as planned.

Thought for the day: Today, I will look for God's plan for my life, knowing that it will be a great plan.

Prayer: Father, thank you for a new Plan A.

Day 11

The third installment on "Events and Grace" is: Life Is Not Always Fair.

"Life happens" is a true statement; and sometimes Life is not always fair. To the natural mind, the crucifixion of Jesus was not fair. Paul wrote in 2nd Corinthians 11:23-28, "Are they ministers of Christ? —I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." We do not mean to minimize your experiences if they have not been as severe as Jesus or Paul; yours are just as real.

Here's the good news. This is an opportunity for growth in our relationship and dependence upon our Lord. We rely on the LIFE in the Word of God. Psalms 84:5-7 NLT, "What joy for those whose strength comes from the LORD, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. 6 When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. 7 They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem."

Thought for the day: Today, I will grow stronger in the Lord.

Prayer: Father, You are the Almighty God, my trust is in You.

Day 12

Number four is: Pain Is A Part of Life. Not just physical pain, but sometimes deep emotional pain; pain that touches the soul, the very heart of man. Well-meaning people tell others to "just get over it." That's like telling the person with a broken leg to "just get over it."

Isaiah 1:6 gives us insight for healing. "From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment." When Isaiah talked about the "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" he was not speaking of the physical man but of the spiritual." He then tells us how to receive restoration.

"Closed up, bound up, and soothe with ointment." To close this pain, we must face it full on; feel the depth of the hurt. Don't live in denial; "it" really happened. As we are experiencing the extreme pain, we are also planning the next step in our lives; this is "binding up." The last phase of healing is the "soothing with ointment." This is a supernatural touch of the Holy Spirit. Don't stay in the "fullness" of pain by meditating on it. Expect life to go on and go on in abundance.

Thought for the day: Today, I will move on from the pain to the plan of God for my life.

Prayer: Father, I believe nothing takes You by surprise. While You haven't planned the pain, You will heal me. My hope and trust are in You.

Day 13

The final "Event and Grace" is: People Are Not Always Loving And Kind. Sad to say but sometimes people plan to mistreat others. Sometimes they don't have us in mind, but their actions of unkindness affect us negatively. Even other times people say things out of anger that they regret later, but we feel the brunt of their "unlovingness."

Good news—this is an opportunity for us to realize that we don't need others' approval or appreciation to experience the joy of the Lord. It is also a great opportunity for us to experience the wonderful power of forgiveness. We know that we can't change others, but we can change ourselves. It is a true saying that "half the people don't know you are angry, and the other half don't care."

Jesus told us to "forgive those who despitely use us." Sometimes this is hard; that's why we need the Holy Spirit. Examine yourself—do you enjoy the anger or do you want it to go away. Wanting it to go away exposes your heart toward God. Give it time, prayer for them, and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work.

Thought for the day: Today, I will be loving and kind.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the wonderful and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Day 14

After Elijah had been caught up in the chariot of fire (read 2nd Kings chapter two), and the anointing had fallen on Elisha, Elisha made a profound statement, “Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.” (2nd King 2:14).

A deep question for us today is, “where are the Elijah’s of God?” Elijah had gone through some mighty experiences. He experienced spiritual highs and spiritual lows; just like us. Elijah’s main focus was obedience to God. That’s where we need to be. Living a life of obedience to God.

Thought for the day: Today, I will obey what I sense the Lord is saying to me.

Prayer: Father, I know that I am not Elijah, but I also know that You are still God. Speak to me and I will obey.

Day 15

A good friend of mine used to sing a song entitled *Your Grace and Mercy*. Some of the lyrics are: Your grace and mercy brought me through. I'm living this moment because of You. I want to thank You and praise You too. Your grace and mercy brought me through.” The definition of “grace” is God’s ability to treat us according to who He is and not who we are. His grace is manifested in salvation, and in daily living. Mercy is when we “mess up”, He doesn’t discard us—we need both.

Thought for the day: Today, I will appreciate by praise and worship of my Savior, His Grace and Mercy.

Prayer: Father, thank You so much for Your Grace and Mercy.

Day 16

“As I travel through this pilgrim land There is a friend who walks with me. Leads me safely through the sinking sand It is the Christ at Calvary. This would be my prayer, dear Lord, each day You help me do the best I can. For I need Thy light to guide me day and night. Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.”

A pilgrim is one who journeys in a foreign land. Paul said in Philippians 2:15, “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,” Instead of trying to get out of this world, let’s be lights in need of God to “guide us day and night.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will depend on God’s hand to help me be “light in a crooked and perverse generation.

Prayer: Father, show me opportunities to be light and not to curse the darkness.

Day 17

James 1:5-8 says, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

There are many admonitions in the book of Proverbs concerning our mouth; what we say. Proverbs 6:2, "You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth." Proverbs 13:3, "He who guards his mouth preserves his life, *But* he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction." And Proverbs 21:23, "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles."

Let us put a "guard" over our mouth so that we "say" what we "pray." Don't nullify your prayer of faith by being "double-minded."

Thought for the day: Today, I will be aware of what comes out of my mouth so that what I say and what I pray will agree.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the Power of Your Holy Word.

Day 18

We often search for the will of God in our lives. James gives us some insight as to our actions. James 1:27, in the New Living Translation, says, "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you."

There are so many hurting people around us. Let us be aware of investing time in visiting and helping the orphans, widows, and widowers. Also, keep ourselves from the philosophy of a world that is anti-God.

Thought for the day: Today, I will be sensitive to the Spirit of God in encouraging those around me.

Prayer: Father, give me encouraging words and actions for those around me.

Day 19

A good friend of mine includes in his morning times with the Lord, "Father, bring me across the path of someone in whose path You are crossing today." That is a fantastic way to start our day. I would add that sometimes we are the vessels that God uses to initially cross someone's path, then He sends someone else to reap where we have sown. Romans 10:14 NLT, "But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?"

Thought for the day: Today, I will look for people that I may speak a Word.

Prayer: Father, bring me across the path of someone in whom You have prepared to hear. Also, lead me to someone that I may speak to.

Day 20

Pastor Charles Simpson used to say, "Methods are many. Principles are few. Methods always change. Principles never do." We hear often about a "philosophy of life." This simply means that there is something, or someone, in our lives whereby we make decisions.

Of course, the guiding principle of our lives is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. We have many voices in the world, some are good, but some are not. Paul wrote to the Romans about a never changing principle: Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Simply put, the Word of God is transforming our philosophy of life into God's never changing principles.

Thought for the day: Today, I will give the Word of God priority so that my philosophy of life will agree with God.

Prayer: Father, open up the sweet treasures of Your Word to me.

Day 21

How much does God get involved with our lives? Is He concerned over the smallest details? Jesus said, in Matthew 6:26, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Wow, Father cares about everything. He gets involved in our decisions. He gets involved in what seems to be trivial. He is not a "far off God" that takes vacations or sleeps.

1st Peter 5:7, in the Amplified Bible, says, "casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]."

Thought for the day: Today, I walk with my Father in every area of my life and thoughts.

Prayer: Father, thank You for caring about me and getting involved with my life.

Day 22

I think I would be safe in saying that I have heard the minimum of 50 times, "All I have left is God and prayer." I don't mean to minimize someone's struggles. My response is, "Wow, what a foundation." Someone has profoundly said, "When all we have left is God, we have enough to start fresh."

When we sit back, take a breath, and examine the situation, we discover that this is a good place to be. To have our total dependance upon a Father that loves us unconditionally is the best place to build a life of hope.

Thought for the day: Today, I will appreciate others and appreciate things. But mostly, I will appreciate my heavenly Father.

Prayer: Father, thank You for being the center of my life.

Day 23

2nd Corinthians 4:7-9 is a wonderful encouragement, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed"

Let's look first at verse 8, "hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed..." Life sometimes throws things at us that causes tremendous pressure; family situations, job related experiences, even health issues.

The good news is that we are not crushed by them. Verse 7 gives us the reason, “we have a treasure inside of us.” The treasure is the wonderful presence of the Holy Spirit.

Thought for the day: Today, I will focus on God instead of the mountain.

Prayer: Father, thank You so much for Your presence and Your Word that gives me comfort and guides me.

Day 24

Continuing in 2nd Corinthians 4. Verse 8 goes on to say, “we are perplexed, but not in despair.” Sometimes we really don’t know what to say or what to do. However, we are not in despair because we know Father has the answer. Remember verse 7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” We are not living life as others who have no hope. We have the power of God inside of us in the form of the Holy Spirit. He will bring to our remembrance things that we have heard, scriptures, or maybe even an encouraging word from someone. He will not leave us.

Thought for the day: Today, I will rest in God.

Prayer: Father, thank You for Your abiding presence.

Day 25

Looking again today at 2nd Corinthians 4, verse 9, “persecuted, but not forsaken...” Persecution comes to everyone that “lives out their Godliness.” (2nd Timothy 3:12). Godliness is simply a lifestyle that is consistent with the character of God (Pastor Tony Evans).

Good news: Verse 7 says that we have a “treasure in an earthen vessel...” Father will not abandon us in our darkest hours. He will lead and guide and we will look back and say, “surely the Lord was with me.”

Thought for the day: Today, I will live out of the inner man in agreement with the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Father, Thank You that You never leave me or abandon me.

Day 26

The last reminder from 2nd Corinthians 4:9, “...struck down, but not destroyed” The KJV says “cast down.” This is a shepherding term that refers to sheep. When sheep are on their side their internal organs shift and they cannot get up; they will die in this position if not rescued. Paul says to the Corinthians that when they are unable to help or rescue themselves, they will not be destroyed. Paul more to this people in 2nd Corinthians 7:6, “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down...”

How? Verse 7 NLT, “We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”

Thought for the day: Today, I praise God that nothing will happen in my life that I cannot overcome through the Power of God.

Prayer: Father, thank You for this wonderful treasure.

Day 27

There are two things that every human needs: Peace and Productivity.

Peace comes through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The source is the Holy Spirit, but the means is the Word of God. Many believers are born-again and are going to heaven someday. The good news, God offers peace to us while we are here on this earth. Peace for salvation comes through the assurance of the Word of God. Peace in situations comes through the Word of God. See the pattern? We cannot live in peace without the Word of God.

Thought for the day: Today, I will invest time with God in His Word.

Prayer: Father, thank You for revelation from Your Word.

Day 28

God not only wants to give us peace, He also wants us to be productive. When He created Adam and placed him in the garden, He gave him a job. He also gives us a job. We do this job from a posture of peace. Song of Solomon gives us a beautiful picture of this in 1:8 when the Beloved refers to the "shepherds' tent". The Shepherds' tent was a place where the shepherds could be out of the sun but still tend the sheep.

We rest in the peace of God and are obedient to His voice in being productive.

Thought for the day: Today, I will sow seeds of labor from a place of peace, knowing that God will give the increase.

Prayer: Father, lead me and I will follow.

Day 29

The most familiar of all of the Psalms is the 23rd. Verse 1 says, "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want." "Want" here means that Father will supply all that we need. He didn't say He would supply everything that we want, but He would supply everything we need.

A little exercise. The next time you shop for groceries use two carts. Into one put everything you need, in the other put everything you want. There will be a difference. It's not wrong to get things we want, but don't confuse what we need with what we want.

Thought for the day: Today, I will be thankful that I have all that I need.

Prayer: Father, I place my faith in You and the integrity of Your Word.

Day 30

The first part of verse 3, in Psalms 23, says, "He restores my soul;" If our soul can be restored, it can be depleted. Jesus said, in Mark 6:31, "And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and **rest** a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat." He knew the value in restoration.

Many times, we are very busy. Sometimes with Kingdom activity, sometimes with family, even with job related things. VACATIONS ARE ANOINTED AND APPOINTED BY GOD. Time alone to reflect and recharge.

Sometimes a trip to the clothing store, to the lumber store, to the fishing lake or the golf course; whatever. We just need to have our soul (our minds, our wills, and emotions) restored.

Thought for the day: Today, I will plan and follow through with some R and R.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the replenishing of my soul.

Personal notes.

WE WANT TO INVEST THE NEXT FEW WEEKS ON VICTORIOUS LIVING

JULY

Day 1

In 1st John 5:4, John says, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

The Amplified Bible says it this way, “For everyone born of God is victorious and overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has conquered and overcome the world—our [continuing, persistent] faith [in Jesus the Son of God].

Victory is understood to mean winning. Whether it is winning in games, war, or other competitions. The important thing to remember is that victory comes by means of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Not just faith to be “saved” but faith in Jesus in every aspect of our lives. God wants His people to live in victory, every day. Write on a piece of paper “Victory Today.” Put it on your mirror, put in on your refrigerator, put it on the ceiling over your bed so it will be the first thing you see in the morning.

Day 2

Victorious living begins in the mind. Yes, it begins with Jesus. However, many Christians do not know that God wants them to be victorious.

Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Paul is writing to Christians, but he tells them to be “renewed” in their minds.

Renewed means to renovate. Many folks renovate or remodel their houses. The change is for the better. This is the thought Paul is conveying. He says a transformation will occur when we renew our minds.

In Philippians 4:8 Paul tells us one of the ways to renew our minds, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Don’t give in to thoughts that are the opposite of these things.

Day 3

Continuing with the renovation of our minds.

Paul gave the Corinthian church some very good instructions concerning their thoughts. In 2nd Corinthians 10:5 he said, “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”

Victorious living in the mind is not just saying “no”, although that is part of it. It is also saying yes to the truth. The truth is, from the Word of God, God wants His people to live in victory. [The Bible describes the mind as a ship looking for harbor. You cannot keep bad ships from sailing back and forth on the ocean, but you can refuse them from docking privileges in the harbor of your mind.](#)

Day 4

God desires victorious living for His people.

Romans 8:37 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Victorious living doesn’t happen simply because we want it to. It doesn’t happen for people who are “good” enough. Victorious living doesn’t come when we grit our teeth and try harder. Victorious living is a process that begins when we KNOW that God wants victory for us.

Some have asked, “how do we become ‘more’ than conquerors?” Conquering, or winning, comes through conquest. The good news is, Jesus has overcome; He is the conqueror and has given us the victory = we are “more than conquerors.” He fought and won and gave victory to us.

Allow victorious living thoughts to permeate our minds. Sing about victory, testify of victory, expect victory.

Day 5

God has given us the “path” of victory.

Psalms 37:23&24 says, “The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds *him* with His hand.”

Victorious living does not require a perfect life; it requires faith. Faith in Jesus. Remember 1st John 5:4, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

God has given to every person “faith.” Romans 12:3, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” This faith that He has given us is in seed form and must be developed. Romans 10:17, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, (and hearing, and hearing, and hearing, and hearing, ad infinitum), and hearing by the word of God.” As we ingest the Word of God, the Holy Spirit does a miracle; He grows our faith.

Day 6

God has not only promised us victory, but He has also given us the path to victory. More than that, He has given us the “power” to live victoriously.

Ephesians 3:20, in the Amplified Bible says, “Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us,” Notice “according to the power that is at work within us.”

Peter gives us some revelation in 2nd Peter 1:3, “as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,”

We have been equipped by God with “all things” to live victoriously in this life. Develop what God has given. Expect what God has provided. Experience victorious living; now, today, this instant.

Day 7

Martin Luther said Christians have three enemies: The world, the flesh, and the devil. I believe there is a fourth: The law. Let’s talk about these and living in victory.

When we think about the “world” we are not talking about the earth or the planetary system; it is a system of thought that is contrary to the ways of God. In John 15:19 Jesus said, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Persecution stems from a worldly system that tries to shut up the anointing of God. Sometimes the attacks are verbal, sometimes physical. The good news is found in 1st John 5:4, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” No, faith will not cause persecution to cease. However, faith in God gives us an inner peace that allows us to endure. Faith in what God says produces hope. Hope that God will either deliver us here or bring us into the continuation of LIFE. 1st Peter 1:3-5 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Reservations here; restaurant, hotel, or any other reservation can be broken. This reservation is incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away and CANNOT be broken.

Day 8

The flesh screams at us for its own way; me, I, entitlements, and the list goes on. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

Our born-again spirit wants so much to give the Holy Spirit reign in our lives. But there is this flesh, the part of us that is not born-again, the will, the mind, and the emotions. This part of us wants its own way. Paul went on to say in his letter to the Galatians, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

This victory over the flesh does not come by will power. We can't grit our teeth hard enough or make enough resolutions to overcome the flesh. Overcoming the flesh comes as a work of the Holy Spirit in us as we "feed" ourselves on the things of God. James said, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." This literally says that when we receive the Word of God as part of our lives, our mind, will, and emotions will be moved from one place to another. From giving in to flesh to giving the Holy Spirit reign.

Day 9

The devil, slew foot, dragon, evil one, enemy, and so on. Many names have been given to one that gets entirely too much "credit" for evil things. Most of the time our problem is not the devil. James said in James 1:14, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed."

Jesus overcame the devil in every situation, then gave us the victory. Romans 8:37 says, "Yet in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through Him who loved us." We are "more than conquerors" because Jesus fought the battle, then gave us the rewards of His conquest. James told us in chapter 4 verse 7, "Therefore submit to God. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you." The key to this verse is "submit to God." Listen to what Paul said in Colossians 2:15, "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."

In 1st Peter 5:8 Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." "May" means to give permission; don't give permission to the devil. He is defeated and can just roar, not bite; he is toothless.

Day 10

The "law" refers to a set of rules that people try to follow with the intent to become "right" with God. Sometimes it is the Mosaic laws, sometimes church laws, sometimes laws that are imposed by others. No matter which law, the result is always the same, failure and condemnation.

Paul gives us a wonderful revelation in Romans 8:1, "*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." To walk, or live, according to the flesh means to live in our own efforts to gain "no condemnation."

Think of the law as a mirror. The mirror cannot fix whatever is wrong, it just reveals it. Jesus "fixed" what was wrong with His substitutionary death on the cross and His resurrection. Romans 7:6 says, "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

Yes, we are not under the "law", but we are not lawless. That is, we don't allow ourselves to rule. We are under the law of the Spirit of Life. Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." We are living in the loving governorship of the Holy Spirit. Give Him full control.

Day 11

One of the fiercest battles many Christian's face is the assurance of their salvation. "Terrorist" preachers and well-meaning believers tend to tell us how sinful we are because we don't live up to their demands.

William Cowper was an eighteenth-century poet and songwriter who faced this same trial. He had listened to someone teach that some were predestined to be saved, and some were not. Mr. Cowper was convinced that he was not in the group to be saved. From this erroneous teaching, he went into deep depression even to the point of trying to take his life on several occasions. He finally was enlightened to the truth of “whosoever will, let him come. He then wrote one of the most beautiful songs that has ever been written. The fourth verse of *There Is a Fountain* says, “E’er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die: And shall be till I die, And shall be till I die; Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die.”

May this be your song; “Redeeming love is my theme, and shall be till I die.”

Day 12

Continuing with victory in our relationship with the Lord. Colossians 2:8-10 says, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” Wow, we are complete in Him.

Don’t let anyone, tradition, ungodly philosophy, or anything else rob you of resting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Paul was so adamant about this that he told the Galatians “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (1:8&9).

Referring to someone, or ourselves, as a “good” Christian implies we had something to do with it. We are complete “in Him.” If someone is a “good” Christian, does that mean that some are “bad” Christians? We are all “saved by grace through faith.”

Day 13

Transitioning from “law” thinking to “grace” thinking is sometimes difficult. That’s why Peter said, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,” (2nd Peter 1:2). I like the way the Amplified Bible says it, “Grace and peace [that special sense of spiritual well-being] be multiplied to you in the [true, intimate] knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, as we continue in the Word of God, we realize the grace of God more.

Sunflowers are beautiful flowers that start off as tiny sprouts. The reason sunflowers are called sunflowers is because they follow the sun. The sun rises in the east, the young sunflower will point east. The sun sets in the west, and the young sunflower will point west. These flowers throw off a lot of seeds. They are productive because they are always looking for the sun. They always locate the s-u-n, and because they are looking for the s-u-n, they’re always growing. When you and I look for the S-o-n, like the sunflower looks for the s-u-n, then we find the effects of His rays softening our hearts so we can throw off new seed, new life. It is our response to the Word that determines our growth and productivity.

Day 14

I read a story about a guy that had always wanted to go on a cruise. He saved up the necessary money and bought the ticket. Not having enough money for food, he filled one of suitcases with cheese and crackers. He so enjoyed the cruise, sitting on the deck watching the whales and dolphins, walking around conversing with other passengers, and just relaxing. Every day he would walk by the dining room and see people enjoying steak, lobster, and other fine cuisine. When he was disembarking from the ship the captain stopped him. "Did you enjoy your trip" the captain asked. "Oh yes, I enjoyed it very much" responded the passenger. "I was just wondering" said the captain, "have we done something to offend you?" "No, not at all, why do you ask?" "

"Well," the captain said, "we noticed you seeing us enjoying our meals in the dining room, but you never joined us." The guy responded, "Oh no, I just had enough money for the ticket, and not enough for the meals." "I am so sorry" the captain said, "the meals were included in the price of the ticket."

How many Christians think that the only thing for them is heaven when they die and don't know the full package includes abundant life here.

1st Timothy 6:17, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy."

Day 15

One Christmas Pam and I bought bicycles for our children. The bad news is, they came in a box and had to be assembled. After several hours of frustration, I thought maybe I should read the manual that came with the bikes. After all, the people who wrote the manual probably knew more about putting the bikes together than I. Sure enough, on Christmas morning they were ready.

Our heavenly Father desires us to have good lives. He probably knows more about how to achieve this than we do. That's why He gave us a "manual", it is called the Bible. 2nd Peter 1:3 says, "as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,"

Day 16

As a young boy, my friends and I (Gary, Freddy, CB, and Danny, and sometimes others) used to swim in the Kanawha river. Sometimes we would swim to the other side. The problem was the river has a very strong current. We would have to mark a spot on the other side and swim to it. Otherwise, we would end up several yards downstream.

Philippians 3:13 says, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,"

Father wants us to have the nature of Jesus. The purpose is to enjoy greater fellowship with Him. In order for us to have the nature of Jesus we have to be transformed. This beautiful, wonderful, transformation occurs when we keep our eyes on Him, when we "mark the spot" and swim toward it/Him. If we don't "mark the spot" we will end up off course.

The "spot" is Jesus. As we invest time in prayer, meditation on truth, and the Word of God the Holy Spirit does this glorious work of transformation.

Day 17

I read a story of a young boy who came home from school and as he walked into the house the smell of spaghetti sauce filled the home. As he walked closer to the kitchen, the aroma became stronger. He went to the stove and took the lid off of the pot and asked his mother, “where’s the mushrooms?” “They’re in the sauce” she said. He then asked, “where’s the tomatoes?” “They’re in there,” she said. “Where’s the meat” he wanted to know. “It’s in there” she answered. “Everything you want is already in the sauce” his mother assured him.

Colossians 2:9 in the NLT says, “For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.” Do we want God, righteousness, abundant life, peace, joy, etc. These are all in Christ. Here’s the good news—^{1st} Corinthians 1:30 NIV, “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” It’s all in Him.

Day 18

A USS battleship was navigating through a strong fog. The captain saw a light ahead just as the radio sounded. The radio voice said, “please alter your course by 10 degrees to avoid a collision. The captain told the voice to alter his course. The radio voice came on again, “you must alter your course 10 degrees to avert a collision.” The captain responded, “this is the captain of a USS battleship, you alter your course by 10 degrees.” The voice came on again, “this is the lighthouse, you do what you want.”

Several years ago, I bought a car from my good friend Max Gibson. Maxie had put a bumper sticker on the car that said, “If you feel far from God, guess who moved.”

Father has a wonderful plan for our lives. It is a plan with peace and joy. Sometimes we don’t experience what God has for us; guess who moved.

Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Day 19

Most people enjoy being blessed. Blessed with a gift, blessed with a compliment, or blessed with a vacation, etc. Sometimes we focus more on the blessing than on the source.

I read a story about a young man that took his girlfriend out for dinner and when they sat down, he laid an elaborate box on the table for her birthday. All the while they were eating dinner, she just kept thinking about this box, because it was a big box, and she wanted to know what was inside. She could hardly eat. The waiting to open the gift was on her mind, but her boyfriend told her to open the gift after dinner. All she could think about was the box.

Finally, dinner was over. “Can I open the box now?” “Yeah, you can open the box.” She opened the box and pulled out a pillow. “Oh, wow, I mean, this is a nice pillow...but it’s a pillow.” She turned the pillow over, thinking that something was taped on the backside. There was nothing.

“Well, thank you.” It was obvious she was disappointed that she got a pillow. Her boyfriend got up, took the pillow from her, and laid the pillow on the floor. He got down on one knee, took her by the hand, and said, “Will you marry me?” She forgot about the pillow. The one who gave her the pillow now became a lot more important.

Deuteronomy 8:18, "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day."

Day 20

God had brought the children of Israel out of bondage with a "strong right arm." Generation after generation, the Israelites would forget that it was God who brought them out. He said, through Moses, in Deuteronomy 4:9, "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,"

Father wants to help us, deliver us, save us, keep us, bless us, and walk with us. While God wants us to enjoy His blessings, let us never forget that it is God who does all of this. Going ever further, let's teach our children that God is always the source.

Day 21

Approximately 750 years before Jesus was born, the children of Israel were going through a hard time. In Isaiah 49:14 they cried out, "But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me.'" Listen to the Lord's reply in Isaiah 49:15&16, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. 16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me."

Don't ever think that the good times of your life are behind you. Father knows where you are and what you are going through. He will give you peace in the midst of the storm and He will give you direction. Never, never, never lose hope.

Hebrews 6:19, "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,"

Day 22

Thinking of blessings. One of the greatest blessings we have is hope. King David went through a lot of struggles. Some of his own making, and some from friends and family that he did not cause. On at least three occasions he cried, "Why are you cast down oh my soul."

To be "cast down" is a shepherding understanding. It meant to be utterly helpless and dependent upon someone for deliverance. In the midst of his despair he uttered, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him."

We don't praise God with the motivation of getting out of being cast down or upset; we praise because we know somehow, someday, He will deliver us.

An old song says, "*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*"

Psalms 42:5, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him *For* the help of His countenance."

Day 23

Psalms 103:2 says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:"

William Randolph Hearst, the great publisher, read about a painting and became greatly interested in it. Desperately desiring to own the painting, he sent his people all over the world to try to locate the painting, but they couldn't find it anywhere. A year later, out of the blue, one of his employees came to him and told him that the painting had at last been found. Hearst, excited about the discovery, asked where it had been all this time. His employee said, "It was in your basement. You've owned it all the time." Mr. Hearst had never read the ledger that had a record of everything he owned. He did not understand the wealth that he already possessed. Many believers operate their lives never fully understanding all of the benefits that are available to them in Christ.

Day 24

Dr. Mark D. Hanby wrote a song for praise and worship about what the Lord has done. The first verse says, *"Look what the Lord has done, Look what the Lord has done. He healed my body, He touched my mind He saved me just in time. I'm gonna praise His name, each day He's just the same Come on and praise Him, look what the Lord has done."*

One of the truths to this song is, "each day He's just the same." In the closing book of the Old Testament, Malachi, God says, "For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;" (Malachi 3:6).

While we experience many ups and downs of life, God does not change. We can count on this. We can live our lives based on this truth. "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine..."

Day 25

"Oh Lord, my God When I, in awesome wonder Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made. I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder Thy power throughout the universe displayed."

What human can measure the universe? What human can count the stars? There are approximately 8 billion people on the earth today. With all of this, Jesus said, in Matthew 6:26, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

In all of the vastness of the universe, we are but a tiny speck. Yet the Father of Lights, the Creator, desires for us to experience victory in every area of our lives. Expect it, experience it, enjoy it.

Day 26

In 2nd Chronicles 20:21-24 there is a great story about God's people experiencing complete victory, "After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the LORD and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: NLT "Give thanks to the LORD; his faithful love endures forever!" 22 At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the LORD caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves. 23 The armies of Moab and Ammon turned against their allies from Mount Seir and killed every one of them. After they had destroyed the army of Seir, they began attacking each other. 24 So when the army of Judah arrived at the lookout point in the wilderness, all they saw were dead bodies lying on the ground as far as they could see. Not a single one of the enemy had escaped."

What a great event; God's people experiencing victory without a physical weapon. At first glance, it would seem victory came simply by praising the Lord. However, we must also look at verse 20, "Early the next morning the army of Judah went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. On the way Jehoshaphat stopped and said, "Listen to me, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem! **Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be able to stand firm.** Believe in his prophets, and you will succeed."

It was their faith in God that caused them to experience victory. They praised because their faith was in God's power for their victory.

Day 27

A few years we took our son Neil and one of his friends to a wrestling event in Charleston, WV. We saw the Nature Boy Ric Flair defeat Dusty Rhodes. It was a fun night.

Pro wrestling is staged and, to many, very enjoyable. Before the wrestlers ever go out, it has been predetermined who will win. The contenders go through the battle for entertainment purposes, but the point of the battle is not to decide who will win but to give the crowd a show. The winner of the match does not battle for victory, but from victory. He battles knowing that he's already won.

Those who come to Jesus Christ have already won. God allows us to go through our Christian walk, not to win the victory but to show off to the world that He that is in us is greater than He that is in the world (1st John 4:4)

Day 28

I have a plaque in my home office with Isaiah 40:31 inscribed on it. The verse says, "But those who wait on 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." I have it as a constant reminder of one of the promises of God.

The word "wait" literally means to interlace or become one with the Lord. This verse tells us that because we are one with the Lord, we have exchanged our limited strength for God's unlimited strength.

John 17:21&22 says, "that they all may be **one**, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be **one** in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be **one** just as We are **one**:"

Because we are joined by blood, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have His strength, His ability to do and be all that He says. Time to rejoice in the Lord.

Day 29

Looking again at Isaiah 40:31, "...They shall mount up with wings like eagles..."

One enemy of the eagle is the crow. The only bird that dares to peck an eagle is the crow. The crow sits on the eagle's back and bites his neck. The eagle does not respond nor fights with the crow. The eagle doesn't fight the crow, he just begins to climb up in elevation. An eagle can comfortably reach 10,000 feet while crows top out at about 7,000. Any higher than that, and crows get dizzy and faint because they don't have the eagles' lung capacity to breathe at those heights.

This is a key to victory for us. When an enemy, the world, the flesh, the devil, or the law, begins to badger us, we just soar in our oneness with the Lord.

2nd Corinthians 10:4&5, “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”

Day 30

Remaining in Isaiah 40:31, “...They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”

Anyone that has ever ran very far can attest to becoming tired, even to the point of fainting. The literal understanding of this is; when we live in our oneness with the Lord and His strength, we will run “without breaking a sweat” and walk without “throwing in the towel or quitting.” You see, we are not living in our strength, we are living in His.

Isaiah 40:28&29, “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.”

Day 31

There are many instances of God providing victory for His people. David and Goliath, Jehoshaphat, and Gideon, just to name a few.

One of the greatest victories was when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Pharoah’s army with his mighty chariots were behind them and the Red Sea was in front of them. Seemingly, there was no way out. But God, but God, but God had a different plan. This is recorded in Exodus 14:14, “The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

God has different means for victory. Sometimes it’s “stand still.” Sometimes it’s “sling a stone.” And sometimes it’s “break the pitchers and shout.” There is no set example for the means of victory. The good news is the source is always the same; God.

When we get into situations with seemingly no way out, listen for God’s direction and do it. Sometimes it’s doing nothing, sometimes it’s not. However, expect God to give the victory.

AUGUST

Day 1

Let’s think about hope. Hope has been defined as “Hope is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one’s life or the world at large. “

In the Bible hope is understood as “the happy anticipation of good.”

To lose hope causes one to be in despair. The book of Proverbs describes loss of hope as being sick in the heart. Proverbs 13:12, “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.”

Many lose hope as a result of setbacks in life: loss of a loved one, job loss, rejection, disappointment, etc. All of us have experienced these. The question is, why do some become heartsick, and some do not? All of us process things differently and our lives have been shaped by different experiences. None of us should “throw stones” at others. We are to encourage and be patient with others. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Day 2

Continuing with “hope.” Hope is so vital to a Christian that the writer of Hebrews says it is an “anchor for the soul.” Hebrews 6:19, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,” The soul is the seat of our being.

Dr. Luke wrote in Acts 2:26 NLT, “No wonder my heart is glad, and my tongue shouts his praises! My body rests in hope.” Hope makes a glad heart and gives us exuberant praise.

1st Peter 1:3 in the Amplified Bible says, “Blessed [gratefully praised and adored] be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant *and* boundless mercy has caused us to be born again [that is, to be reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] to an ever-living hope *and* confident assurance through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” We can have an ever-living hope. That is, because Jesus was raised from the dead, we can have hope now, in this life, through all of the struggles and disappointments, whatever life throws at us.

Day 3

More on hope. The big question is, how do we get hope and keep it?

Yes, there are many disappointments in life. We can choose to focus and meditate on the struggles, or we can meditate on what the Bible says. When our expectations and hopes are based on others, jobs, being treated as we think we should, there will be disappointments.

The scriptures teach again and again that our hope is based on God, Who is a God of hope. Romans 15:13 says, “Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Write this scripture down and put in a place where you can see it often—Hebrews 6:18 NIV, “God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.”

When life doesn’t turn out as we expected, maybe God has a better plan. Where the NIV, in the above reference, says “greatly encouraged,” the KJV and the NKJV say “strong consolation.” Be encouraged, be consoled or refreshed and comforted, the God of hope will give you peace and direction.

Day 4

One more thought on hope (at least one more, maybe more).

We never want to minimize the struggles of others. We do, however, want to maximize the God of His Word.

Father has given us a powerful resource when He created the mind. The ability to think and meditate. He has even instructed us as to what to meditate on.

Philippians 4:8&9, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” He says that God is a God of Peace. He also instructed us to “do” these things. What things? Meditate on the things of God in verse 8.

Our mind sometimes gets bombarded with things that are not of God. In 2nd Corinthians 10:5 Paul gives us a key to victory, “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” Whatever “exalts itself” above what God says is to be cast down. HOW???? By consistently and constantly filling ourselves with the Word.

Here are some suggestions: 1) Write scriptures of hope and promises on “post-it notes” and place them in prominent places. 2) Surround yourself with people of Biblical hope. 3) Be a part of a body of believers (church) that will teach and share the truth about God (that He is a God of hope.” 4) Be faithful in the reading of the Word of the God of Hope.

Day 5

We all love Thanksgiving, the holiday. Yes, we are thankful every day. But every fourth Thursday of November we enjoy the holiday of Thanksgiving.

In most homes there is a big meal. Usually, turkey is on the table along with ham and, of course, sweet potato casserole. There is a lot of bustling about in the kitchen and dining room until finally the call, “It’s ready.”

Being “ready” is very important in all phases of life. Ready for the day, whether it’s school, work, or some other activity.

The most important readiness is to meet God. In Revelation 19:7 John writes, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

Being “ready” is not a matter of doing the quota of good works or stopping the action of bad works. Being ready is trusting Jesus, and Him only, for our forgiveness of sin and sins. Believing and receiving Jesus’s finished work on the cross of Calvary. If you have done this, rest in your readiness.

Day 6

God has also called and anointed us for good works. The second most disrespectful thing in the Body of Christ is for the minister to be ready to share what the Holy Spirit has given him and the congregation to not be ready to receive. The MOST disrespectful thing is for the congregation to be ready, and the minister is not; he hasn’t prepared and is not ready.

This is not just for ministers. Whatever service that Father wants us to do, we must prepare and be ready. Whether it’s the “leader” of the gathering, the singers, the Sunday school teachers, or service in everyday life. There is the absolute necessity of being ready. In Titus 3:1, Paul said, “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be **ready** for every good work.”

The servant is to prepare in prayer, the Word of God, and the heart. When the “conductor” points his baton at us, we are ready.

Day 7

Paul wrote to young pastor Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2nd Timothy 4:2). The NET (New English Translation) says it this way, “Preach the message, be ready whether it is convenient or not, reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and instruction.”

Although Paul was talking to Timothy about preaching, this applies to all of us; “be ready, whether it is convenient or not...” The difference between serving when it is convenient and not serving when it is convenient is a matter of the heart. Those with a servant’s heart will be ready to serve with joy “unto the Lord” while those simply doing “servant” things will be inconvenienced.

Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to give us a servant’s heart.

Day 8

There are thousands of books written about leadership; how to be a leader, responsibilities of leaders, being respected as leaders, and on and on.

There are leadership conferences all over the world by the hundreds each year teaching the same things.

I did a quick search on the internet and found hundreds of books on leading. Sadly, there were very few on serving.

Yet, the Bible speaks a lot more about serving than leading.

Jesus said, in John 13:16&17, “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

Day 9

Time, Talent, and Treasure. These are three things that we all have.

Someone has said that a day is like 24 boxcars. We have all seen boxcars; those big things traveling on the railroad tracks. Anyway, each boxcar represents an hour. It is up to us what we load into the boxcar. Of course, we will invest eight hours into sleeping (hopefully). The next 16 is up to us. We can fill each box car with junk, or we can fill each hour with things of value. The result of what we have “loaded” will manifest in the other hours (boxcars).

Let’s determine to fill our boxcars primarily with things that will produce positive results.

Day 10

How about talent. No, most of us will never earn a good living by singing or playing a musical instrument. However, God has given each of us an ability to accomplish great things in this life.

Sometimes we feel like our talent is insignificant. Please read Exodus the 17th chapter. It is the story of Israel in battle with the Amalekites. Moses, Aaron, Hur, and Joshua are the only names mentioned. But

there were hundreds of unnamed soldiers battling. Without these unnamed soldiers, there would have been no one fighting the battle.

It is reported that Billy Graham was responsible for over 3 million people coming to Jesus as Savior. Most of us have never heard of Mordecai Ham. Mr. Ham is the one who led Billy Graham to the Lord.

As Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary) (1st Corinthians 12:22).

No talent that God has given is insignificant.

Day 11

Next, we come to treasure. My wife, Pam, loves to go to yard sales and thrift stores. When she comes home, she will say, "come and see all the treasures that I found." One person's junk is another person's treasure.

We often equate treasure with wealth. Think about this, we are all wealthy to some degree. The only necessities in life are food, clothing, and shelter. Anything above that is wealth. Some possess billions of dollars over these necessities, and some have one dollar above. What we do with our wealth is up to us.

In 1st Timothy 6:8 Paul said, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain." Then, in verse 10 he told us what hinders godliness (Godliness being defined as consistently living out the character of God), "...the love of money..."

Many insist that they do not love money. If our lifestyles are such that we cannot give priority to giving to God, we love money. If we indebted ourselves to the point that we cannot give priority to giving to God, we love money. If, when increase comes (payday) and we think, "If I give to God, I won't be able to...., then we love money.

Let's arrange our lives so that God gets priority over our Time, Talent, and Treasure.

Day 12

For this day let's look at a story concerning the power of the mind and fear. This story is supposed to be true.

"Some time ago a man got trapped in a boxcar. He worked in a boxcar and didn't realize that somebody, the other workman, was coming by. As he worked inside the boxcar, another workman came by and - not realizing this gentleman was inside - rolled the door, shut it, latched and locked from the outside. The man on the inside knew about boxcars - he worked on them all the time. He knew that this door was locked now until the next day when the workman comes to open it and load the car for shipment. He also knew that if nobody came before tomorrow to open up to get him out of there, he would be dead before the next day when it would ordinarily be open. The reason he would be dead is because that was a refrigerator boxcar, and on the top of the boxcar was a refrigeration unit blowing cold air into that thing.

Now it is sealed, it is closed. The temperature started to lower and before anybody would come, he's convinced he would be dead. He panicked, as many of us would if we believed we are now trapped inside a boxcar that is going to kill us. He began to scream, scratch and kick the door trying to get out. He tried to get up to the ceiling trying to get that thing shut off, or some way to find the way out. There was

no way out. The unit was running, and the door was locked. In frustration and exhaustion, he dropped to the floor of the car.

The reason we know as much as we do about the situation inside is that at this point, he reached and pulled out a pen and started to write some thoughts on the floor of the boxcar. He wrote some things about family and various things I guess you and I would write if we were trapped in that situation. But throughout his writing were several key phrases. The first one was: "It's getting so cold inside." A little later on he wrote: "My hands are turning numb it is so cold." A little bit later on he wrote: "If I could just go to sleep." That's the last thing the person does before they freeze to death. And the last phrase was "These may well be my last words" - and the writing trailed off.

The next day workmen came opening up cars to inspect them for a loading that particular day. Workmen came, grabbed the lock on the outside, rolled the door back and saw the body of the dead man on the floor of that boxcar. The authorities were called, the body was taken, and autopsy performed because of the strange circumstances surrounding that incident. Under autopsy every physical sign of his body said he froze to death. What he did not know however is that the refrigeration unit on top of that boxcar was broken and only the fan was blowing the air. It was not subzero air being pumped into that car; it was outside air simply being circulated. He did not suffocate.

The temperature outside that night never dropped below fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit. He did not freeze to death - he killed himself by the power of his mind and fear."

Day 13

Jesus' first public sermon is found in Luke, chapter four verse 18, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;"

Let's take a few days to look at this wonderful sermon. For reference, Jesus was quoting Isaiah 61:1&2. Isaiah gives a lot more than does Luke, so I encourage you to read both.

Jesus starts His message by declaring that the Spirit of the Lord has given Him power and His presence to preach good news to the poor. The poor here is not referring to impoverished people but rather to those who are apathetic or hopeless.

There are several previous devotions concerning hope. Let it suffice to say that Jesus wants us to have and has provided the means for hope to His people.

Day 14

Jesus next dealt with "healing the brokenhearted." The Greek word Jesus used for brokenhearted was actually a phrase that meant to "fill in the gap." In other words, whatever has caused us to be brokenhearted, Jesus will fill in that gap.

Many experiences can cause us to be brokenhearted. Loss, disappointment, unfulfilled expectations, etc. The good news is, a consistent, thriving relationship with Jesus will heal or fill in that gap; that place that should be there to take away the disappointment.

Talk to Him. Tell Him your fears. Tell Him your disappointments. Talk to Him about your anger. He won't "fall off the throne" and He won't stop loving you. It is only by facing head on the cause of broken heartedness that we can be healed. Go ahead, throw something, yell something, get it all out. When we are empty, Jesus will fill us.

Day 15

"Deliverance to the captives." What has captured us? We immediately think of drugs, alcohol, or sex. How about stress, our limitations, or even expectations of others that have been put upon us. The list goes on and on.

Yes, Jesus will heal the drug addict or the alcoholic. Sometimes it takes rehab and counseling, but He will heal us.

He also has the answer for the other things that have captured us. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30 in the Message Bible says, "...Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Too good to be true. No! This is reality and the desire of Jesus. Sometimes, most of the time actually, it takes a while to form this relationship. Don't give up. Jesus wants us delivered.

Day 16

Next Jesus talked about "recovering of sight to the blind." Yes, He will heal the literally blind. However, in this verse He is talking about those blind to truth.

The truth is, Jesus has paid the complete and awful penalty for OUR sin, and sins. The hinderance to truth is what we have perceived in our minds. Paul said in 2nd Corinthians 4:5, "whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." He went on to say in verse 6, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Let us fill our minds with Truth and experience the work of the Holy Spirit as He brings light into our lives.

Day 17

The final declaration of Jesus in Luke 4:18 is, "To set at liberty those who are oppressed;"

Oppression is a terrible experience. This is referring to the hurts many have experienced at the hands of others. Or even hurt by situations or circumstances. There is a beautiful story of the love of Jesus found in John chapter four. It is the story of "the woman at the well." This woman was a Samaritan, the outcast of society. She was also a five-time divorcee and was now "shacking up." She was drawing water at noon, the heat of the day, because no one would be there to ridicule her. Jesus promised her "living water" that would quench the thirst of her soul, the place of her hurt.

Praise God, there are no hurts that Jesus cannot heal. There is no sin that He won't forgive. Jesus told the woman who was caught "in the very act of adultery", "neither do I condemn you."

Be free, confess to Jesus the hurt, the sin, the failure, the inadequacy and experience the freedom of a relationship with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Day 18

Hebrews 6:18 gives us a wonderful, foundational promise; something we can stake our lives on, "that by two immutable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie**, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Impossible!

In 2nd Samuel 7:12-17 God gave David a wonderful promise. He said, even though there would be failure, there would always be someone sitting on the throne. Skip ahead 53 years and Solomon has failed. However, in 1st Kings 7:12 God said, "For David, my servant's sake..." 86 years later Abijam failed, but in 1st Kings 15:4, "Nevertheless, for David's sake..." In 2nd Kings 8, 156 years later, Jehoram failed but in verse 19, "For David's his servant's sake." Now go ahead 313 years since the promise. 2nd Kings 19:34, "for my servant David's sake."

Now skip 3000 years to Matthew 21:9 when Jesus comes riding upon the colt, "Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the **Son of David!** 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" Only this time, God didn't have mercy on Jesus, He had mercy on us for the "sake of Jesus, Son of David."

We can depend on God.

Day 19

Many of us become frustrated with ourselves because of continuous flaws in our character. We grit our teeth and promise to do better. We hear sermons on how we are supposed to act. Think about this, if we meet all of the list people make on how Christians should act, but don't have an inward change, it's just an act.

Here's the good news. The Holy Spirit will change us on the inside so we will be like Jesus in character. 2nd Corinthians 3:18, in the NLT, says, "So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."

Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote a beautiful song entitled *He's Still Working On Me*. Some of the lyrics say, *He's still working on me To make me what I need to be It took him just a week to make the moon and stars The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars How loving and patient He must be 'Cause He's still workin' on me There really ought to be a sign upon my heart Don't judge him yet, there's an unfinished part But I'll be better just according to His plan Fashioned by the Master's loving hands*

Don't get frustrated, you are not yet what you are going to be.

Day 20

So, just what is character? What are we being transformed into?

Legendary basketball coach John Wooden famously said, “Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.” Character is not putting on an act, it is who we are, who we are when no one is watching.

Because we are being transformed into the character of Jesus, let’s look at what He did when no one was around.

1st John 2:16 describes three of the temptations of all humans, “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

When Jesus was alone, in the wilderness being tempted by the devil, He faced all three of these. Please read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. No one was around. He could have given in to temptation. Who would have known? He responded to all three with, “it is written.” Jesus invested time in fellowshiping with His Father; out of the fellowship came victory. It was His nature, or character, that rose up when alone and resulted in victory. This is what the Holy Spirit does in us as we fellowship with our Father in prayer, worship, and study of His Word.

Day 21

When Jesus was hanging on the cross, beaten by people that He had loved, betrayed by one that He had invested three years in discipling, denied by the one He called “the Rock”, lied about the ones He had brought truth and the offering of abundant life, He responded by saying, “Father, do not charge them with this sin.”

Yes, He was surrounded by a multitude but in essence He was alone. Even His Father seemingly had forsaken Him. Where did He find the love to forgive? It was in His character. It was not an act, it was who He was.

This strength of character came from valuable time with His Father. Matthew 14:23 says, “And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.”

This is what the Holy Spirit does in us as we fellowship with our Father in prayer, worship, and study of His Word.

Day 22

In Matthew 26:36-46 we read of the greatest trial that Jesus faced; the garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane means “the press” or “the wine press.” The wine press is where tremendous pressure is put on grapes to produce wine.

Jesus was under so much pressure that “His sweat became as great drops of blood.” His veins in His head literally burst and blood flowed out.

In this time of pressure, intense pressure, Jesus sought the will of the Father. His character was selfless. His nature was one of submission to the Father regardless of the outcome. “Our salvation was bought on Calvary but was wrought in Gethsemane. If the trial, torture, abandonment, and the cross would have been worse (if indeed it could have been) Jesus would have endured it all. He was totally given to the Father’s will for His life. This was not an act; it was who He was.

This is what the Holy Spirit does in us as we fellowship with our Father in prayer, worship, and study of His Word.

Day 23

"The rain came down and the floods came up, The rain came down and the floods came up, The rain came down and the floods came up, And the house on the rock stood firm."

Most of us learned this song when we were children in Sunday school. We hear the children singing it on Sunday mornings. This song is based on a teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 7:24-27.

How important is building our lives on the rock, the rock of truth? Psalms 11:3 says, "If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?"

There is a story of a farmer who owned several acres of land. The land was bounded on the South by creek, the West by the big boulder, the East by the old oak tree, and on the North by the woods. The farmer died and left the land to his son. The son died and left the land to his son, and so on. The land was never surveyed. After a period of time the creek dried up, the boulder eroded, the tree was struck by lightning, and the woods caught fire and were destroyed. The neighboring owners began to encroach upon the property. Because there were never any official boundaries, not much could be done. The owners lost much of their land.

To not have a foundation of the truth of God's Word, we will be encroached upon by false teachings and soon will lose the "rock" of our foundation.

Day 24

Thinking of foundations, we look at Isaiah 28:16, "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation..."

A few years ago, a friend of mine built a house. He was a good mason and laid the foundation himself. He actually built the complete house himself. He lived in the house for a short period and sold it. Not long after the house caught fire and was destroyed. My friend bought the house back and built another house on the foundation. He knew the foundation was good because he had built it, it was a sure foundation.

Our "sure foundation" is Jesus. But what about Jesus is sure? He was born of a virgin (He did not inherit sin from Adam), He lived a sinless, spotless life (He fulfilled all of the requirements of the Mosaic law), He died on the cross of Calvary (He became sin for us, making us the righteousness of God in Christ), He arose from the dead (assuring us of Life forever) and ascended into heaven (He then sent the Comforter, the promised Holy Spirit to abide in us).

Yes, we may get a few windows broken, a storm might even blow the roof off, or a fire might destroy the structure; but because our foundation of Jesus is Sure, we will not be destroyed.

Day 25

"What have I to dread, what have I to fear Leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near Leaning on the everlasting arms. Leaning, leaning Safe and secure from all alarms. Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms."

What a beautiful old hymn. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Man may persecute, ridicule, or imprison us. We may be separated from loved ones. There is a possibility that sickness may ravage our bodies. There is one thing that no one or no thing can touch—our peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Day 26

We have found a happy place. No, it's not the beach, although we enjoy the beach. It's not the mountains, we enjoy them too. It's wherever we are.

Paul said in Philippians 4:11, while in jail, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content." Our happy place is not where we are, it's where Jesus is. "Christ in us, the hope of Glory."

Is our happy place dependent on our physical location? Or our circumstances? On the latest and greatest toy?

We are learning that "in whatever state" we are in, to be content.

Day 27

A few years ago, we were trying to lead a church that was decreasing each week by 10 or 20 people. When "the dust settled" we had decreased by over 400 people. We still had over twenty thousand square feet of buildings and 9 acres of property to maintain. We also had a lot of debt and a big monthly financial budget to meet. I was having sleepless nights and stressing every day. While sharing this with a friend he gave me a soft and loving rebuke, which was a tremendously freeing revelation. He said, "If all the rest of the people leave, and this property goes back to the bank, what's that got to do with you and Jesus?" Wow! It didn't sink in at first, but the more I thought about it, the "truer" it became.

Romans 8:38&39 in the NLT says, "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Going back to the old hymn, *"what have I to fear, what have I to dread, leaning on the everlasting arms."*

Day 28

Heard a story of a pastor who was bi-vocational; he was farmer. A man came to him one day and said, "Preacher, I want to try the Christian thing out." The pastor/farmer said, "Great, let's go down to the hog pen and pray." The man said, "What, I ain't goin' to no hog pen." The pastor said, "Well, that's where we need to go." A week later the man came back and said again, "Preacher, I want to try this Christian thing out." The pastor said again, "Fantastic, let's go to the hog pen." The man said, "I told you I ain't goin' to no hog pen." A couple of weeks passed, and the man came back. He said, "Preacher, I want to be a Christian." The Pastor said, "Good, let's go to the hog pen." The man said, "Let's go." The pastor said, "We don't have to now."

Here's the moral of the story. How much do we want a relationship with Jesus? Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

Day 29

Someone has said, "The best way to make God laugh is to tell Him our plans."

There is a great event recorded in Genesis chapter 6. This is where God told Noah to build the ark. God told Noah the material to use, the size of the ark, who and what were to occupy the ark, and so on. There is one thing that we would say is missing concerning the ark; the rudder. There was no rudder, nothing to steer the ark with. Why? Because God was guiding the ark.

Jesus gave us the greatest example in John 5:19, "Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."

Let's allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and experience the greatest life of peace and productivity.

Day 30

In 2nd Corinthians 4:8&9 Paul tells us something about his life that we all can relate, "We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."

Let's look at this in our life. We have life's pressure, but we are not crushed. We are without a means of resources, but we have hope. There are people trying to stop our progress, but we have the Holy Spirit giving us His ability. We have no strength within ourselves, but we have the Life of God.

How could Paul say this? How can we say this? The answer is in 2nd Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." The NLT says it this way, "We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves."

Day 31

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus is the author of our faith; He gave us faith (Romans 12:3). He is also the finisher of our faith (Philippians 1:6).

We have steps in our house. As our grandchildren were just learning to walk, they would hold my hand as we walked down the steps. They were not safe and secure because they were holding my hand, they were safe and secure because I was holding their hand. God has us in His grip and He won't let go.

John 10:28, "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."

"Neighbors are kind, I love them everyone. We get along in sweet accord. But when my soul, needs manner from above Where could I go but to the Lord?"

SEPTEMBER

Day 1

Sovereignty has been defined as supreme power and authority. In the Old Testament, God kept reminding His people that the wood they were carving and stones they were shaping to be their gods could never create; Only He could create.

We must never lose the fact of God's sovereignty, His supreme power and authority. We are human, not divine. We are the created, not the creators.

When we were born-again, we entered into the realm of God, God did not enter our realm. He sent Jesus to enter into our realm so we could enter into His.

We don't tell God what to do, He tells us what to do. We are His, bought with the price of the death of His Son.

1st Peter 1:23-25, "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."

Day 2

If God is sovereign, and He is. If God is the creator, and He is, why would humans want to tell Him what to do?

If God has a plan for us, and He does. If God knows the beginning from the ending, and He does. Why would humans want to make their own plan for life?

We can experience complete rest by trusting and following God's plan for our lives. By following God's plan, we can achieve maximum effectiveness with minimum weariness.

1st Corinthians 2:9-12, "But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God."**

Day 3

King David said in Psalms 37:23 NLT, "The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives."

Wow, God really cares about the details of our lives. He cares about what car we buy, what furniture we buy, what vacations we take, our hobbies, our friends, our families, every detail.

He not only cares, but He also “directs our steps.” He will help us buy the correct car, take the best vacations, enjoy the hobbies we have, select our friends, and even bless our families.

Jeremiah 29:11 NLT, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Day 4

The traditional writing of ancient Egypt was in hieroglyphics. This had thousands of characters with each symbol representing an idea or word. In 1799 French soldiers discovered a mysterious black rock buried in the sand near Alexandria, Egypt. This is called the “Rosetta Stone.” The Rosetta Stone translated an edict issued by the Greek authorities to the Egyptian population. It was written in Hieroglyphics and Greek. The Rosetta Stone was the “key” in understanding the ancient Egyptians.

We have a “key” in understanding the Bible. 1st Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Along with 2nd Peter 1:20, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,”

These two scriptures are the “key” to understanding scripture. Sit down to study with a prayerful heart and mind and compare scripture with scripture.

Day 5

As we travel through life with the expectancy of victory there are some decisions to make, decisions for “life.”

One of these decisions is to constantly examine ourselves in order to allow the Holy Spirit to make adjustments. This is not to discern whether we are saved or not, but to grow in maturity. Peter wrote in 1st Peter 1:13, in the English Standard Version, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

This “preparation” is done with the collaboration of the Lord and us. Psalms 26:2 says, “**Examine me, O LORD**, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.” Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, “But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1st Corinthians 11:28).

We go into our “secret place” with the Holy Spirit and get totally honest. He will reveal to us what He wants to do. Then we yield to Him. Galatians 3:3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

Day 6

Remember the Instamatic Cameras? We would focus, then press the button and out would slide the paper on which the photo would appear. Problem was that the paper did not look anything like the picture we had taken. Solution, the photo had to develop.

This is us; we are developing into what God intended us to be. Before we were even born God had what we would be already mapped out for us. Psalm 139:16 NLT, “You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”

We should not get frustrated at ourselves anymore than the acorn should because it is not yet an oak tree. Be patient, we’re getting there. Maturity, as in the photograph, takes time.

Always keep in your mind’s eye that you are going to be like Jesus...someday.

Day 7

Sometimes, on the road to “life” we need to get rid of the fluff. You know, the excess baggage we need to have peace and joy.

“Fluff” is like credit card debt. People buy things they don’t need with money they don’t have and before you know it, a huge balance. Paul said, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain” (1st Timothy 6:6).

God loves us just the way we are. He also loves us too much to leave us like we are. That’s why the Hebrew writer said, “Now this, *“Yet once more,”* indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Hebrews 12:27). God shakes off the “fluff” so we will live our best life now.

Day 8

Psalms 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!”
Something mighty happens when God’s people work together. It’s called “spiritual synergy.”

Synergy works like this: Leviticus 26:8, “Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.”

Psalms 133:2 goes on to say, “It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.” The “precious oil” he is talking about is the anointing oil. The anointing that destroys yokes of bondage.

When God’s people dwell in unity of love and purpose the bound are set free, the lost are found, and miracles occur. Psalms 133:3, “*It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion;*

For there the LORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.”

Day 9

Thinking more about “synergy.” This means that two can get a lot more accomplished than one; two that are working together. Synergy can practically be illustrated through two horses pulling weight.

A draft horse on its own can pull up to 8,000 pounds. However, when two draft horses work together, they can move up to 24,000 pounds. This is even more amplified when trained together as they can pull 32,000 pounds.

Logically this does not make any sense. We were all taught at an early age that $1 + 1 = 2$. The power of synergy lies in the fact that multiplication, not addition takes place when working as a team.

Ephesians 4:16, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Day 10

Have you ever seen a scary movie? You know the monster is not real, yet you get scared. Being scared of the monster is an emotion based on something that is not real. In this Christian life we don't live by emotions, we live by faith. My dad used to say, “don't borrow trouble.” What he meant was don't worry about something that may or may not happen.

Hebrew 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The literal Greek of that is, “faith is the underlying ingredient that makes hope come to pass.” Faith is like a magnet that pulls our future hope into the present reality.

Emotions go up and down according to circumstances and situations. Faith and hope are steady. Hebrews 6:19 says, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...”

Day 11

Most of the people reading this have eaten a Krispy Kreme donut. Many people drive by the shop looking for the orange neon light to be on. This light means the donuts are hot. When we are trying to lose weight, we probably shouldn't be thinking about the source of our problem.

The same goes for living victoriously in this life. When we sit around thinking about the problem, or the source of the problem, we will never be victorious. In Philippians 4:8 Paul listed some very praiseworthy things. He ended this verse by encouraging us to “meditate on these things.” Did you know that we could “think ourselves happy?” Acts 26:2, “I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews,”

Let's think about Father and His goodness, His love, and His care and be happy. Maybe you want to purchase the T-shirt that says, “Don't worry, be happy.”

Day 12

One of the most sought-after attributes in life is peace. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” People spend thousands of dollars trying to find peace. Sometimes it's looked for in things, sometimes in human relationships, sometimes hobbies, and sometimes in pills or the bottle.

Someone said, “everything is great as long as it's hunky dory. But when the dory gets hunky, we discover if we really have peace.” I heard a story about an art contest promoted by a man who sought the perfect picture of peace. The artists were told to paint whatever they felt would best portray ‘Peace.’ Some artists painted serene landscapes with sunsets and fields of beautiful flowers. Another painted a still quiet lake with a reflection clear as glass. Each was amazing and beautiful, but when the winner was unveiled, everyone was surprised. The title of the winning painting was “Peace in the Midst of the Storm.” At first glance, the painting looks anything but peaceful. Black clouds and lightning bolts cover the sky. Waves crash on a rocky hillside with raging waters below. How could this ever be descriptive of peace? You have to take a closer look at the painting, because there is more there than simply meets the

eye. Just beneath the gushing waterfalls, you will notice a little bird with her nest of babies tucked underneath the edge of a rock. In the midst of the storm, this bird found a sanctuary, a safe place to rest her wings.

1st Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Day 13

One of the ways to live in peace is to see the big picture. You know, where you can "see" the end from the beginning. No, this is not possible with man, but it is with God. Isaiah 46:9&10 says, "Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'"

We don't have to "see" the end from the beginning, all we have to "see" is God. The God who cares and intervenes on behalf of His children.

Day 14

I have a poem in my office that I look at frequently. It says, in part, "When things go wrong, as they sometimes will. When the road you're trudging seems all up hill. When the funds are low and the debts are high, and you want to smile but you have to sigh. When care is pressing you down a bit. Rest if you must, but don't you quit."

Hebrews 6:12 says, "That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Jesus told a wonderful parable about a man planting corn. He said the man went out to look for the corn every day. One day, he didn't know how, the corn was through the ground. The corn was coming up all along, he just couldn't see it.

Don't quit when you don't see fruit. Stand in faith and patience. "But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance (Romans 8:25).

Day 15

We live in a fast-paced world. We can hit the drive through at the bank, and the restaurant. Most of us love the microwave oven. The internet is fantastic; we can gather thousands of bits of information at the click of the mouse.

Life is not like that though. We don't mature overnight. We don't get over loss or heartache overnight. These things take time.

We also don't achieve success immediately. It takes faith, patience and effort.

Writing to the Philippians Paul said, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" (Philippians 3:12).

For the next four days let's look at what I call the V.A.L.E. method of success.

Day 16

"V" is for vision.

As you know, Father has a plan for our lives. Please read Psalms 139:16. Many, and this is not a rebuke, don't know what God's plan is for them. A plan that God has for all of us is to pray for those within our sphere of authority.

We find the first step in progressing toward the vision in Habakuk 2:2, "...Write the vision And make *it* plain on tablets..."

Write down the names of those for whom you are praying. What are you asking God to do?

Write down the vision for your life and/or family.

We confess, at Bancroft Mission, "we are a growing body of believers three hundred strong, we have workmen in abundance and finances to meet every need." This is what we believe the Holy Spirit is giving us. This is our "VISION."

Day 17

"A" is for assess.

Many times, when we go to a mall, or some other public place, there is a sign that has the layout of the area. There is a red dot on the map that says, "You Are Here." We don't know where to go if we don't know where we are.

If you have a vision to be a college professor and you never went to college, don't give up, just assess what you need to do. When God gives a vision there is a way for it to happen. If you don't know the way, just be patient, it will come in due time.

More of Habakkuk 2 says, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry" (Habakkuk 2:3).

Day 18

"L" is for lifestyle.

A vision that God gives, whether it's to pray, or own a business, cannot be pursued when it is convenient; it must be part of our lifestyle. Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Frazier said, "boxing matches aren't won in the ring. They are won in the wee hours of the morning, when everyone is asleep in bed, and you are out running. In the hours in the gym doing conditioning exercises. The boxing ring reflects the hours of preparation." Another great is Lee Trevino. Trevino is one of the great golfers of our time. He said, "if you hit a thousand balls a day for twenty years, you might be ready for the professional golf tour." What these men are saying is that success has to be a lifestyle.

In Philippians 3:13 Paul said, "...one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,"

Day 19

“E” is for enjoying the journey.

We can get so possessed with accomplishing goals that we forget to enjoy the journey. Successful people don’t talk much about where they are, they talk about how they got there.

A very good friend of mine shared this true story with me. He said he, his wife, and two children enjoyed going on vacation to the beach. He said he was so possessed with the goal of being there that he would say to the family, “We are going to stop for gas. Everyone go to the bathroom, then grab a sandwich or a snack and come right back out.” He rushed them. Yep, they got to the beach in record time. The problem was, when they got there, no one would speak to him for a couple of days. Finally, he resolved to make the journey part of the vacation.

Go ahead, pursue the vision, or purpose, God has given. During the journey, enjoy life.

Day 20

Some of the most popular television shows of all time are Seinfeld, Cheers, I Love Lucy, Blue Bloods, Friends, The Waltons, Andy Griffith, just to name a few. Hmmm, this should tell us something, all of these shows are about friends and family.

Ephesians 3:14&15 says, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”

When we received Jesus as our Savior, we not only received a promise of heaven and an abundant life here, but we also became part of a family; a family of fellow believers. Because we are a family, no one is greater than another. We rejoice when one of the “family” succeeds or is honored. We hurt when one of the “family” hurts. We bear one another’s burdens. We have patience with each other as we all are growing and “becoming.”

A great illustration is of a fireplace roaring with wood burning. When one of the logs is taken out of the fire, it will soon extinguish. We need each other.

Ephesians 4:16, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Day 21

Symbiotic growth is the growth that occurs between two organisms where both benefits. Parasitic growth is growth that occurs in one organism because it’s feeding off of another. Christians must ask themselves how they are functioning in the organism of the Body of Christ.

Am I a spiritual parasite? Sing to me. Preach to me. Pray for me. Counsel me. Help me, but expect nothing from me. That is a parasite. A Christian interested in symbiotic growth says, “Yes, I have needs, but I’m willing to give too because everyone needs to benefit.

Ephesians 4:16, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Day 22

Most of us enjoy a bowl of cereal with milk. The cereal that we eat with milk comes from the grain, which came from the mill, which goes back to the provision of God in the wheat fields. The milk came from the cows that ate the grass that came from the ground that God provided. Everything we have is traced back to God.

We are thankful for the jobs we have that is a means of provision. Jobs change, God doesn't. He is always the source.

We appreciate the means by which we enjoy life. However, never forget that God is the source.

Deuteronomy 8:18, "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day."

Day 23

We have a beautiful picture of one of the ways the Holy Spirit works in Matthew 26:26, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Jesus first "takes us." 1st Peter 2:9 says, "But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"

Jesus has chosen us. We don't just wake up one day and decide we are going to be a Christian. The Holy Spirit draws us. John 6:44, ""No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." Romans 10:14 NLT, "But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?" Sometime, somewhere in our lives we heard the Gospel. The Holy Spirit makes it "real." And we believe. It is not an accident. We were divinely chosen by God.

Day 23

Continuing with Matthew 26:26, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

When we receive Jesus as our Savior, God begins to reveal His plan for our lives. "And as they were eating, Jesus...blessed..." The greatest blessing we will ever experience is to walk in the divine plan of God for our lives.

Paul, an apostle, experienced many hardships. He also experienced many triumphs. In Acts 20:23&24, when he was leaving the Ephesian church, he said, "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

One of the reasons Paul was so motivated to spread the Gospel was because of the joy of living in God's plan for his life. Writing to young pastor Timothy, he said, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry," (1st Timothy 1:12).

Day 24

After Jesus "took" the bread and "blessed" the bread, He "broke" the bread.

We came to Jesus with a lot of "excess baggage." Preconceived ideas. Fleshly "me" attitudes. Yes, God loves us just the way we are. But He loves us too much to leave us that way; He begins to "break" the old carnal, self-opinionated, self-reliant, person. Remember, our spirits were born again but our mind wasn't; it needs to be renewed. Romans 12:2 NLT, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think..."

Hebrews 12:27&28, "Now this, *"Yet once more,"* indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Let's welcome the "shaking" and "breaking" of the Holy Spirit.

Day 25

Jesus then "gives" us. He gives us to a family, a local body of believers, to our neighbors, to our fellow workers; He gives us to people who need us.

2nd Corinthians 5:18 in the NLT says, "And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him."

We become conduits of the Holy Spirit to restore others, to bring the Gospel to others, to pray for others. We are vessels by which the Holy Spirit brings the divine "life" of God to others.

Day 26

Sometimes servanthood is misunderstood. Many imagine being a servant means to wear "sackcloth and ashes" and to go around with a sad look on their face.

Jesus is the greatest example of being a servant (more on this later). Isaiah 53 describes Him as a man "of sorrows and acquainted" with grief. But Ecclesiastes 3 says there is a time "to cry and a time to laugh." Jesus, being fully human and fully God, surely sorrowed and cried. But he surely laughed too. He did what was appropriate for the time. He was emotional. He laughed, cried, became angry, was joyous, He was tempted (yet without sin); He experienced the same emotions as us.

God doesn't want us to be spiritual curmudgeons. He wants us to enjoy life and keep Him as a priority.

Day 27

Jesus took off His garment, wrapped a towel around His waist, and began to wash the disciples' feet. Then He said, "If I, your leader, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Then He said something else, "you will happy if you do these things" (Please read John 13:1-17).

When we focus on the appreciation of others, or the ingratitude of some, we can begin to become “men pleasers.” Our service will be determined by the responses of those we serve.

Paul taught, in Colossians 3:7, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Always keep in mind that our service is ultimately to God.

A professional violinist was giving a concert. When he finished, the crowd jumped up from their seats and gave him a standing ovation. He had delivered a magnificent performance. The young violinist, with tears coming down his cheeks, walked off the stage, dejected. The stagehand saw him and said, “Why are you so sad? Those people are going crazy out there and you are crying. I don’t understand.”

“Do you see the one man in the center down there? He is still sitting.”

The stagehand said, “Yeah, so what? There are two thousand other people who are standing.”

“This is true, but you don’t understand. That man down there in the middle is my dad. He’s also my violin teacher. If he doesn’t stand, it doesn’t matter what two thousand other people do.”

If God doesn’t applaud when He sees how we live our lives, it doesn’t matter what everybody does.

Day 28

Paul is the author of about half of the New Testament. Paul spoke four languages in a time when the majority of the population was illiterate. He spoke to kings, governors, and jail keepers. He acted as his own attorney during one of his trials. Yet, he never called himself “apostle Paul.” He referred to himself as a servant. He referred his fellow workers as “fellow servants.” The books of Hebrews and Revelation refer to Moses as a servant. The angel in Revelation 19 and 22 refers to himself as a servant. James, Simon Peter, and Jude all referred to themselves as servants.

Are we slaves or servants?

A servant is different than a slave. A slave is not a slave by choice. Another imposes their will upon a slave. Paul told those who were born again while a slave to be free if they could.

Servants are those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men. When Paul was addressing the Corinthians about Spiritual gifts, he ended the twelfth chapter with a list of callings and giftings. One of these was “helps.” A helper is a servant, one who serves by choice. A servant does not serve just when it is convenient or when it doesn’t cost him anything. Repeating from Day 27, Colossians 3:7, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Always keep in mind that our service is ultimately to God.

Day 29

Exodus 17:8-13, “Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” 10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses’ hands *became* heavy; so

they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

Here we have Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and Hur. How about all of the men that were doing the fighting? They were servants. Yes, they were there at the command of Joshua, who was fighting at the command of Moses. But ultimately, they were servants. They were all there for a common cause; to obey the will of God.

When we serve, we may be obeying a leader, or even meeting the need of someone else. Ultimately, we are serving God.

Day 30

In Matthew 25 Jesus told a parable about 3 men who were entrusted with a sum of money. Two of the men used the money to make a profit; one did not. Jesus said to the two men in 25:21, “His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”

We may not receive many accolades in this life. However, there is a promise to the faithful servant. A servant will be rewarded in the continuing life with the incorruptible body.

The greatest joy for the servant will be when he sees Jesus. He will take his reward and cast it at the feet of Jesus because serving is all about Jesus. Revelation 4:10&11, “the twenty-four elders (REPRESENTING THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS) fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11 “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

OCTOBER

Day 1

The most powerful force in the world is the Holy Spirit. Before God said, “let there be light” the Spirit of God “hovered” over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:2, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

It was the Holy Spirit that brought us into the family of God. 1st Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

It is the continuing work of the Holy Spirit that changes our human nature into the nature of Jesus. 2nd Corinthians 3:18 NLT, “So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.”

It is the Holy Spirit that empowers the believer for service. Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Have you been born into the family of God? If not, receive Jesus' death as the payment for your sin.

Is your human nature being changed into the nature of Jesus? If not, submit to the Lordship of the Spirit.

Have you been empowered for service? If not, ask Jesus right now to empower you.

Day 2

Jesus gave a monumental declaration in Matthew 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." Notice He does not say "you ought to be the salt" or "you should be the salt", He says, "You are the salt."

Of course, the word "earth" here is not referring to ground on which we walk. He was talking about the inhabitants of the earth. Jesus said without salt doing its job, the earth is not worth much.

We are salt because the presence of God, the Holy Spirit, resides in us. That's what makes us valuable to the earth. Mankind does not need our talent, our time, or our treasure; mankind needs the presence of God, the Holy Spirit, to season him.

Job 34:14&15 gives us a vivid image of mankind without the presence of God. Job 34:14&15 NLT, "If God were to take back his spirit and withdraw his breath, 15 all life would cease, and humanity would turn again to dust."

Day 3

After Jesus told His disciples they were the salt of the earth, He said they were also the light of the World (Matthew 5:14).

John 9:5 is of the utmost importance to understanding the believer's position of being the "light of the world." "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." We must ask, "how was Jesus the light of the world?"

The world at the time of Jesus was far removed from the original intent of the Father. Our Father's passion was always relational. In John 17:24 Jesus said, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Jesus was not speaking so much about geographically "may be with Me where I am" but relationally, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

The "religious" world at the time of Jesus was one of self-righteousness and superstition. Jesus brought the love of the Father to a dark world.

Jesus is no longer physically in the world, but we are. Now, we are the "light of the world." Or rather, "light to the world." John 17:20-23, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

Day 4

I read this story recently—A father wanted to give his daughter something to do, and there was a picture of the world on a sheet of paper. He tore it into smaller pieces and told her to see if she could put the pieces back together correctly, kind of like she would work a puzzle. The little girl agreed. Five minutes later, she showed her father the pieces put back together perfectly. He was stupefied. When he asked her how she had done the task so quickly, she said, “Oh, on the back was a picture of Jesus and I figured if I got Him right, the world would fall into place.”

What a fantastic example of how when we put Jesus as the priority of our lives, everything else falls into place. Jesus said, “Matthew 13:44-46, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 “who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Day 5

Speaking of priorities; “A fairly wealthy man one day was driving his BMW and had an accident—a very bad accident. The car was totaled. A policeman came on the scene and got the man out of the car. As the man came to, he said, “My BMW, oh my BMW!” The policeman said, “Sir, I’m sorry but you don’t have time to worry about your BMW. It’s just a car. We’ve got to rush you to the hospital because your arm has been severed at the elbow.” The wealthy man said, “Oh, my Rolex oh my Rolex!”

Paul, the apostle, gave us the correct view of priorities. He was very influential among his peers, rising in rank and status. In Philippians 3:1-6 Paul lists his credentials. Then he says in Philippians 3:7&8, “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” In verse 10 he says, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,”

Day 6

Some people wish days were 36 hours long while others would like 6-hour days. Paul had some things to say about time. Ephesians 5:16, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

To Redeem here means to make wise use of. Are our days cluttered with “time consuming” things that are not productive. Rest and relaxation are very important so don’t take a guilt trip if you just do nothing at times; we need “down time.”

Paul included in his letter to the Ephesians to examine ourselves. Ephesians 5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;” “Psalms” here refers to times when we get alone with the Holy Spirit, in a quiet place, and examine our heart. In other words, get real or authentic, with God and ourselves. Are we using time wisely? We have to answer that question honestly.

Next Paul talks about “hymns.” Hymns has to do with anthems to God. To remove what is not productive in our lives and to reinforce what is. Again, be honest.

The last of this progression is “spiritual songs.” “Spiritual songs” is the result of a time alone in the “closet” with God, then reinforcing what is of the Kingdom (dominion of the King). We come out of this quiet time with a renewed spiritual vitality. Go ahead, do it.

Day 7

The result of research says that a pastor invests about one hour of study for every hour the congregation hears. At Bancroft Mission, our praise team invests about 2.5 hours of practice and leads us in worship for about 20 minutes. There are several others who participate in some form of leading, teaching, etc. during a normal gathering.

However, the majority of believers are in the congregation. Now, that’s fine but does that mean that the sitting congregation have no talents. Not at all. The scripture teaches in too many places to cite in this short devotional that all believers have a gift. MOST of these gifts are used while not at a geographical location which we call church.

In Exodus 35 we have the account of the master artisan by the name of Bezalel. Bezalel had two very important gifts; he could make things with his hands and teach others to do this also. Your gift, or talent, may be in the use of your hands. It may be in the use of your mind, or even in your body (such as athletics). It may even be in the entertainment industry. The important thing is to remember that your “earthly vocation supports your heavenly vocation). We are all full-time ministers.

Day 8

Yes, God has given to each of us an ability to carry out His mission or His purpose. Sometimes we function in one capacity but, for some reason, we can no longer function at all.

For example, many of us have known singers that at a point in their lives they could no longer sing. They are not to be “put on the shelf.” They just go to another function or gift. Maybe it’s prayer, or some other productive gift.

One of the greatest gifts needed in the Body of Christ is an encourager. As Joshus became the leader of the children of Israel God knew he would face trials. God said to the people, in Deuteronomy 3:28, “But command Joshua, and **encourage** him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.”

As others become involved in their gifting it is important that the “old guard” encourage them. Encourage means to “put courage in.”

Let’s not be prideful or embarrassed to allow others to step into roles that we occupied. Also, let’s not stand back and watch; let’s be encouragers.

Day 9

How about our treasure, or money? The Bible is also very specific about what our priority is with money.

Proverbs 3:9 says, “Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase;” Notice the Holy Spirit says through Solomon “first-fruits.” Then Paul says, in 1st Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

When we have an increase, payday or otherwise (maybe an inheritance or some other type of “increase”) the first action with this is to seek the Lord for what He would have us to give and where we should give it.

In Proverbs, Solomon goes on to say, “So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:10). In other words, as we obey the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God, God promises to invest in us. It’s the spiritual law of sowing and reaping.

Day 10

Galatians 3:8&9 gives us some wonderful insight to faith, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Another translation says, “Faith is the underlying ingredient that makes hope come to pass.”

Faith is believing in spite of not seeing. Faith is believing in spite of not feeling. However, our faith is not blind. It is believing a God who has proven Himself in countless ways over thousands of years.

God said to Abraham in Genesis 12:2, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.” My friends, this is a covenant of faith. Let’s put our faith in God and His blessings. Let’s put our faith in God and obey Him and be a blessing. Let’s put our faith in God for His blessing on our families, our church, our communities, and our nation.

Day 11

It saddens some folks to discover that 8 billion do not make it their life’s goal to bless them. We cannot live our lives expecting anyone to bless us. Our blessings come from God. God can, and probably will, use a person to be a blessing to us. Always remember, there is a difference between source and means.

The means may be our employment, our family, or maybe even a stranger. Always, ALWAYS, and in all ways, God is the source.

Luke 6:38 KJV, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” Notice— “shall men give into your bosom.” God is the source, but He uses men. We are thankful for men God uses to give but we praise God.

Another aspect of this is “Give, and it shall be given...” Our giving in faith is the prerequisite for receiving.

Day 12

Exodus 26:30, “And you shall raise up the tabernacle **according to its pattern** which you were shown on the mountain.” As we read of God’s instruction to Moses concerning the building of the tabernacle it is obvious that God had something in mind. Several times He told Moses “according to the pattern.”

When God tells us to do something He expects to be obeyed. A very interesting and eye-opening event happened in 1st Samuel. God told King Saul, through Samuel the prophet, what he wanted him to do. Saul succumbed to the pressure of others and only partially obeyed. Let’s read what God said to Saul in 1st Samuel 15:17&23, “So Samuel said, “When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the

tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? 18 “Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’ 19 “Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?” 20 And Saul said to Samuel, “But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 “But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.” 22 So Samuel said: “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.”

Wow, God is serious about our obedience.

Day 13

William Booth was an English Methodist preacher who, along with his wife, Catherine, founded the Salvation Army and became its first General. The Christian movement with a quasi-military structure and government founded in 1865 has spread from London to many parts of the world.

A quote from William Booth, “Faith and works should travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and then works; and then faith again, and then works again until you can scarcely distinguish which is the one and which is the other. James 2:17, “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Faith always has a corresponding action. Hebrews 11—“By faith Abel offered...”, “By faith Noah, ...prepared an ark...”, “By faith Abraham obeyed...”, “By faith Abraham... offered up Isaac.” You get the point.

Day 14

God identified Himself to Moses as “I am.” “I am” is in the present tense. He is ready to do it now, so when you pray, believe that the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus. 2nd Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.”

When we read in the Word of God about promises that He has made to us we believe in faith that He will do what He said. That doesn’t mean that God is a “wish book” or a catalogue where we pick out what we want, and He will give it to us. It does mean, however, that what God says in His Word, taken in proper context; He will do. 1st John 5:14 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

We discern the will of God through His Word and through our “closet” times with Him.

Day 15

Ecclesiastes 10:10 tells us how important it is for believers to stay spiritually sharp, “If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge, Then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success.”

Naturally speaking, when we use cutting tools, it is of the utmost importance. Abraham Lincoln once said, “If I am given six hours to chop down a tree, I will spend the first four sharpening my ax.”

The same is true spiritually. We can be reactive and run to prayer and Bible study after a situation rises in our lives. Or we can be proactive and stay sharp.

Jesus is our great example—Luke 6:12, “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God.” Jesus knew he would face demons, persecution, people in need, and other “life situations.” He invested the entire night to prayer. I believe He invested the night in listening and fellowshiping with His Father—Praying.

As we invest time in fellowship, Bible reading and study, and prayer (listening) we will keep ourselves spiritually sharp.

Day 16

Another way to stay spiritually sharp is to be in submission to the Father and to others.

James 4:7, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” We are in the Kingdom of God. The word “kingdom” means “the dominion of the King.” As we live our lives submitted to the King of Kings, we will stay sharp.

We also have believing friends in which we can trust to help us. Proverbs 27:17 Solomon said, “As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” We need to have believing and faithful friends who will hold us accountable to our progress in the journey in the Kingdom. Ephesians 5:21 says, “submitting to one another in the fear of God”

Let’s all be a friend and have friends that will love us enough to tell us the truth.

Day 17

Jesus is most often depicted as a Lamb. “Behold the Lamb of God”, John 1:36. “Lamb without spot”, 1st Peter 1:19.

There is an interesting event that happened in the book of Genesis concerning Jacob, Laban, Rachel and Leah. Jacob wanted to marry Laban’s daughter, Rachel. He made an agreement with Laban to serve him for seven years for Rachel. After seven years of serving, Jacob went to Laban to get his bride. A great feast was given, and Jacob had too much to drink. Laban tricked him and gave him Leah instead. The next morning, when Jacob discovered the trickery, he was furious. Laban’s explanation was that Leah was the older of the two and he couldn’t allow his younger child (Rachel) to be married before his older. Jacob then agreed to marry Rachel and then serve seven more years.

Here's the teaching for us in this story. Rachel means Lamb and Leah means weary. When we serve or work to get the Lamb (Jesus) all we get is weary. We are to “marry” Jesus and then work, just as Jacob did after he married Rachel.

Day 18

Works do enter into our life. James 2:18, “But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” We just don’t work for our salvation; we work because we are saved.

Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for

your souls. 30 “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Jesus gives us rest, rest from our labors to gain His approval. Although His yoke is easy and His burden is light, there is a yoke and there is a burden or load; it’s just light because we are yoked with Him.

Day 19

Contract or Covenant.

Many of us have signed contracts. You know, a contract is an agreement between two parties that creates an obligation to perform (or not perform) a particular duty. Maybe we bought an automobile and signed a note with a lending institution. Or maybe we hired a service. One thing about a contract, we don’t even need to know the person or company with which we make a contract.

A covenant is vastly different than a contract. Marriage, for example, is a covenant. Ephesians 5:31, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

Also, we have a covenant with God, not a contract. Jesus prayed in John 17:20-22, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 “that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:”

Praise God, we have a covenant with God, He is in us, and we are in Him. We KNOW Him.

Day 20

1st Peter 4:10, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Each of us is uniquely gifted. Yes, many sing or have some other gift. However, we all sing or use our talents differently. The important thing is that we use our talents. Peter says in the verse above that we are to be good stewards, or good managers of the gift that God has given.

God places the importance on being productive in the book of Genesis. After He created Adam, the first thing God said to him was to be fruitful; He immediately gave Adam a task.

In Matthew 25 we read of the parable of the talents, or money. God rewards good managers and does not reward those who do not manage what He has given well.

Let’s decide today, right now, that we are going to be good stewards of what God has given us.

Day 21

Our God is absolutely amazing. Martin Luther said, “He can give only according to His might; therefore, He always gives more that we ask for.”

Philippians 4:19, in the Amplified Bible says, “And my God will liberally supply (fill until full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Wow, we say, how can I make this happen for me? In this letter to the Philippians, Paul had just commended them for their generosity. Philippians 4:15-17 Paul says, “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”

Paul says here, and in many other places, that the spiritual law of sowing and reaping will occur as we obey God in our giving.

Day 22

Revelation 19:6 says, “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, “Alleluia! For our] Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

God is omnipotent. To be omnipotent means to be all powerful. When life happens and comes in the form of mountains, we can focus on the mountains, we can focus on our own abilities, or we can focus on the omnipotent, all-powerful God—the choice is ours.

Andrew Murray said, “Faith keeps itself occupied only with His omnipotence.”

How, how, how can I live this way? Romans 10:17, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Literally, faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing and hearing...

Day 23

Absorb the principle that failure is never final, so if you do not succeed the first time, keep on trying.

Philippians 3:13&14 says, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

If we have tried something, in obedience to God, and it does seem to have worked, don’t lose heart. Seek the Lord, maybe He wants us to stand in faith, or maybe He wants us to learn something. Obedience to God is never without fruit.

Day 24

God breathed into Adam, and he became a living soul. Without the “breath”, or life sustaining power of God, mankind would not be able to exist. In the book of Job it says, “If He should set His heart on it, If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, 15 All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust” (Job 34:14&15).

Several thousand years later Paul said in Ephesians 3:20, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” He went on to add in Ephesians 4:6, “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

We live in the presence of God. Or rather, the presence of God lives in us.

Day 25

Have we ever noticed that Jesus did not teach His disciples how to preach. He didn't teach them how to sing. He did teach them how to pray. Luke 11:1-4, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." 2 So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. 3 Give us day by day our daily bread. 4 And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."

Prayer is saying to God, "I need You." We need God's direction, His counsel, His wisdom...there is not an area of our lives in which we do not need God.

Let's invest some quiet time each day for mediation with God and His Word.

Day 26

Corrie ten Boom said, "Faith is the radar that sees through the fog."

After an airplane pilot receives their pilot's license, the next logical step is to become instrument certified. This allows the pilot to fly in the clouds or in inclement weather.

Faith in God and His Word makes us "instrument certified" in the sense that we are not moved by what we see or feel, we are only moved by what the "instrument" says—the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

Day 27

Many times, people quote us. They say, "I heard you say this or that." The problem is, that's not what we said, that's what they heard. We hear things through preconceived ideas. John wrote, in John 21:23, "Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

Many times, we perceive someone's "sour" look as disapproval when in actuality they may have a headache or some other ailment completely unrelated to us.

James 1:19 says, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;"

Let's not be quick in making judgments or interpretations. Solomon, the book of Proverbs said, "The first *one* to plead his cause *seems* right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him" (Proverbs 18:17).

Day 28

Job 38:2 says, in the NLT, "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words?"

Job went through a terrible ordeal. Some scholars say his calamity lasted about nine months. Whether it was nine months or nine days, it was horrible.

The great lesson we can learn from Job is, of course, patience. But another lesson we can learn is who's in charge. Please read Job chapters 39-42 and see God confronting Job about Job trying to be Him.

Finally in Job 42:3-5, "You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You."

Let's learn from Job to allow God to be God and us to be humans.

Day 29

We have heard it said that "hindsight is 20/20." Wouldn't it be great if foresight was 20/20? If we could only know what lies ahead, we would make our decisions today based on what we know is ahead.

Here's the good news; Our Loving Father does know what is ahead.

In God's graciousness to the children of Israel He said, "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:12).

Jesus said, in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

The Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke) word for prayer means to set your mind like a trap to capture the thoughts of God.

Father wants to speak to us, let's determine to listen.

Day 30

Friends mean well when they say, "I have your back." They usually have full intentions of doing so. However, as many have discovered, this is not always the case. Maybe something unforeseen happened, or maybe there was an accident. Any number of things could have hindered them from keeping their word. We will not get into strife over it.

God gave a promise through the prophet Isaiah about His faithfulness. Isaiah 52:12, "For you shall not go out with haste, Nor go by flight; For the LORD will go before you, And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard." He will never be hindered by any circumstance.

When the Holy Spirit leads us in a step of faith, God has our back. When the Holy Spirit walks us through

life situations, God has our back. Most of us have this poem on our walls:

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,

One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,

especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,

You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you

Never, ever, during your trials and testing's.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

Day 31

Isaiah 43:1&2 was written to Israel, but for us. It says, "But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you."

What wonderful truths are in these two verses. He created us. He formed us. He redeemed us. He called us by name (He knows us personally). We are His. Wherever He leads us, He will protect us. We might get lowered over a wall in a basket (Acts 9:25). We might go through shipwrecks and abandonment from others (2nd Corinthians 11:22-33). Or we may be persecuted. No matter what, the Holy Spirit will be right there with us. Father will send Angels (perhaps in human form) to minister to us (Matthew 4:11).

November

Let's take the 30-day challenge and find something for which we can be thankful each day of November.

Day 1

For what are you thankful today?

While Thanksgiving is an American holiday, each of us, no matter our nationality can be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 says, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

Let's be thankful for the awesome gift of Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross, and His subsequent resurrection that provides for us a "peace that passes all understanding."

There are many things in life that we are possibly unsettled in. Please don't let your vertical relationship with God be one of them. Rest in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross.

As the old hymn says, "I've anchored my soul in the haven of rest..."

Day 2

For what are you thankful today?

Relationships are wonderful. "Life here is grand with friends I love so dear..."

The sad truth is many don't experience the coveted relationships that others enjoy. David made a declaration that we can rely on today. Psalm 27:10, "When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the LORD will take care of me."

The Shulamite spoke of abuse by her brothers in Song of Solomon 1:6.

2nd Timothy 2:13 in the Amplified Bible says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful [true to His word and His righteous character], for He cannot deny Himself." HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF.

We are thankful for a faithful God. A God we can know as Father, or Dad (Romans 8:15). We can tell Him our innermost secrets and He will never gossip. We can share with Him our greatest struggles and He will never blush.

Day 3

For what are you thankful today?

There is probably not anyone reading this who does not have a roof over their head. Some would have a better "roof" while others have more "roof" than they need.

David gives us news about a shelter that is better than any house we could ever have. Psalm 61:3, "For You have been a **shelter** for me, A strong tower from the enemy." Then in the next verse, "I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the **shelter** of Your wings. Selah." Finally, in Psalm 143:9, "Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; In You I take **shelter**."

Today we are thankful for our homes that give us shelter but mostly we are thankful for our Loving Father who provides a covering of security and peace for us at all times.

Day 4

For what are you thankful today?

Did you know that you are wealthy? Paul gives us the basic necessities of life in 1st Timothy 6:8, "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." Do we have food and clothing? As I look at myself in the mirror it is obvious that I do pretty well in the food department.

One penny over the basic necessity of food and clothing puts us into the category of the wealthy. Wealth is relative. To the billionaire, the person that only has one million dollars is not wealthy. To the millionaire, the person who only has 100 thousand dollars is not wealthy. To the person who has 100 thousand dollars, the person who only has 100 dollars is not wealthy. To the person who only has food and clothing, anything else makes him wealthy.

Today we are thankful for food and clothing and the one penny over.

Day 5

For what are you thankful today?

We are not thankful today in comparison to anyone else. There will always be someone who can outdo us or has more possessions. Or maybe more relationships.

Here is something good for all of us. Find one thing in your life for which you are thankful and be thankful for that 100%. Let me say it again, **Find one thing in your life for which you are thankful, and be thankful for that 100%.**

Maybe everything is not what we want. We all have something for which we can be thankful. We can still breathe. We have food, shelter, clothing, etc.

Mostly, we have a Savior. "He's a personal Savior He's mine I know, I love Him so He did my heart a personal favor That's why I tell it now wherever I may go When I am blue and feeling, oh, so lowdown He'll take me through Old Satan can't get me down And from the path the path that is mine I'll never more waver For He's a friend He's a friend, He's a friend He's a personal friend"

Day 6

For what are you thankful today?

One of the definitions of "thankful" is appreciation.

Saying "thank you" or letting our appreciation be known is becoming a lost trait. We teach our children to say thank you. When someone lets us merge into traffic, we throw up our hand or blink our lights to show our appreciation. A sense of entitlement is rampant in both the younger and older generations. The entitlement mentality is defined as a sense of deservingness or being owed a favor when little or nothing has been done to deserve special treatment. It's the "you owe me" attitude. Entitlement is a narcissistic personality trait.

King David was given many promises by God Himself. However, as we read the book of Psalms, David is constantly saying "thank you"; he was showing his appreciation.

Let's live our lives with thankfulness and appreciation.

Day 7

For what are you thankful today?

Solomon teaches us about a happy attitude. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A merry heart does good, like medicine..."

Here's what science has to say about thankfulness and a happy/merry heart.

Gratitude is more than just a polite gesture of saying "thank you." It's an essential aspect of mental health that can affect our overall well-being. Research has shown that [practicing gratitude can reduce stress, depression, and anxiety and improve sleep quality, self-esteem, and overall happiness.](#)

Gratitude is a positive emotion that involves acknowledging and appreciating the good things in our lives. [When we express gratitude, our brains release dopamine and serotonin](#), two important

neurotransmitters that regulate our moods and emotions. These chemicals can help us feel happier, more content, and less stressed.

Here are just a few benefits to the human body that occurs when we show our gratitude:

1. Reduced Stress and Anxiety
2. Improved Sleep Quality
3. Increased Self-Esteem
4. Greater Resilience: Practicing gratitude can also help us become more resilient in adversity. A study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that more grateful people had greater resilience and were better able to cope with traumatic events.
5. Practicing mindfulness can also help you cultivate gratitude. Take a few minutes each day to focus on your breath and be present in the moment. Notice the sights, sounds, and sensations around you and appreciate them for what they are.

Day 8

For what are you thankful today?

I read this story recently: Two little girls one day were acting very badly. They were misbehaving. It was on Thanksgiving Day and their father told them, "Girls, go to your room. You are dismissed from Thanksgiving dinner." The girls went dejected and sad to their rooms. A few moments later, they heard their mother calling, "Girls, girls, come down to dinner, girls."

A little baffled in light of what their father had said, they sheepishly walked down to the dinner table and sat down. But they noticed something. Dad was not there. So, they naturally asked, "Mother, where is Dad?"

"Dad went to his room."

"But why, Mom?"

"Because Dad loves you so much. He couldn't change his standard, but he didn't want to deny you dinner. So, Dad said he would go and pay the price so that you could come and eat the meal. So, while you enjoy the meal, remember that your dad has picked up the tab and is paying the penalty."

Brothers and sisters, when you forget to say thanks for everything else, don't forget to say thanks for Jesus.

Day 9

For what are you thankful today?

Why is being thankful so powerful?

Being thankful helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.

David wrote in Psalm 9:1, "A psalm of David. I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds."

When we not only meditate on God's greatness but tell others of the mighty acts that He has done, the Holy Spirit does a work in our lives. Our outlook becomes brighter. Our attitude becomes more like the attitude of Jesus. We become more pleasant in every area of our lives.

Go ahead, find one thing that God has done for you and share it with someone. See what the Lord does.

Day 10

For what are you thankful today?

Continuing with the thought of sharing our thankfulness.

1st Chronicles 16:8 says, "Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!"

Our faith is increased when we share the great things Father has done.

Before King David fought the giant, Goliath, he told King Saul about the hand of Lord enabling him. 1st Samuel 17:33-37, "And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, 35 "I went out after it and struck it, and delivered *the lamb* from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught *it* by its beard, and struck and killed it. 36 "Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

David had not experienced the confidence that an earthly father can give. His brother had belittled him. King Saul had expressed his doubts. David needed to remind himself of all that God had done in order to strengthen his faith for the task ahead.

Day 11

For what are you thankful today?

Sometimes it can be tough to be thankful for the little things, especially in hard times. But here's the funny thing about thankfulness. Once we begin counting our blessings, we often discover that we have a gracious plenty after all. It's simply the change in perspective from dwelling on what we lack to focusing on what we have.

We all know the value of prayer. Paul put being thankful in the same context. Colossians 4:2, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."

What are some "little" things in life for which we can be thankful?

Day 12

For what are you thankful today?

1st Timothy 4:4, “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”

Take some time to look around. We live in an amazing world. At this time of year in West Virginia the foliage gives off brilliant gold, orange, and other colors. We know this is because the trees are entering a time of rest. However, it is the mighty creation of God that causes this rest, which then produces these beautiful colors that dazzle us every year.

Instead of rushing through life, take some time to “smell the roses.” Then thank God for this wonderful life.

Day 13

For what are you thankful today?

Do we realize how much God loves us? I know that I don’t at times. Psalm 106:1 says, “Praise the LORD! Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.”

Not just His love but His faithful love.

Many times, we don’t experience love for others the way we think we should. But our Loving Heavenly Father loves us unconditionally. Yes, He loves us in our brokenness (we are all broken in some way). He loves us in our unfaithfulness. He loves us when we don’t love Him back.

He loves us just as we are. And He loves us too much to leave us in this state. He will change us, heal us, rebuke us, and encourage us.

Psalm 107:21, “Let them give thanks to the LORD for his **unfailing** love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.”

Day 14

For what are you thankful today?

Psalm 69:30&31 says, “I will praise the name of God with a song, And will magnify Him with thanksgiving. 31 This also shall please the LORD...”

Do we realize that God enjoys our singing. Not necessarily the quality of our voice but words from our mouths. Jesus said, “...out of the abundance of our heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

Try getting alone with God and just singing to Him. Not for yourself, but for Him. Sing out of your heart what you are experiencing. The Lord will be pleased.

Ephesians 5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;”

Day 15

For what are you thankful today?

How do we approach our Mighty God? Sometimes it is in panic. Sometimes it is in fear of a situation.

David gives us some insight as to the proper way to approach Him. Psalm 95:2, "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms."

Let's slow down and first have a thankful heart. Thankful that He hears us. Thankful for His patience. Thankful for who He is. Then enter into a time of communication, two-way communication. Both listening and speaking.

Day 16

For what are you thankful today?

Psalm 92:1&2, "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; 2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night"

How often should we be thankful to and for the Lord? These scriptures tell us in the morning and every night. I don't think this means to quit our jobs and just be thankful and sing praises all day. What it does mean is to have a thankful heart all day.

How wonderful would our day be if we began by thanking the Lord? Then, at night, before we sleep, we thank Him again.

Day 17

For what are you thankful today?

Even as we face the trials of a fallen world, we can rejoice in the redemptive power of Christ and the renewal that He promises us. Whatever obstacles and tribulations life brings, Christ calls us to give thanksgiving through it all. As Christians, our hearts can be filled with gratitude for His sacrifice for us and the new life we can have in Him.

As Paul was closing his letter to the Thessalonians, he closed with exhortations. One of which is 1st Thessalonians 5:18, "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Notice he doesn't say "for" everything but "in" everything. Life happens and it is not always good (most of the time it is). We thank Him for His faithfulness and His unfailing love.

Day 18

For what are you thankful today?

God has uniquely gifted each of us. As life goes on sometimes our gift changes; but we are still gifted. Let's remember that it is our Father who has gifted us and anointed us. That's why Paul wrote to the Colossians and said, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (3:17).

I had a friend several years ago that shared with me quite an experience. Bill was a gifted singer and sang in nightclubs. Bill received Jesus as his Savior and vowed to God he would never sing another song that did not glorify Him. A couple of years later Bill had an accident and was severely injured. This injury resulted in him going into deep depression. He had several suicide attempts but "somehow", "something" happened, and he was not able to carry out the suicide. Bill said one day his children were in school and his wife was working. He said he went into the back room of his home and had this

conversation with God, "God, I am too much of a coward to take my life. I am going to sing "Amazing Grace" and dedicate it to the devil." He did and then said to God, "Now, what are you going to do." Bill said a voice spoke to him in the dark backroom of his home and said, "I am going to love you." Ole Bill fell to his knees and repented. He was miraculously healed both physically and spiritually. Now, when Bill sings, he never fails to give thanks to the Lord.

Day 19

For what are you thankful today?

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and amid the hustle and bustle of the season, it's easy to forget why we celebrate this important holiday. For the Christian, Thanksgiving is about more than turkey, parades, and family traditions. Instead, it's about gratitude and honoring God through the act of giving thanks

The book of Chronicles reveals to us the heart of David, and a heart that we are asking Father to work in us. 1st Chronicles 29:11-13, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. 12 Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all. 13 "Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name."

Let's stop what we are doing and read this again. But this time instead of reading David's words, let's make them ours.

Day 20

For what are you thankful today?

What about our giving? Jonah gives us some keen insight as to our attitude WHEN we give.

Jonah 2:9," But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD."

Giving of our time, talent, and treasure is a wonderful privilege for Saints. No, God will not curse us if we don't. Jesus took all our curses, or all the curses due us.

As we journey in life, enjoying the wonderful life He has given us it is out of gratitude that we give. We give with the attitude of thanksgiving.

Paul taught that as we give, it causes others to be blessed, which results in their thanksgiving to God.

2nd Corinthians 9:10-12, "Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,"

Day 21

For what are you thankful today?

It's easy to get swept away in the rush of everyday life and forget to be grateful for all the things we've been given, especially during the holiday season. When that happens, little by little, we start to feel on-edge, easily angered, and forget about the goodness of God.

Reminding ourselves that it is by His great mercy that He saved us. That we cannot add one item to obtaining our salvation. We are utterly hopeless in our selves to be righteous before God. We rejoice in Psalm 13:5, "But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation."

We ought to clap our hands, shout, or however we express our thankfulness to a merciful God right now!

Day 22

For what are we thankful today?

The goal of all believers should be to become more like Jesus. Not doing what He did but becoming who He is in our nature, the essence of our being. Our thoughts, our passions, our motives, etc.

The scripture says this occurs by an act of the Holy Spirit. 2nd Corinthians 3:18, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

With this in mind, we are thankful for the Holy Spirit's continued work in our lives. Yes, we are resting in our relationship with the Father. This rest comes from having received Jesus as our Savior. But we all want to grow in that relationship. Paul wrote to the Colossians saying how thankful we are for this work. Colossians 2:7, "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

Day 23

For what are you thankful today?

Isaiah 12:4 says, "And you will say in that day: 'Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.'"

This is one of the many verses that begins "in that day." In what day? In the case of Isaiah 12 it is the day of deliverance, freedom, and salvation.

Praise God, we are experiencing everyday freedom, deliverance, and salvation. Not in the sweet by and by but in the nasty now and now.

Let us enter each day with a thankful heart for what the Lord has done. Let's share with others what the Lord has done. Let us tell others that God is God above every circumstance and situation in life.

Day 24

For what are you thankful today?

We are living in a fantastic world. The opportunities are unlimited.

Also, being totally honest, there is a lot of turmoil. At the time of this writing, 2024, prices on almost everything are soaring. The political climate is chaos. It seems that no one wants to compromise on anything—it's all "my" way or nothing. Christian martyrdom is at an all-time high. We could go on, but you get the picture.

There is one constant: God. God has a kingdom that cannot be moved by anything or anyone. And we are living in that kingdom. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews has to say. Hebrews 12:28, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,"

Let us be thankful that God is not wringing His hands in fear, pacing up and down and saying, "what am I going to do?"

Since God is not in fear, we are not either. We are a thankful people for His unshakable kingdom.

Day 25

For what are you thankful today?

One of my all-time favorite songs is *It Was Enough* written by Larry Bryant. Part of the lyrics with the chorus:

Lord, I see so much in me
That I just can't get right
Things that weigh me down each day
And steal my sleep at night
In Your Word I read about
A peace I wish I felt
But how can You forgive me
When I can't forgive myself

It was enough
The blood that You shed
It was enough
That You rose from the dead
It was enough
To set me free
It was enough
That You died for me

One of the ways to obtain peace for believers is to realize that Jesus has truly paid it all. Another way is to be thankful. Paul says, in Philippians 4:6&7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and

supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Day 26

For what are you thankful today?

Ever roll out “on the wrong side of the bed?” You know, when our attitude could be better. It is a fact that how we begin our day usually determines how we live that day.

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 118:24, “*This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.*”

We are aware, both by experience and in relationship to others, that sometimes life can be tough. Jeremiah experienced the most stressful and tortuous times in the history of Israel. Yet he wrote in Lamentations 3:22-24, “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”

Try to begin each day with the expectation of a newness in the Lord and in life. Be thankful.

Day 27

For what are you thankful today?

Just what does a gift mean to us? Well, if it’s something we really want, we are extremely happy and thankful.

Many of us have received a “re-gift.” A gift that someone else has received but passed on to you. Please don’t be critical. Yes, it may be something that they did not want, or it could be something that they cherish and their love for you has caused them to want to share. Maybe they did not have funds to buy a new gift??? It’s all about the attitude in which we receive the gift.

In 2nd Corinthians 9:15 Paul describes God’s gift as “indescribable.” 2nd Corinthians 9:15, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

How can we ever describe the gift of God? We can’t. But we can be thankful.

Day 28

For what are you thankful today?

There is something great about reciprocal thankfulness. Saying to one another how thankful we are. In Ephesians 5:19&20 Paul spoke about helping each other on our spiritual journey. Part of that help includes sharing back and forth with others about things, or people, or God, or Jesus, or the Holy Spirit for which we are thankful.

As someone shares with us their thankfulness, it reminds us of that area also. The same thing happens when we share with others.

Ephesians 5:19&20,

“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

Day 29

For what are you thankful today?

Changing a lifestyle can be extremely challenging. I read a few years ago that it takes a month of exercise for every year we have been out of shape, to get back into good shape.

Many have cultivated a lifestyle of complaining, groaning and moaning, and being a “glass is half-full” kind of a person.

We know Father wants us to be thankful. Not that He needs it, but we need it.

But yet, we don’t want thankfulness to just be something that is really not us.

So, how do we do this? Do we grit our teeth and determine to “do this thing?”

1. Begin with a quiet time alone with Father. Just talking and listening just like we do our best friends.
2. Read the scriptures. As we read the Holy Word of God, the Holy Spirit will make the Word alive to us.
3. Ask Jesus to fill us with the Holy Spirit.
4. Allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives—this is Kingdom living.

After a period of time, it is different for all of us, we will begin to have a thankful spirit/attitude.

Day 30

For what are you thankful today?

Imagine what the world would look like if we all routinely pondered the things we're thankful for. Thanksgiving is a wonderful time of year to remember all your blessings in your life and give thanks to God for it all. More than that, it is especially important for Christians to cultivate an attitude of gratitude and thankfulness throughout each and every day.

The Bible — and specifically, Bible verses on thankfulness and gratitude — encourages believers to thank the Lord regardless of life circumstances, with gratefulness serving as a central theme in the human experience.

The last of our “30-day challenge” in this November Daily Devotional is an assignment.

Go back to day one and re read all of the verses used throughout the month. Make being thankful a goal each day.

December

December can be a hectic time. For most of us, it is just like any other month. Go, go, go. I just watched, for probably the “umpteenth” time an episode on the Andy Griffith Show about a visiting minister to their church whose message was about slowing down, taking it easy, and enjoying life.

Let’s do this in December. Let’s start by reading these devotionals not just to get through them but to glean some things that can be applied to our lives.

Day 1

I have a friend who takes Ephesians 5:19 seriously and literally. It says, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;” He arises very early every morning, goes to his quiet place and reads several of the chapters in Psalms. He then takes out his red hymnal and begins to sing some hymns. You know, he always has a positive and upbeat attitude. Maybe there’s something to what he does, hmmmm!

I do know this, Jesus invested several hours alone with the Father. He even instructed His disciples to “go to their closets...” Matthew 6:6, “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Hey, it might have some great and positive results.

Day 2

As a child, Christmas was very exciting. We usually received one present. A football or basketball for the boys. Clothes for the girls. I still get excited about Christmas. Not for presents that I will receive but to see our children and grandchildren receive their gifts.

I don’t think Jesus was really born on December 25th. I don’t think He was born in December. But that is beside the point. Why He was born and what He accomplished is of the utmost importance.

Galatians 4:4&5, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

He came to redeem us. To buy us back from a lost relationship with the Father.

Day 3

I read this great story not long ago: A mother was having a gathering to celebrate the birth of her newborn son. She invited a bunch of friends over to celebrate his arrival. She welcomed her guests, and they all had a great time celebrating, eating, and drinking.

After a while, one of the ladies said, “Well, bring the baby out. Let us see him.”

The mother went to get the baby from his crib—he was nowhere to be found. She started to panic and fell fearful. Suddenly, she remembered that the baby was still at her parents’ house, where she had left him that morning. She and the guests had been having so much fun they had forgotten what the party was about in the first place.

During the Christmas season, many people get busy with the celebration and forget that the birth of Jesus Christ is the reason for the season.

Day 4

In the second year of Jesus' ministry while on earth He had huge gatherings. Some followed for the "loaves and fishes" and others followed for the miraculous healings. When Jesus challenged some to discipleship, they left Him. He turned the twelve that He had chosen and asked if they would leave too. Peter said, "To whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life."

Isaiah prophesied some 750 years before Jesus saying, "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him."

What caused His followers to stay with Him was not His good looks, fine facilities, or even His charisma. It was the anointing.

My friends, let's not be caught away by anything else than the anointing. The world is not hungry for a show, they are hungry for the anointing—the touch of the Master.

Day 5

In John 5:39 Jesus said, ""You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Eternal life comes only through Jesus. Jesus was talking to a group steeped in religion. They carried the scripture around their waist or attached to their heads in some way.

While scripture memorization has great value. Feeding the hungry and clothing the poor are extremely commendable. But eternal life comes only through Jesus: His substitutionary death and resurrection.

I am reminded of a very good worship song entitled *The Heart of Worship*. Part of the lyrics say:

I'm comin' back to the heart of worship
And it's all about You
It's all about You, Jesus

I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it
When it's all about You
It's all about You, Jesus

King of endless worth
No one could express
How much You deserve?

Day 6

There are almost 9,300 songs written about Christmas. Some are jingles, some "spiritual", and some about fictitious characters.

What's your favorite Christmas song and why? Stop and think about it.

Christmas is a wonderful time of year for some but for others it is very stressful.

Let's make resting in Jesus a year-round occasion. 1st Peter 5:7 says, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." All of our sin, stress, sorrow, cares, anxieties; everything. He really does care and desires to give us rest and peace, peace beyond understanding.

Now, it would be easy if all we had to do was snap our fingers and it would be done, not so. It takes a desire on our part. Also, we need to stop dwelling and meditating on what might have been or what we wish things were like. —Begin today.

Day 7

Reading 1st Timothy 1:15-17, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

We might contend with Paul about just who is the chief of sinners. Paul declares that it was by Jesus that he obtained mercy. He went on to declare the King is alone wise. In other words, what God says and does in us is greater than our opinion of ourselves.

Rest in the eternal, immortal, invisible God who alone is wise. Then give Him honor and glory forever—
So be it.

Day 8

John 1:14 tells us about the birth of Jesus, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Many scriptures tell of the glory that Jesus had with the father before He came to earth. I encourage you to read the book of John.

John 3:16 declares, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." You see, Jesus came into the world and died for all mankind.

As we know, the New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek word *word* used in John 1:14 is *logos* while the other Greek word translated as *word* is *rhema* (pronounced ray muh). Here's the difference. *Logos* means a written word, something that all can read. The word *rhema* means the word alive; it becomes alive to us. How many times have we read a certain passage and then one day wham, it becomes alive.

Although Jesus died for all, He does not become alive to us until we receive Him as Savior. John 1:10-13 says, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Is He alive to you?

Day 9

Listen to this startling statistic. In the United States alone there are about 2 billion Christmas cards sent each year. I'm sure, in time past, there were even more.

Our mother used to string a line in the house and hang Christmas cards that we received on it. It was always a joy, and they were heartwarming to read.

Some cards speak of Santa Claus, and some of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer among other secular themes. However, most speak of the glorious birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

While Christmas card sending is becoming a thing of the past, let's not allow the birth of Jesus to slide by.

Day 10

One of the blackest and shameful times, if not the most, in American history is slavery. It's amazing to me that Paul, the great apostle, never dealt much about being free from human slavery.

What he did deal with was being free where we are. None of us have personally experienced being enslaved by another human being. We have, however, been in bondage. We were in bondage to sin. Some were, and still are, in bondage to a set of laws, whether Mosaic, Church, or self-imposed.

The good news is that Jesus has freed us. Romans 8:15 says, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" Also, in John 8:36, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Go ahead, enjoy life and enjoy your spiritual journey.

Day 11

There is a wonderful teaching by Jesus in Luke that will carry us through whatever life throws at us. Luke 6:48, "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock"

Several years ago, a very good friend of mine built a house and sold it. A few years later the house was destroyed by fire. My friend bought the house back. Now, you may ask, why would someone buy a house that was completely destroyed by fire? My friend built the house and knew that the foundation was good. He built another house on the same foundation and sold it.

If we have built our house on the foundation of Jesus Christ, we will never fall. Sure, storms come, the strong winds blow, but we are still standing. Listen to what Isaiah said in 28:16, "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.'"

Day 12

There are many great fathers in the world. Many of you reading this are a great father.

Yet Jesus said this, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11)

Another good word for "evil" here is earthly. We, as earthly fathers, are limited. Not one father can bring everlasting fulfillment. Many fathers have good occupations, but no occupation can guarantee to be a constant source of provision.

We have a heavenly Father who is the total source of every need of mankind. Romans 14:17 says, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Righteousness (right standing with God), peace (that goes beyond human understanding), and joy (the inner exhilaration) comes through by the Holy Spirit of God.

Day 13

Anyone ever been treated badly, taken advantage of, lied to, or in any way mistreated? We all have. Jesus said in Luke 17:1, "Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to *him* through whom they do come!"

The Greek for offense means, "the movable stick or trigger of a trap." We have all seen mouse traps. We apply the bait, set the trigger and WHAM, the mouse is caught.

When maltreatment comes, we can choose to walk in love and forgiveness, or we can be angry and offended. When we are offended, we trip the trap, just like the mouse. The bad news is, we are the ones that are trapped. The offending party goes on their merry way, and we are left with being trapped. Trapped by anger, resentment, even hate.

These bad reactions will take their toll on our spiritual journey.

Let's choose to forgive. Yes, it's hard. So, we cry, "Holy Ghost, pull me through."

Day 14

On one of the many confrontations with the Pharisees, Jesus said, in John 2:19, "Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Yes, Jesus did die on the cross and was buried then resurrected. Jonah was really in the belly of the fish.

Let's look at another aspect of "three days" in our scripture today.

"Three days" was an idiom of that time. You know, phrases and sayings that are familiar to one culture but maybe not another. Like, "he's a chip of the old block." Or "she has a chip on her shoulder." We all know what these mean, but other cultures do not. "Three days" in that culture meant that the reason for which someone does something has been accomplished.

When Jesus died on the cross, was buried and resurrected, the reason for which He came to earth was accomplished. He completed our salvation and restoration. He may have been in the grave two days, one day or four days; it doesn't matter. He completed the work.

Day 15

We are extremely thankful for the wonderful gift of salvation. Titus 3:5 says, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

We understand that, on the cross, Jesus gave His life for us. However, in the resurrection, He gave His life to us. Dr. Luke, in Acts 17:28-31 says, “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ 29 “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. 30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

One of the ways in which He gave His life to us is with a new identity. We are not sinners saved by grace. We used to be sinners, but we were saved by grace; sinner is no longer our identity.

Paul told the Galatians, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Day 16

Did you ever notice that the bible does not tell us why God loves us? He just does, it’s who He is. If God would ever say, “I love you because” He would cease to be love. He would qualify His love based on our performance.

He loved us while we were sinners (Romans 5:8). He loves us when we “do right” but He loves us when we do wrong. That doesn’t mean He approves of wrongdoing, just that He still loves us.

He loved us so much that He gave us what was most precious to Him. He turned His back on His Son. Matthew 7:46, when Jesus was hanging on the cross, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Day 17

Acts 2 records the first message preached after Pentecost. Part of it, in 2:36&37 says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

This was a tremendous change for them. They had had generation after generation after generation of serving God in one way. Now, Peter tells them that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ) and they had crucified Him.

Someone has said that the only person that likes change is a wet baby. Lotta truth to that. Many of sit in the same chair at home. We eat at the same place at the table. We come to church and sit in the same pew and park in the same spot. Nothing wrong with that.

But when it comes to spiritual things, God is constantly changing. The Gospel does not change but methods do.

There is a fancy phrase that describes what has to happen in order to transition into what God wants to do now. It is called a paradigm shift. A paradigm is the way we see things or understand things. When we grasp old ways of doing things because that's the way we have always done it, it signals that something has become a tradition. The bad part is, we will miss out on what God wants to do in us and through us.

Day 18

Matthew 1:18-23, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

The virgin is an absolute necessity.

It is the fulfilment of Prophecy. Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

In order for Jesus to become the sacrifice for our sin, He had to have not inherited the same sin. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—" Every person ever born of man and woman inherited sin. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit.

Day 19

Matthew 2:1, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem."

For the most part ancient Palestine was a rugged land: Soil scorched, sand dunes, lined huge cracks in the sun parched earth. Vegetation and water were virtually non-existent. Bethlehem (City of Bread) had wheat fields, lush terraces, vineyards, abundance of figs and olive trees. In the middle of a wasteland, a beautiful fertility existed. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Jesus will appear in our wastelands, our disappointments, and dry places.

Psalm 43:5, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God."

Day 20

Matthew 2:11, “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

The visit of the Magi gives us some wonderful lessons.

They were men of education and wealth. When they saw the dwelling and surroundings of the “King”, they could have left in disgust. They didn’t. When life does not turn out like we want, don’t get disgusted, stay faithful.

They presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

This was not a chunk or slab of gold, it used to be, but someone fashioned it to make it more valuable. At the close of the 20th century a \$5 bar of steel could make \$10 worth of horseshoes. The same \$5 bar could make \$350 worth of needles. It also could make \$32,000 worth of knife blades. That same \$5 bar of steel could make \$250,000 worth of springs. It just determines whose hands the steel bar is in.

Jesus can take our lives, when we think we are not worth much, and make us into something beautiful. Isaiah 61:3, “To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”

Day 21

Matthew 2:6, “And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people, Israel.”

To govern means to rule or command. Most translations say “shepherd” instead of governor. Jesus rules and commands from a place of care and love, just like a true shepherd.

Jesus ruled over demons, leprosy, fevers, the sea, paralysis, blindness, deafness, and the list goes on. Deuteronomy 28 lists several curses. As we follow the ministry of Jesus, we find that He healed all of these. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”

He rules over sin, sickness, poverty, lack, and everything else.

Day 22

When the angel visited Mary, announcing to her that she would give birth to the Messiah, she had a natural and understandable response. Luke 1:34, “Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” The angel then explained how; Luke 1:35, “And the angel answered and said to her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*”

Have you ever been in a situation where you saw no way out. You may have cried out, “how.” There are some things that are beyond all human reasoning and logic. The virgin birth, the resurrection, our unrighteous lives becoming right with a Holy God.

William Cowper found himself in the dilemma of his unrighteousness. He was convinced, through “terrorist” teaching that it was impossible. After several suicide attempts, he finally understood the message of GRACE. He wrote a wonderful song about it, *There is A Fountain*. One of the verses goes:

E’er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die:
And shall be till I die,
And shall be till I die;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

We may be able to explain many things. We accept by faith and live in victory.

Day 23

Matthew 2:1&2, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

Many songs we sing at Christmas are reminders that Christmastime is supposed to be happy. Songs like "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "Have a Holly Jolly Christmas," "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire," "Jingle Bells," and "Walking in a Winter Wonderland" all communicate that Christmas time is to be a joyous, trouble-free season.

But let me ask you honestly: Is that what you are experiencing this season? Probably not. For some of you, personal problems keep you from experiencing the joy of the season. For others, you feel like one crisis after another has run you over. With such an avalanche of problems it is hard to have a holly-jolly Christmas.

There are a couple of questions from our scripture to consider:

1. What are we seeking?

The wise men were seeking Jesus, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews.” Let’s make Jesus our top priority of our everyday journey.

2. Where are we looking?

When we look for joy in any other place, we will ultimately be disappointed. True joy comes when we look to Jesus. Not our inner self, not others, not situations, but Jesus.

Enjoy Christmas with the King of Kings.

Day 24

Luke 2:8-12, “Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 “For there is born to you this

day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 “And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

In the first century, shepherds were generally scorned as shiftless, dishonest people who grazed their flocks on others' lands. They weren't the pleasant Hallmark faces we're used to seeing this time of year. We have sentimentalized them so on our Christmas cards and art that they look like gentle folk waiting to go to a homecoming celebration. No picture is farther from reality.

We may ask, “why would God pick shepherds?” One reason is He was telling us that no matter our social, economic, education, or sinful status, He chooses us—we are accepted through Jesus.

The birth of this child is about God coming to us in our everyday lives and saying to us, “Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news.”

- It's about God meeting us in our pain and loneliness.
- It's about God meeting us in our frustration and anger.
- It's about God meeting us Monday and Wednesday and Friday.
- It's about God wanting to be a part of our lives every day.

Day 25

Merry Christmas

Luke 2:13&14, “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Can you imagine the brilliance on that lea? A multitude of heavenly host praising God. Traditionally we say these were angels praising. But the scripture says, “there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God” Who were these heavenly hosts? I don't know, do you?

The most important message is the light of the world was born. John 1:1-9, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world”

Jesus brings “light” to sinful people, broken people, outcasts, lonely people; “whomsoever will.”

Day 26

Paul said, in 2nd Corinthians 10:12, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

Use your imagination. It won't be like this but for illustration purposes. You are standing in line at the pearly gates waiting for your turn to stand before God. Your name is Alan Hitler and just ahead of you is Adolf Hitler. You're feeling pretty holy right now. But what if your name is Alan Bojaxhiu and just ahead of you is Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (Mother Teresa). Uh oh, this could be trouble.

We are not compared with anyone else. We are compared with God's perfect standard. The result, "You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting."

The Good News—Ephesians 2:8&9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Day 27

As we prepare for the coming new year, many are taking personal assessments and making resolutions.

Let's consider keeping the most important things first. One of which is our character.

John Wooden instructed his basketball players, "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation because your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

Salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit. Transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. Going to heaven is a promise to those who walk by faith. Character, what we do when no one is watching, is a choice.

Day 28

More thought on resolutions.

Why not make a resolution to make Jesus first in our time, talent, and treasure.

Losing weight, quitting certain habits, starting to work out, etc. are all good things. As Jesus said, "These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

Jesus also said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Was He really serious? Seek first the dominion of God in our lives? Every day? What do you say? Luke 6:46, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

Are you feeling guilty. Don't feel guilty, just make the necessary adjustments.

Day 29

How to spiritually prepare for the new year?

Our preparing for the New Year spiritually should prioritize Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship. These three elements will help us grow in our relationship with God and make us a blessing to others. Preparing for the New Year spiritually is definitely worth doing. So go ahead.

We live in a "me" world. While we enjoy Facebook, sharing with our friends and families. It is amazing how many "selfies" are on there daily. Many are obsessed with self.

Galatians 3:14 says, "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." God's first conversation with Abraham is found in

Genesis 12:2, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.”

Notice in Genesis that God promises to bless Abraham; that’s fantastic and true—God wants to bless us. The next part says, “you shall be a blessing.”

Let’s start each day by saying, “Father, how can I be a blessing to someone today.”

Day 30

Slow down. A very good friend gave me a book recently about slowing down; thank you. I receive it for myself and share it with others.

As we all to well know, we live in a fast-paced world. Especially parents with young, active children. Trying to juggle jobs, games, family time, etc. can be very difficult. A friend of mine said his dad told him he needed to pace himself. My friend said, “I am, I have it on full throttle and keeping it there.” Good news, he slowed down before having a nervous breakdown.

I don’t know how to tell you parents and grandparents to slow down. But we can all find time to invest with fellowshiping with the Father. This must be a top priority.

Whatever we have to do to invest five minutes or so with the Father, just do it.

Day 31

What do we expect for the coming year? Psalm 65:11 says, “You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance.”

I don’t know what the coming year holds. I do believe we can enter it, and each day, with the expectation of the Favor of God; we call it the “FOG.”

We don’t enter the new year, or life with the attitude of gloom and doom or woe is me. We enter believing that God is a good God.

James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

Wake up each day thinking, “how can I be a blessing today” and “let’s see what great things God will do today.”