

Wisdom to Guide You

A collection of poems
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Franklin C. Edwards

Wisdom
to
Guide You

FRANKLIN C. EDWARDS

WISDOM TO GUIDE YOU

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Loneliness of Leadership	2
The Generational Curse of Silence	5
How Trauma Becomes Identity	8
The Addiction to Validation	11
The Cost of Survival vs. Truly Living	14
Faith in a World that Glorifies Self	17
The Pressure to Heal Fast	20
Grief with No Timeline	23
Poverty as a Pipeline to Violence	26
The Death of Childhood Dreams	30
Men Raised by Broken Men	33
The Price of Being Different	36
Love that Hurts vs. Love that Heals	39

When Success Feels Empty	42
When the Church Hurts You	45
Addiction to Chaos	48
The Fear of Outgrowing People You Love	51
When Prayer Feels Pointless	54
Toxic Positivity	57
The Fear of True Intimacy	60
Escaping vs. Healing	63
The Burden of Potential	66
Resilience Fatigue	69
The Quiet War Within	72
When Faith and Doubt Coexist	75
<i>About The Author</i>	79

The Loneliness of Leadership

- *Isolation as spiritual preparation* • *Criticism as a price of leadership*
 - *Protecting clarity from outside influence*
 - *God's presence outweighs human praise*

In my loneliest hours, I was the greatest leader.
Isolation is key because humans can be great deceivers.
The more people around you,
the more likely you are to become an underachiever,
Because various people start speaking different thoughts,
and your brain becomes the receiver.

And when the opinions of others get in your brain,
Then they begin to leave a stain.
It hurts to be alone, but the price is worth the pain.¹
So always remember, less is more.
Your relationship with God is more important than any man
that will walk through that door.²

They're gonna say you were a bad captain
until you decide to leave the ship.
Once you leave the ship,
Then they'll say they wished you came back to lead the ship.
But at that point, you'll be on to better things
and won't even need the ship.³

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Luke 5:16 — “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

² Galatians 1:10 — “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?”

³ 1 Kings 19:10 — Elijah said, “I am the only one left...”

Reflection Question

Everyone wants the crown, but few talk about the isolation that comes with it. How do you stay spiritually healthy when leadership feels lonely?

Journal Prompts

- What voices compete with God's voice in your leadership journey?
- How does isolation clarify or cloud your decision-making?
- When has solitude drawn you closer to God?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why does leadership often come with loneliness?
- How can accountability and solitude coexist for spiritual leaders?
- What does Jesus' pattern of solitude teach us about spiritual focus?

Prayer Prompt

*God, remind me that You are near in my loneliest hours.
Help me discern Your voice through the noise and lead with
confidence in You.*

Challenge of the Week

Schedule one uninterrupted hour this week to be alone with God—without your phone, agenda, or pressure to perform. Simply sit and listen.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Generational Curse of Silence

- *The cost of family silence*
- *Breaking generational trauma*
- *Confession as a healing practice*
- *Love as a tool for generational change*

Generational curses that were never broken
because nobody decided to speak.
Trauma and pain passed down through families over time
have made them weak.
The generational curse of silence is a disease
that's immensely hard to cure,
So speak now or forever hold the pain that your family has to endure.¹

Please, talk to one another as a family, come together and heal.
Jesus will help you all solve your problems as long as you believe
He's real.²
Because if you don't address the issues you've faced as a family,
you'll continue to pass them down.
So talk to each other and choose love so you can turn
your bloodline around.³

And when you watch the next generation grow, you'll see smiles,
so don't be quiet and not say a peep,
Because we both know you'd rather see the generation
after you smile instead of weep.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Proverbs 28:13 — “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

² Romans 10:13 — “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

³ 1 Peter 4:8 — “Love covers over a multitude of sins.”

Reflection Question

How does silence shape identity across generations? What part of your family's story needs to be brought into the light?

Journal Prompts

- What unspoken beliefs or hurts shaped your childhood?
- What have you learned about love through silence or absence?
- What do you hope future generations in your family inherit from you?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why is silence often mistaken for strength in families?
- What does Scripture say about confession and healing?
- How do we start honest conversations without blame?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, help me be the voice that brings healing into my family line.
Give me wisdom, love, and courage to speak where silence once lived.*

Challenge of the Week

This week, reach out to one family member
and open a meaningful conversation.
Share one story or question you've never voiced before.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

How Trauma Becomes Identity

- *Pain as a false identity* • *Healing through Christ*
- *Owning your story vs. being owned by it* • *Choosing renewal*

Your pain became your face, and now you're unfortunately
unrecognizable.

Your trauma has become your identity, and that identity
is no longer disguisable.

The world misses the old you with your natural, glowing personality,
But you wear your pain and trauma so well that it's sadly
become your reality.

I know you've been through a lot but give it to God
and return back to your happy ways.¹

Don't make what you're going through permanent.

I promise it's only a phase.²

Life can be a maze,

But grow closer to Christ, and I promise you'll see better days.³

Are you healing, or are you wearing your wounds
as if they're badges of honor?

Because wearing those badges will give you depression,
then soon you could be a goner.

I know that you're strong, but even the toughest knights
have a chink in their armor,

So heal your soul and read your Bible.

I guarantee that life will feel calmer.⁴

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Matthew 11:28* — "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

² *Ecclesiastes 3:1* — "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."

³ *Romans 15:13* — "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him."

⁴ *Psalms 107:20* — "He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave."

Reflection Question

Are you healing from your past—or wearing it as your identity?

Journal Prompts

- What moments of pain have shaped how you see yourself today?
- How would your story sound if Christ rewrote your identity?
- What does it look like to release the “badges” you wear?

Group Discussion Questions

- How does trauma mask or rewrite our identity?
- Why do people cling to their wounds as proof of strength?
- What does true healing in Christ look like?

Prayer Prompt

*Jesus, help me stop finding identity in my trauma.
Remind me that I am made new in You—
and not defined by what I've endured.*

Challenge of the Week

Choose one belief about yourself rooted in pain.
Write it down—then write God’s truth over it using Scripture.

Great — here are the next two entries:

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Addiction to Validation

- *Approval-seeking in the digital age*
- *Identity vs. perception*
- *The emotional cost of performance*
- *Freedom from people-pleasing*

The addiction to validation is society's newest drug.
Why do people want to be seen so often?
If they aren't getting approval, they'd rather pull the plug.
Social media is driving them to a coffin.

The lengths that people go to be noticed is childishly sad.
Just to be seen online,
People will act like toddlers that need attention from Mom and Dad.

What is the real price you pay for always seeking attention?
Don't you ever feel exposed?
In a world where your privacy is constantly public,
The judgment you deal with is self-imposed.¹

Validation costs you your self-righteousness, independence,
and confidence.
Is stripping yourself of mental awareness really worth the consequence?

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Galatians 1:10* — "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?"

Reflection Question

What's the emotional and spiritual cost of needing to be seen?

Journal Prompts

- In what ways do you crave validation from others?
- How does public approval shape your private peace?
- What habits pull your attention away from God's approval?

Group Discussion Questions

- How does social media fuel the addiction to validation?
- What does it look like to serve God in secret?
- How do we build self-worth rooted in God, not people?

Prayer Prompt

*Father, I confess my desire to be seen.
Help me care more about Your approval than the applause of people.
Anchor my identity in Your love.*

Challenge of the Week

Spend one day creating or serving without posting or telling anyone. Let it be seen only by God.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Cost of Survival vs. Truly Living

- *Survival as a system* • *True freedom in Christ*
- *Reframing what it means to live* • *Sacrificial living vs. mere existence*

It costs to be alive,
Which means it costs to survive.
You have to pay for water that falls out of the sky,
The type of things that make you not even want to try.

But what's the difference between surviving and thriving?
Are you stuck in a system designed by the higher-ups
to keep you down?
Are you dying to live a life that allows you to fly
instead of being chained to the ground?

Only you can answer these questions for yourself,
And the answer to your questions will have a major impact
on your mental health.

So that poses the question... what does it mean to live?
It means not trying to receive when you know you can give.¹
It means killing your old ways for a life that's more disciplined.²
It means you do a lot less talking and a lot more listening.
It means counting your blessings and living a life filled with joy.³
It means sparing the ones that you know you could destroy.
It means talking to God, reading your Bible, and attending church.⁴
It means looking for Jesus every day and never ending your search.⁵

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Acts 20:35 — “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

² Romans 12:2 — “Do not conform to the pattern of this world...”

³ Philippians 4:4 — “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

⁴ Hebrews 10:25 — “Not giving up meeting together...”

⁵ Jeremiah 29:13 — “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Reflection Question

Are you just surviving in systems designed to keep you stuck? What does it actually mean to live?

Journal Prompts

- What does “truly living” look like in your own life?
- Where are you just surviving emotionally or spiritually?
- What systems or habits are limiting your freedom?

Group Discussion Questions

- How do we define success: by thriving or surviving?
- What does biblical freedom look like in practice?
- How can we make joy a habit and not a result?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, help me break free from survival mode.
Teach me what it truly means to live—and to live abundantly in You.*

Challenge of the Week

Choose one area where you feel stuck.
Make a small, faith-based change that aligns with living freely.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Faith in a World that Glorifies Self

- *God vs. worldly values* • *Discernment in a self-obsessed culture*
- *Standing firm in truth* • *Spiritual wisdom over societal pride*

It's easier to stand firm in God when you look into the world sadly,
Because most things in the world usually end badly.
Whether it's pride, greed, lust, or fame,¹
All things that come from this world usually end the same.

But God isn't of this world, so all of His decisions are flawless.
If you stand with the world, you're standing with a place that's lawless.
If the world wasn't lawless, then there wouldn't be so much sorrow.
God has never broken the laws;
He's the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.²

You stand firm in God by fearing Him and praying for His wisdom.³
Society preaches self-worth and instant gratification
because society is an evil system.
So find a good church with a good pastor and pay attention
to every word,
Then go and tell many people everything that your two ears heard.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ 1 John 2:16 — “For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

² Hebrews 13:8 — “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

³ James 1:5 — “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God... and it will be given to you.”

Reflection Question

How do you stand firm in God when culture constantly preaches self-worship?

Journal Prompts

- What worldly values are hardest to resist right now?
- When have you chosen obedience over popularity?
- How does seeking wisdom help ground your identity?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why does the world glorify pride, and how do we guard against it?
- What helps you stay spiritually anchored in a chaotic culture?
- How do you lovingly share truth in a world hostile to it?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, give me eyes to see clearly.
Help me resist the lies of self-glorification and stand firm in Your truth.
Make me bold in love and anchored in wisdom.*

Challenge of the Week

Identify one way you've been shaped by the world more than the Word—and actively choose to reverse it this week.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Pressure to Heal Fast

- *The weight of public expectations* • *Private healing vs. public perception*
- *Grace in the process* • *Walking with God at your pace*

The pressure to make a comeback when you fall off can be intense.
You were forced to bet on yourself in self-defense.

Self-defense because life hits you at all angles.
First, life will knock you down, then begin to strangle.

And now everyone wants your comeback story,
but nobody wants your process.
It's like they only care about the final result
and never about the progress.

But remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint,
and you're bound to win the race.¹
All you have to do is follow Christ and run at your own pace.²

Ignore the eyes that are on you, the chatter about you,
the judgment too,
Because the man you pray to is the only one that can truly judge you.³

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Philippians 1:6* — “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...”

² *Hebrews 12:1* — “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

³ *1 Samuel 16:7* — “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Reflection Question

Everyone wants your comeback story—but not your process. Why do you think that is?

Journal Prompts

- When have you felt rushed to heal before you were ready?
- What does your pace of healing look like right now?
- What does God say about the value of process?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why do people celebrate outcomes but ignore the in-between?
- How can we honor people's healing timelines better?
- What does Scripture say about process and perseverance?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, remind me You're patient with my process.
Help me stop performing and start trusting that
Your timing is always perfect.*

Challenge of the Week

Let go of one expectation you've been placing on yourself.
Write a new goal that honors both healing and grace.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Grief with No Timeline

- *The lingering presence of grief* • *The myth of “moving on”*
- *Hope in eternal reunion* • *Living in a way that honors loss*

The timeline of grief is never-ending.
Living without the ones you love never gets easier,
but you grow stronger.
And society can be very condescending;
They’ll say the pain will go away if you just wait longer.

But what are you waiting for?
The ones you miss are never coming back.
And I know it feels impossible,
but you have to get your life back on track.
Although your soul says you can’t move on because it’s not ready yet,
And your mind knows the memories you made with them
you’ll never forget.
And your heart is sad because there lies some regret,
Due to the fact that you couldn’t fix all your issues
with your loved one before they paid their almighty debt.

Your spirit is there to remind you that the bright side
hasn’t been seen yet,
And the bright side is that you will one day see them again.¹
Whether you miss your family, partner, or a really close friend,
Yes, unfortunately, the sins we commit have a cost, and death is the price.
Thankfully, you will one day spend eternity with them in paradise.²

So smile, wipe your tears, and let Christ remove that dark cloud.
Continue to live your life in a way that would make the one you lost proud.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:14 — “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”

² Romans 6:23 — “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...”

Reflection Question

Society says move on. Your soul says not yet. How do you personally know when healing has begun?

Journal Prompts

- What lies have you believed about the timeline of grief?
- Who do you miss, and how do you honor them?
- What comfort has God provided during loss?

Group Discussion Questions

- How do you hold grief and hope at the same time?
- Why is grief not a linear process?
- What does it mean to live in a way that honors those we've lost?

Prayer Prompt

*God, grief still lingers—but so does Your presence.
Thank You for walking with me through sorrow.
Help me heal, not hurry.*

Challenge of the Week

Write a letter to someone you've lost.
Say what was left unsaid, and invite God into the ache.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Poverty as a Pipeline to Violence

- *Cycles of poverty and systemic oppression*
- *Survival-driven choices*
- *Root causes of crime and broken systems*
- *Injustice and opportunity gaps*

Chris was only 14 but grew accustomed to dope fiends.
Another eviction notice has him stuffing crack rocks in his jeans.
Born into a place where the sun never shines,
It's a jungle in his neighborhood and he's just swinging
through the vines.

You can't relate to his pain if you haven't gone days without eating.
His father is nowhere to be found, so his mother took a beating
From every man that she let into her life.
Chris' mother was strong, but no man saw her as a wife.

Roaches on his forehead when he wakes up in the morning.
He can't save his money for a rainy day because it's always storming.
Clothes always dirty because he can't afford laundry soap,
And if the light bill isn't paid this month,
Chris is gonna run out of hope.

Too young to get a job, so Chris was forced to rob,
Even if opportunity knocks, his door doesn't have a knob.
Stopped going to school because school isn't paying any bills.
Straight A's are cool, but they don't pay for any meals.

It's hard to be scholarly
When you're born into poverty.
The car note was late,
So the tow man just took it off the property.

Now his only option is to find a connect and hit the streets,
Because crime still pays, and it's been days since Chris
has had something to eat.
Now the question I leave you and all the readers...
Is poverty a business system put in place by our so-called "leaders"?¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Isaiah 10:1-2* — "*Woe to those who make unjust laws... to deprive the poor of their rights...*"

Reflection Question

It's easy to judge the outcome, but what about the environment that molds it? Does society set some people up to fail by design?

Journal Prompts

- Have you ever judged someone's outcome without understanding their environment?
- What systemic issues contribute to cycles of poverty?
- Where do you see injustice woven into your community?

Group Discussion Questions

- How does poverty create a pipeline to crime?
- What responsibility do communities and governments hold?
- What does biblical justice look like in modern systems?

Prayer Prompt

*God, break every system designed to harm the vulnerable.
Use me to bring justice, compassion, and truth where it's been denied.
Help me see people—not just problems.*

Challenge of the Week

Support a local outreach or justice initiative this week—financially, physically, or prayerfully. Be part of the solution.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Death of Childhood Dreams

• *Letting go of old dreams* • *Trusting God's redirection*
• *Finding purpose beyond disappointment* • *Gratitude for closed doors*

The death of childhood dreams
Is rarely as bad as they may seem.
You realize that your childhood ending
Is yet another ending scene.

In this movie we call life,
We get to write our own script,
And if your childhood self would've gotten what they wanted,
Then your entire script would've been flipped.

If your childhood wishes would've been granted,
You wouldn't have been able to receive the seed that God planted.¹
Of course, the realization that your dreams will not come true
shall always be painful,
But it's the bright side that's waiting for you in the future
that keeps you from feeling shameful.

It's always a blessing that we don't get what we asked for,²
Because when God denies one blessing,
He always has a better one in store.
So don't be upset when God closes a door,
And for the Lord's will to be done in our lives is something
we should ask for.³

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Proverbs 19:21 — “Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.”

² Romans 8:28 — “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...”

³ Psalm 143:10 — “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God...”

Reflection Question

What happens when reality snuffs out your spark?

Journal Prompts

- What dream did you have to let go of?
- What closed door ended up being a blessing?
- How has God redirected your life in better ways?

Group Discussion Questions

- How do you trust God with your purpose after disappointment?
- What dreams might God be reshaping, not killing?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, I've let go of dreams I once held dear.
Help me trust that You're writing something better.
Let me mourn the past—but hope in Your plan.*

Challenge of the Week

Write a new vision statement for your life—not based on what you lost, but what God might still do through you.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Men Raised by Broken Men

- *Father wounds and generational cycles*
- *Healing through spiritual fatherhood*
- *Becoming who you needed*
- *The contrast between earthly and heavenly fathers*

Men raised by broken men don't always become men.
Then they have a son of their own, and the cycle repeats itself again.
Those "men" take a lot of losses and can never seem to find a win. They
still blame all of their problems on their fathers every now and then.

And it's understandable, because without a positive male role model,
you experience a lot of pain.
The unhealed trauma you feel as an adult can make it hard to maintain.
Sure, you can complain how your dad never supplied your wants
and none of your needs,
Or you can be a man, open your Bible, and get the help you need.¹

Your earthly father wasn't there,
but your Heavenly Father will make sure you succeed.²
Your earthly father wasn't reliable,
but your Heavenly Father will always do the deed.
What your earthly father stripped from you,
your Heavenly Father will replenish, and that's guaranteed.³
So be the father that you wish you had when it's time to raise your seed.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Psalm 119:105 — "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

² Joshua 1:9 — "The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

³ Philippians 4:19 — "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."

Reflection Question

As an adult, how do you heal when your childhood father figure wasn't ideal?

Journal Prompts

- What did you long for from your father figure growing up?
- Where do you still feel the effects of that absence today?
- How has God shown up for you in those emotional gaps?

Group Discussion Questions

- What cycles do father wounds create in adulthood?
- How can men become what they never received?
- What does it mean to rely on your heavenly Father?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, I bring You the father-shaped wounds I still carry.
Heal what's been broken, and help me become what I needed.
Let me lead with love—not lack.*

Challenge of the Week

Write a letter to your father—whether you send it or not.
Let God into the space between what was and what you
still need to heal.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Price of Being Different

- *Cost of standing out* • *Envy and misunderstanding*
- *Courage to walk in purpose* • *Rooting identity in calling, not approval*

The price of being different is rewarding, yet annoying,
to summarize it.
But if you can stand out for the greater good, then I'd highly advise it.

The pros are you get to be a leader, an innovator, a role model,
and a pioneer.
However, there will definitely be cons, so let me be clear.

People will send jealousy, hate, envy, and pessimism your way.
The more you stand out, the more negativity they will convey.
The truth is, they're only upset because secretly they want
to be everything you portray.
They wish they had the courage you display every single day.¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Matthew 5:16 — “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Reflection Question

Do you think that the price of being different is worth the cost? In your opinion, what does it cost?

Journal Prompts

- When have you been misunderstood for standing out?
- What parts of you do people envy but not understand?
- What keeps you grounded when criticism comes?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why do people criticize what they secretly admire?
- How do you lead well without shrinking or performing?
- What does God say about being “set apart”?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, help me stay faithful even when I feel different.
Let me shine for You, not shrink for them.
Make me bold, not bitter.*

Challenge of the Week

Reflect on one way you’ve downplayed who you are to fit in.
Take one bold step to live authentically this week.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Love that Hurts vs. Love that Heals

- *Distinguishing toxic love from true love*
- *Spiritual discernment in relationships*
- *Healing through God's example of love*
- *Generational relationship patterns*

Love that heals is love that builds because it's genuine
and comes directly from the spirit.

Love that hurts is love that breaks, and it's so tainted
that you couldn't pay me to go near it.

You can tell the difference between the two in people's smallest actions,
Because in the smallest actions
Are where you find the largest detractions.

It's the little things that determine the biggest outcomes in life
and in love.

You either have a plethora of love in your life,
Or there's a lack thereof.

But God will show you how to love because His love is eternal.¹
Before He showed me how to love,
Love felt abnormal.

So pray for discernment, and you'll see the difference
between hurting love and healing love.²
You'll always be able to choose healing love,
Then you'll always be feeling love.³

FOOTNOTES:

¹ 1 John 4:16 — "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

² Philippians 1:9–10 — "That your love may abound... so that you may be able to discern what is best..."

³ Romans 12:9 — "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good."

Reflection Question

How do you tell the difference between love that builds and love that breaks?

Journal Prompts

- What kind of love were you modeled growing up?
- Where have you confused toxic love with true care?
- What does God's love teach you about healing?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why is discerning love so difficult in modern culture?
- How does spiritual love differ from romantic infatuation?
- What does healthy love actually look like?

Prayer Prompt

*God, help me know what love is—not just feel it.
Teach me to recognize what's from You
and what's just disguised pain.*

Challenge of the Week

Ask God for discernment before engaging in (or continuing) any romantic or emotional connection this week.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

When Success Feels Empty

- *Misplaced ambition*
- *Chasing goals that don't satisfy*
- *Spiritual fulfillment over accolades*
- *Inner peace through God*

You've reached your greatest heights, yet there's still a void to be filled.
You've accomplished everything you've set out to accomplish...
shouldn't you be thrilled?
Yet in your soul, you still feel like something's missing.
All your wishes have come true, so why are you still wishing?

You're still empty even though you have money
and reached your goals, because success should never be about
money. Success should always be about the things that bring you joy
when the sky isn't sunny.
Like family, friends, the little things that money can't buy,
Real fulfillment comes from the things that money can't quantify.

Your relationship with God and the yearning you have
to make it grow
Is what truly brings inner peace, along with the things
that money can't show.¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹John 6:27 — "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life..."

Reflection Question

You hit the goals, got the money, but the void's still there. Why?

Journal Prompts

- When have you reached a goal and still felt unsatisfied?
- What pursuits have left you feeling spiritually empty?
- What does real fulfillment look like for you?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why is success without peace so common today?
- What does it look like to redefine success with God?
- How do you stay humble when blessings come?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, I've chased the wrong things.
Bring my heart back to what matters most—You.
Fill the empty places with purpose, not possessions.*

Challenge of the Week

Identify one pursuit that's left you spiritually empty. Pause it. Spend that time investing in a deeper relationship with God.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

When the Church Hurts You

- *Church hurt and forgiveness*
- *Human imperfection vs. divine perfection*
 - *Healing your faith beyond the building*
 - *Seeing Jesus, not just His followers*

When the church disappoints you, please never be discouraged.
The reason being is that Jesus is the only reason you should
even feel encouraged.¹

What I mean by that is every churchgoer, including the pastor,
is an imperfect person,
So how could one sit in church and expect a perfect version?

Jesus is the only reason you should feel encouraged
because He was the only perfect man.
The rest of us spreading His wisdom have been sinful
since our lives began.
So when the church lets you down,
forgive them because they too are sinners.²
And if you're a sinner judging another sinner,
then you'll never end up being a winner.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Hebrews 12:2 — “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith...”

² Colossians 3:13 — “Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

Reflection Question

How do you navigate your faith after you feel like your spiritual leaders have failed you?

Journal Prompts

- When have you been hurt by a church or spiritual leader?
- How has that affected your relationship with God?
- What truths remind you that Jesus never fails?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to separate God from flawed people?
- How can we rebuild after spiritual disappointment?
- What does healthy accountability look like in church?

Prayer Prompt

*God, help me to forgive where I've been hurt.
Refocus my eyes on You—not the flaws of man.
Heal my faith where it's been bruised.*

Challenge of the Week

Reach out to someone who has experienced church hurt. Listen. Love. And reflect Jesus to them—not just religion.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Addiction to Chaos

- *Dysfunction as comfort* • *The false normalcy of chaos*
- *Peace through Christ* • *Spiritual reorientation*

You're addicted to chaos because you've never found peace.
And while you search for peace, the chaos always seems to increase.
So it got to the point where chaos became peaceful to you.
Sorry to say that peace and chaos oddly became equal to you.

If chaos is your peace, then what does that make peace itself?
It's hard to answer that because peace is something you've never felt.
But I'm here to tell you that peace comes from following Christ.¹

If you want peace and not chaos,
Following Christ would be my best advice.²

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *John 14:27* — “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives...”

² *Isaiah 26:3* — “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.”

Reflection Question

Peace feels foreign when dysfunction is all you've known. How do you change that in your own life?

Journal Prompts

- When did chaos become your normal?
- What does peace feel like to you today?
- What habits reinforce the cycle of disorder?

Group Discussion Questions

- How does chaos become familiar and addictive?
- What does God's definition of peace look like?
- How can you pursue peace intentionally?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, I confess that I've gotten comfortable in my chaos.
Help me relearn what peace feels like — Your peace.
Lead me out of confusion and into quiet.*

Challenge of the Week

Every day this week, take 10 minutes of silence (no phone, music, or screens). Ask God to meet you in the stillness.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Fear of Outgrowing People You Love

- *Growth vs. loyalty* • *Navigating emotional attachment*
- *Courage to evolve* • *Trusting God's pruning*

The fear of outgrowing people you love is a part of growing pains.
And if you don't experience pain in this life,
then you won't experience any gains.
It hurts because you love them, yet you have to let them go.
And if your relationship with them will ever be the same
is a question you'll never know.

There are things and people you'll have to sacrifice on your journey
as you grow,
And just because you outgrow a friend doesn't mean
they become a foe.
It just means you've started a new chapter in your life
and entered a new season.
People come and go; everyone can't last forever in your life,
no matter the reason.

Yes, it can be scary to leave people behind and move on,
But ask yourself, is it scarier to move on or to move wrong?
A better life usually awaits for you on the other side of fear,
so move strong.
Learn to let people go, and if they come back,
then it was God's plan all along.¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1 — “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

Reflection Question

Why does personal growth sometimes force distance from the very people who shaped you?

Journal Prompts

- Who are you afraid of outgrowing?
- What does it mean to honor someone's role in your past?
- What new season might God be inviting you into?

Group Discussion Questions

- What's the emotional cost of evolving?
- How do you leave people behind without guilt?
- How do you know when it's time to release someone?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, help me embrace the season You've placed me in.
Give me courage to grow and grace to let go.
May love remain, even if our paths change.*

Challenge of the Week

Reach out to someone you've drifted from and thank them for how they helped shape you — even if you've outgrown the relationship.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

When Prayer Feels Pointless

- *Prayer fatigue* • *Misplaced expectations*
- *Trusting God's timing* • *Reconnecting with spiritual purpose*

When prayer feels pointless,
it's because you're not practicing patience.
And you're not practicing patience
because you've reached a place of complacency.
You're complacent because you feel like,
as a Christian, you've done enough,
So you now feel like God owes you His attention
when times get rough.

But you forget that God isn't on your schedule;
instead, you're on His time.
Therefore, on your journey up the mountain of life,
practice patience as you climb.
And if you're questioning whether or not God is listening,
you're having little faith.
God hears and sees any and everything,
so know your prayers are heard and safe.¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹ 1 John 5:14 — “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”

Reflection Question

Have you ever had a moment where you questioned if God was even listening?

Journal Prompts

- What made prayer feel pointless?
- What do you expect from prayer that might need to shift?
- How can patience be part of your spiritual practice?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why does unanswered prayer create doubt?
- How do you stay spiritually motivated when you don't "feel" results?
- What does healthy expectation look like in prayer?

Prayer Prompt

God, I feel weary.

Remind me that You hear me even in silence.

Help me stay present, patient, and trusting in Your timing.

Challenge of the Week

Commit to a specific prayer (same time, same place) every day this week — even if it feels hard or empty.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Toxic Positivity

- *Emotional honesty* • *Dangers of denial*
- *Discerning truth beneath the smile* • *The spiritual cost of pretending*

Toxic positivity always leaves a strain,
Because lying to yourself will always deepen pain.
Forcing a smile, but your soul gets nothing to gain.¹
Your heart always knows the truth,
No matter how much you lie to your brain.

Fake motivation that doesn't fulfill your purpose
Will, in the end, always make you feel worthless.
While on the outside you're faking like you've got
everything together,
Your spirit on the inside is crying for help because it knows
you should be doing better.

So never live a lie; please, just live your truth.
It may hurt to face the truth, but what pain does lying really soothe?

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Proverbs 14:13* — “Even in laughter the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief.”

Reflection Question

How can forced smiles and fake motivation actually deepen pain?

Journal Prompts

- When have you felt pressure to pretend you're okay?
- What does honest emotional expression look like for you?
- What do you gain when you're fully honest with God?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why is “positive thinking” sometimes harmful?
- How can we create space for emotional truth in faith communities?
- What role does vulnerability play in spiritual healing?

Prayer Prompt

*God, help me live honestly.
Let me stop faking strength I don't have.
Show me how truth brings freedom, not shame.*

Challenge of the Week

Choose one person to be emotionally honest with this week — even if it feels uncomfortable.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Fear of True Intimacy

- *Vulnerability and protection* • *Fear of being known*
- *Relational trust* • *Guarding vs. opening the heart*

Vulnerability threatens our need to self-protect,
Because as humans, we are naturally wired to connect.
We are programmed to have a social life
and a yearning for companionship,
So we often look for company, and our self-protection begins to slip.

Being vulnerable can be scary because people are hard to trust.
They'll use your vulnerability against you and leave you crushed.
You start opening your heart to people,
and they hold it against you in disgust.
It's like you open up to someone, then watch your feelings
as they get flushed.

And because of these reasons, some people fear true intimacy.
That's why you should cautiously choose who to be vulnerable
with intricately.¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Proverbs 4:23* — “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Reflection Question

How does vulnerability threaten our need to self-protect?

Journal Prompts

- What's your relationship with vulnerability?
- Who has honored your heart — and who hasn't?
- How can you open your heart with wisdom?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why do people fear intimacy?
- What's the difference between guardedness and wisdom?
- How can faith help us risk vulnerability?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, You know my heart — every scar, every wall.
Help me trust again. Teach me how to open up wisely and courageously.*

Challenge of the Week

Open up in a vulnerable conversation — not recklessly, but intentionally. Let someone see a part of your real self.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Escaping vs. Healing

- *True healing vs. avoidance*
- *Facing emotional pain*
- *Numbing vs. surrender*
- *Long-term peace over quick relief*

Escaping means running; sometimes means you're being a coward
Healing means taking accountability;
it's what makes you feel empowered.

Escaping means to numb the pain,
and numbness wears off eventually.
Healing means to face the pain and overcome it essentially.¹

Escaping looks like running,
Running back to the sins from which you came.
Healing looks like praying,
And asking to be freed from those sins in Jesus' name.²

You escape with distractions,
That bring temporary satisfaction.
You heal,
When you kneel.

No, healing doesn't happen overnight because important things
take time,
But it's better to heal over time than to walk around blind.

And pray to the one living God that's real.
So to heal or to escape, the choice is yours.
Ask yourself... aren't you tired of fighting internal wars?

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Psalm 34:18 — *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."*

² James 5:16 — *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

Reflection Question

Explore the difference between distractions that numb pain and actions that truly heal it.

Journal Prompts

- What distractions do you turn to when in pain?
- What does real healing look like in your life?
- What step could move you toward healing this week?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why do we choose escape over healing?
- How can prayer and community support deep healing?
- What's the danger of spiritual numbing?

Prayer Prompt

*God, I don't want to keep running.
Show me the root of my wounds — and how to release them.
Give me strength to choose healing, even when it's hard.*

Challenge of the Week

Fast from one distraction that helps you escape.
Instead, use that time to pray or reflect.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Burden of Potential

- *External expectations* • *Internal worth*
- *Societal pressure* • *God's definition of success*

When society puts expectations on you,
those expectations can turn into pressure.

Society's expectations of you can turn the world
into your biggest oppressor.

Because once people feel like you're not meeting their expectations,
They try to make you feel lesser,
As if you're lesser of a person,
And that your feelings don't matter like they once did,
Which makes your confidence begin to worsen,
And that smile that you would never hide
Is now hidden inside.

These are the different ways that society's expectations
can shape your self-worth.
But remember, your opinion of yourself matters
more than anyone else's on this earth.¹

So, what do you think when you look in the mirror?
Once you block out society, your own vision for your life
will be clearer.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Galatians 1:10 — *"Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God?
... If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."*

Reflection Question

How does society's expectation of your potential shape your self-worth?

Journal Prompts

- Whose expectations have shaped your view of yourself?
- What do you believe God says about your worth?
- How do you redefine success for yourself?

Group Discussion Questions

- What happens when you feel like you're not "enough"?
- How can faith reframe pressure into purpose?
- What habits help you stay centered in God's vision?

Prayer Prompt

*God, free me from pressure to perform.
Show me that my value isn't in others' eyes but in Yours.
Remind me I am already enough in Christ.*

Challenge of the Week

Unfollow or silence 3 voices (social or real life) that fuel performance pressure — and replace them with truth-filled ones.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

Resilience Fatigue

- *The emotional toll of strength* • *God's strength vs. human strength*
- *Rest as a spiritual discipline* • *Carrying burdens with Christ*

When you're tired of being strong, but the world doesn't let you rest,
When you just wanna relax, and you're tired of giving your best,
Confess your frustration to the Lord and let Him carry your burden.¹

Because the show must go on,
But now is not the time to close the curtain.

Just a heads up... the world will never let you rest
because this is an evil world we live in.
You give your all in the world,
yet the world still wants you to give up or give in.
But you have Jesus by your side,
so you must stay determined and driven.
So let God answer for you, and stop trying to make every decision.

You're not stronger than the world,
but Christ is because He has risen.²
Yes, I know it's hard, but don't let the world strip you
of your ambition.
Continue to follow Christ, and His plans for your life
will come to fruition.

Resilience fatigue is draining, but never let it become an inhibition.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ *Matthew 11:28 — "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

² *John 16:33 — "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Reflection Question

What happens when you're tired of being strong, but the world doesn't let you rest?

Journal Prompts

- What does emotional exhaustion look like in your life?
- What burdens have you been carrying alone?
- What would it look like to let God lead more fully?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why is resilience often expected but rarely replenished?
- How do you define strength in a biblical sense?
- What practical changes help you move from burnout to rest?

Prayer Prompt

*God, I've been holding too much.
I feel worn out, trying to hold everything together.
Remind me that I don't have to.
You are strong enough for both of us. Amen.*

Challenge of the Week

Take one thing off your plate this week and surrender it in prayer.
You weren't made to carry everything.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

The Quiet War Within

- *Hidden emotional battles* • *Loneliness in struggle*
- *Spiritual growth through internal storms*
- *God's awareness of what no one else sees*

The private battles that only you face,
While you keep a happy look on your face,
Show how dedicated you are to staying focused as you run
your own race.

These inner battles you fight will shape you and mold you;
They can either elevate you or fold you.

They make you realize who was there for you
as you walked through the storm.
You notice some people's love for you is strong,
While other people's love for you is lukewarm.
You realize that fighting pain silently shouldn't be the norm.

Most importantly, you realize that while you're at war with yourself,
you're still able to perform.
But as always, like everything in life, the choice is yours to pick:
Will the inner battle you fight heal you,
or will you be left forever sick?¹

FOOTNOTES:

¹ 2 Corinthians 4:16 — "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

Reflection Question

How do the private battles that no one sees shape you?

Journal Prompts

- What silent battles are you currently facing?
- How do you typically cope with internal struggle?
- What does healing look like from the inside out?

Group Discussion Questions

- Why do we often hide our hardest struggles?
- What's the risk of keeping everything internalized?
- How can vulnerability lead to healing?

Prayer Prompt

*Lord, You know the quiet war inside of me.
I ask for strength to keep showing up and wisdom
to know when to ask for help.
Help me fight with Your strength, not just my own.*

Challenge of the Week

Open up to one trusted person this week about something you've been battling alone.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

When Faith and Doubt Coexist

- *Faith vs. doubt* • *Spiritual integrity*
- *Total trust in Christ* • *Rejecting passive belief*

When faith and doubt coexist, you are failing to be faithful.
To say you have faith in God, then to be doubtful, is distasteful.
Your mouth is saying you have faith,
but your actions show that you are unfaithful.
Don't let your mouth speak righteousness
while your actions are disgraceful.

You either have strong faith, or you don't.
It's either you trust God, or you won't.
You cannot live in-between.

You must walk by faith, not by sight,
And keep hope for the things you haven't seen.¹

Always remember, a tree falls the way it leans,
So lean into Jesus, and you'll fall into a life greater
than your sweetest dreams.²

FOOTNOTES:

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:7 — “For we live by faith, not by sight.”

² Proverbs 3:5-6 — “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding...”

Reflection Question

Is it possible to have both faith and doubt at the same time? Why or why not?

Journal Prompts

- Where has doubt shown up in your life recently?
- What does it look like to act in faith even when afraid?
- How do your words and actions align (or misalign) spiritually?

Group Discussion Questions

- What's the difference between doubt and unbelief?
- How can we support one another during spiritual uncertainty?
- What does full surrender to God look like in practical terms?

Prayer Prompt

*God, I believe — but help my unbelief.
Strengthen the parts of me that hesitate.
Teach me to trust You completely and follow without fear.*

Challenge of the Week

Identify one area of doubt.
Take one small, faithful action anyway.

What do you want to say in response to what you read? God, in response I want to say...

Long term plan (Big-picture growth, values, or ongoing focus)	I will...

Write a short prayer in response to today’s reflection

Additonal Thoughts/Reflections

About the Author

Franklin Edwards is a multi-genre author and entrepreneur with a passion for using literature to inspire faith, courage, and positive change. He has written and published more than twenty-two books, including nineteen children's titles and several poetry collections for adults. His children's book *Just Be Yourself* was featured on Nine PBS and remains part of their permanent public library.



Through his company, Franklin the Helper® Children's Books, LLC, Franklin has created opportunities not only to share his own work but also to support new authors. He has guided writers through the publishing process and developed programs that bring stories and inspiration directly into schools, churches, and community spaces.

At the heart of Franklin's work is his faith. Whether through children's stories, reflective poetry, or community initiatives, he strives to remind people of their worth and purpose. His mission is to spread light and truth, using literature as a bridge that connects people to God's love and to one another.