

A Walk with Me Book



*unleashed*

31 DAYS TO REDEEM  
YOUR HAPPINESS

CAROLYN K. SMITH

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References to the devil are uncapitalized because he deserves no honor, whatsoever.

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## Recommendations

**M**y good friend, Carolyn Smith, is a living joy dispenser and capable expert on the subject of *Joy Unleashed*.

There has never been a better time in our world to unleash a book about the joy of the Lord than now! This book not only demonstrates how to unleash joy in and through your life, but it also walks you through God's gifts and fruits, how to discover them, unwrap them, and most importantly, how to interact with them.

A heart full of God's joy becomes a fountain that God can use to dispense all that His Kingdom holds. My question to you is this: **Are you willing to invest 31 days to get your tank so full of God's joy that it overflows into your everyday life and to all the lives that God puts in your path?**

I guarantee your life will never be the same if you let these powerful truths penetrate your heart and soul! Let the joy of the Lord be your strength.

DAVE HAUER

International Crusade Director,  
seeing over thirteen million people come to Jesus Christ  
Founder, Under the Influence Ministries  
Pastoral Elder, The House Church

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**A**re you tired of needing outside sources to pick you up every day, week, or month? Do you want more from life than numbing yourself with a nightly dose of Netflix? Or have you ever been jealous of those people who just always seem happy and content? This treasure of a book can help with all of that. I am not exaggerating!

**Carolyn has beautifully put together 31 days that go far beyond the basic devotional pick-me-up, moving into powerful truths that can fully transform your life.**

Will this book encourage you along the way and give you extra strength for each day? Yes, of course. But it will help you grow, day by day, into someone who has more than enough joy-strength for yourself and is able to become a source of strength for those around you.

I have seen Carolyn live these truths for years and have watched the impact of it in her life. I highly recommend this joy resource and its amazing author!

NATHANAEL WHITE

Pastor of Presence Church and author of *Become You* and *Nobility*

Some books clearly resound the heart of the author. *Joy Unleashed* is just such a one. This book declares Jesus's unconditional love and introduces us to Jesus Christ, as the true Giver of Joy. It gives powerful examples of hindrances to walking in joy and solutions to equip us, as Carolyn encourages us to take a moment to ask Jesus who He says we are.

Carolyn invites us into God's presence by not only helping us unveil our identity in Him, but also reminding us that love toward His people comes in many different forms. She encourages us to take action in creating joy for ourselves and others.

**To me, the most powerful platform of this book is the miraculous healing from pain to joy that Carolyn, herself, experienced while in the actual process of writing this book.**

God has truly embraced and anointed *Joy Unleashed*.

WENDEE BROWN

Author, *Fingerprints of God*, *Waterproof*, and *As This Little Child*

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Carolyn Smith truly knows what it means to be filled with joy. She lives the joy God has imparted to her in such a way that there is no question she is completely filled with it. This is why she can share with you the process of acquiring God's joy through this book.

Everyone who reads this book will have an easy blueprint to follow. Through the steps given, you can be filled with joy that is right for your unique life, and by God's Spirit, Who is perfect.

God never makes a mistake, and He knows each of us so well. I believe He has provided the contents of Carolyn's book, so many thousands can acquire the Joy that only God can give.

I highly recommend Carolyn's book to anyone who has been longing for true joy. I know, without a doubt, that God has sent me this message. I had been seeking it, but did not know what it was until I saw it.

**Each day in *Joy Unleashed* is a step closer on the path to the joy you have been seeking, but have not been able to find. Through God, Carolyn provides the words you need to read and meditate on, so your joy will be full.**

ELI REEVES

Stephen Minister Leader, Lakeview United Methodist Church

# Dedication

To Jesus, the Lord of my Joy, and Fourth Man in every fire I have endured. Receive this book as my offering. You are due it all.

For Jim, “Crown of Yahweh.”  
I could not have chosen a better co-adventurer. Thank you.  
Let us adventurer, my beloved!

For Andy, “Man of Joy.” You bring me so much, and share it with all.  
For Rebecca, “Captivating.” You are my friend, cheerleader and Son Shine.  
At Xerxes, Jesus transformed a peculiar people in His joy and love.

For my family, my gift: Duane (Pops), Spencer, Amanda, Brayden, Cutler,  
Treyson, Javen, Caleb and the ones to come.  
You champion my joy as you revel in your own. I adore each of you and  
hope this deeply, deeply blesses you. I am so glad we are family.

For my mother, Emmie Ida.  
You love me in both words and action, and you are exquisite.

For my dad, Jerry Ida. Your easy ways remind me God is in control.  
Your tenacity and drive encourage me to seize life’s opportunities.

For my brother, Will, “Determined Protector.”  
You are my advocate and my delight.  
For Ethan, Abigail and Olivia. You are so precious to me!

For my sister, Brenda, “Sword.” How very apt!  
You cut through pretense with frankness and laughter.  
You prove the hope of the future is worth the pain of the past,  
and I thank Jesus for you.

For you, reader. You are a joy seeker, and that pleases God.  
You will grow in joy and love. It can fill your heart and spread across the world.  
I bless you! “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)

You do not have to go through the fire to get joy.  
Just ask for it. Cultivate it.  
Keep asking. Keep cultivating.  
Then, your joy will be full.  
You will have a belly full of it...and a crop to share.

This book cultivates joy, and you can share the overflow.  
Share it to help others.

# *A Letter to My Children*

Jesus is always near.  
He watches you with care.

As He gazes upon you,  
your form is reflected in His eyes,  
and His love reflects upon your life.

Joy follows obedience,  
and obedience follows Love.

Jesus loves you with a pure, true and everlasting love.  
His love is the greatest love you can receive.

It is the life-giving love.

Follow Jesus,  
and your joy will overtake you.

With Abiding Love and Unleashed Joy,

Mama Carole

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Gear Up | *This Is Not Fluff*

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COMFORT YOUR SOUL

**Gear Up and Day 1:**

So, You Need Happiness

God's Love Never Changes

How to Use This Book

Day 1: Reset Your Gratitude



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Gear Up | *This Is Not Fluff*

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COMFORT YOUR SOUL

**I** do not read the fronts of books, much, so the front of this book is not fluff! It contains materials intended to help you on your joy journey.

Expect, then, to found your joy on Jesus, focus on His nature, learn how to use this study, and jump into Day 1, which sets the tone for this month.

Thirty-one days from now, your life will be wonderfully different from how it is today. Make the most of your journey by paying special attention to this unit.

Enjoy the journey! May your joy overflow in the next thirty-one days, and beyond.

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It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 NASB



# *Go, You Need Happiness*

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## JOY REQUIRES RELATIONSHIP

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

Galatians 5:22-23 NASB

**H**ere is the truth: joy is a gift of God, a fruit of His Spirit. Joy is God's answer to the world's need for happiness. It is much like happiness, but stronger and better in so many ways.

You feast upon joy as God's love flourishes in you and takes action. Although God protects and strengthens you in joy when you are hurting, you do not need a fiery trial to obtain it. You can just ask for it—and read, obey and embody the Word of God, the Bible. You will grow in companionship with Jesus, the Christ, as you rely upon Him, call on Him and adopt His ways. This is how we unlock the secrets of His heart and unleash His power within us. This happens when we have surrendered our lives to Christ.

Jesus can be our best friend, if we choose. God's love for us is so great that, even though our sins have separated us from Him, He would rather die than live without us. Let that sink in: He would rather die than live without us. He did this through Jesus: offered His death to pay for the repercussions of our bad choices and redeem our lives back to Himself.

Now, God deeply values autonomy, or free will. He wants you to live powerfully, exercising love and self-governance. He wants you to grow in wisdom, make your own choices, and gain understanding. Then, you will recognize and examine the effects of your choices, whether good or bad. You have the power to make good choices and live a full and free life.

God gives you free will. He knew that not all of your choices would be good. We all make mistakes, and many of these mistakes are actually sinful. God always values you above your actions, though. He doesn't want sin to block you from your opportunity for a full life in a loving relationship with Him.

So, Jesus counted the cost of bringing you back to Himself. What would it cost to cancel out the debt of your sin and make you righteous? A mathematician knows how to apply and remove elements from each side of a difficult equation to get the true value of an expression.

Jesus created math, and He created you. You are an expression of Him, and He knows your value. He knows the math of your redemption. Jesus understands how to simplify your problems and nullify your sin. When Jesus does redemptive math on your behalf, only His love and your righteous relationship with Him remain.

Jesus's solution is this: when the time was right, He came to earth, became a man, and lived a sinless life. He then took your punishment for sin upon Himself by dying on the cross, because He knew your sins would be too weighty for you to carry into a relationship with Him. He is so loving and kind! Now, you can have nothing held against you, spiritually, once and for all.

Jesus stood by His decision to give you choices, and He left you with just one at the end of all of this: will you surrender your life and follow Him?

This one choice remains, because all the bad ones you have made before are cancelled by the blood payment of Jesus, settling your debt permanently. Will you trade your life for His? Will you receive the cancellation of your debt of sin, and receive His life of freedom and right-standing? This will bring you great joy.

Make this choice. The joy you want is as close to you as Jesus. This book can draw you closer to Him. It equips you to shrug off your pain and receive His joy by interacting with Him, deeply. At rest in Jesus, you can truly live, breathe and experience heavenly joy.

Don't put off your decision for another day; today is the day for your salvation. Take it now, while you can. You are not going to heaven when you die unless Jesus has redeemed you with His forgiveness and taken His rightful place as your Lord. It cost Him His life of perfection, and it only costs you your fallen life. Do it. It is worth it to sacrifice your current life so you can grab onto the plans He has specifically for you.

Following is a prayer you can use. Speak every word to God from the depths of your heart; mean it. It will change your world from the inside out.

## PRAY TO BECOME GOD'S CHILD

*God, it's me.*

*I know You love me. You gave me life. You made me special. I am Your creation, unlike anyone else. You made me for a purpose.*

*I haven't lived up to Your expectations. I have gone my own way, and didn't go for You. You call my mistakes, "sin." Sin has distanced us.*

*Yet, You love me so much that you sent Jesus to willingly die and pay for my sins. I want that.*

*Please, forgive me. I don't want to live on my own. I want Your love, Your acceptance and Your forgiveness. I want to belong to You, and experience Your love and joy. I accept You, and I put You in charge of my life, as my one and only God.*

*I forgive all who have wronged me. I know this pleases You and opens my heart to Your joy. I will trust You and follow You.*

*In faith, I receive Your forgiveness, Your Lordship, and Your love. Fill me, completely, with Your Holy Spirit, and cover me with Your presence.*

*Thank You, God!*

*I pray this, in Jesus's name. Amen.*

## GROW IN YOUR NEW LIFE

**C**ongratulations! If you prayed this prayer, you are now a child of God. You are also a member of His family, with brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. Contact us at [jc@ifLOURISHforlife.com](mailto:jc@ifLOURISHforlife.com) so we can pray for you and send you resources to help you grow in your faith.

Your spiritual journey has begun. Everything about your eternal future has changed in a marvelous and remarkable way. This is for you to explore and enjoy.

In a way, you are a spiritual baby. Just like a baby needs feeding, care and growth, you need the same in your spiritual life. Your prayer to reconcile with God was not an ending, but a new beginning. A new, life-long adventure awaits you! To grow as a follower of the Lord, do the following:

- 1) Pray (talk) to God. Expect to hear Him speak into your heart.
- 2) Read the Bible and let it guide your thoughts and actions.
- 3) Spend time with others who have surrendered their lives to Jesus. People can strengthen and encourage one another.
- 4) Tell people about your decision. Others will either have a similar experience to share, or will be interested in following your lead.

Please visit our website, [ifLOURISHforlife.com](http://ifLOURISHforlife.com), for more resources to help you flourish as a Christian.





# God's Love Never Changes

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## HARMONY BETWEEN TESTAMENTS

**J**oy is founded in God, so it is important that you are able to trust God: His love, His character and His selfless interest in your good.

The Bible is a book about God. It shows Who He is, and it explains much about His goodness and desire for our benefit. Many people think God changed when Jesus came to the earth and showed compassion for us by dying on the cross. That's not true at all. God has always been compassionate, and it is this loving compassion that compelled God to give His very life--in the form of His Son, Jesus--as a ransom for your beautiful soul, and for every other soul on the planet that has ever been or will be.

It is important to know that God does not change throughout the epochs of human history. He is the same as He was before the world was created. He will be the same long after you and I are gone from the earth.

The immutable nature of God means He has always acted like the fruit of the Spirit expressed in Galatians 5:22-23, He has always known everything, He has always been present everywhere, and His promises from the Old Testament are obtainable to you, now. Sometimes, we do not understand God's actions, because we have not yet delved into the nature of His heart far enough to know why He chooses what He does.

To show you God never changes, I have used both Old Testament and New Testament verses for each day's study. From these Bible texts, you can see God's personality, dependability, love and care shine through the ages.

God always cares for you. He will reward you for seeking Him.





# How to Use This Book

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## BUILDING BLOCKS OF HAPPINESS

**H**appiness is a gift of God, but like any gift, you have to unwrap the box to see what is inside. Once you do, your life will become a wellspring of joy, and God's love and promises will leap off the pages of your Bible. If this is not your common experience, then this book is for you.

This book is not a devotional, but a study. It takes work to produce the joy that will flourish your body, soul and spirit. This book is the key to getting you on the road to happiness.

Joy is a muscle that you must exercise to strengthen. If your joy is strong, you can endure hard times. If it is weak, you will struggle needlessly in the presence of His ample grace. This thirty-one day workout is an investment in your future, your happiness!

This book consists of five units of studies designed to make your happiness strong and unyielding to circumstance. Each unit builds upon one another and must be read sequentially. Once you have completed a study, you may revisit it, at any time, to go deeper into the subject and glean more joy.

### FIVE UNITS

First, you will read *Reset Your Gratitude*, then venture into these units: *Key Attitudes*; *Chase Wisdom*; *Break the Chains*; *Abide, Align & Identify*; and *Unleash the Abiding*. Let us take a look at the breakdown of each unit, so you know how each step of your joy experience builds upon the one before it.

### RESET YOUR GRATITUDE

On Day 1, you will *Reset Your Gratitude*. This short chapter will put you on the offense in your quest for joy by setting your focus on counting and

creating blessings. You will start to look for joy generators everywhere, and thoughtfully celebrate and express what is good.

Do not just count your blessings for one day. This is part of your ongoing assignment, called *Joy Takes Action*. Work at being grateful, and creating happiness for others, every day. If you forget a day, don't hold any grudges against yourself. Just wipe the slate clean and pat yourself on the back for giving yourself a break. That creates happiness, too, after all.

## UNIT 1: KEY ATTITUDES

This unit reveals God's long game strategy for godly people during times of suffering. It shows how God flips the tables of injustice for you.

In the beginning of His teaching ministry, Jesus gave a sermon wherein we find the Beatitudes. He starts almost every statement with the phrase, "Blessed are you." Did you know "blessed" means happy? It does. Jesus began righting an upside-down world by teaching people how to grab onto joy. Does this sound like a God Who doesn't care? Of course not. God cares deeply. He sent Jesus so you could live a full, happy life that overflows with His joy.

God is practical. He loves you, and He wants to help you place a genuine smile on your face. He values your smile, and your experience of unalterable happiness. After all, as He gazes upon you, my friend, He is smiling with joy.

Yes. You bring Jesus joy just by being--by living. He wants you to have this same joy in your life. He made you in His image. He wants to give you the fullness of joy, realized and completed in His presence. This joy overtakes and transforms you as you abide in Him.

Continue to count your blessings each day. In addition, take on God's perspective as you battle feelings of defeat. God has built up a blessing in every place you experience woe or hardship. He wants to trade woe for blessings, for joy.

## UNIT 2: CHASE WISDOM

*Chase Wisdom* will help you correct habits which deplete your joy, and will point you toward further growth.

God did not give the Sermon On the Mount during Old Testament days; He saved that speech for His guest appearance on this earth. But God has, actually, spoken these same sentiments of joy throughout the breadth of Scripture, including the Old Testament.

The people of pre-Christ days recognized it very clearly in the Poetry and Wisdom scriptures we find in the Bible. They were inspired by the Spirit of God and recorded by the hand of God's Kings and other leaders of

old. *Chase Wisdom* focuses on practical, dynamic steps anyone can apply to improve life and build their joy.

The New Testament backs up every joy-filled Old Testament precept you will see. Ignite your desire to delve into poetic scriptures embracing the heart of God and pouring transformational theology directly into your practical life.

Continue in gratitude for your blessings, and trade in your grief for joy. Along with *Joy Takes Action*, pursue ways you can upgrade your life by replacing useless behaviors for useful ones. This will add depth to your joy and hope for your journey.

### UNIT 3: BREAK THE CHAINS

This unit will help you get free from decisions and mindsets that have shackled you from the joy Jesus wants for you.

Every study strategically builds, within you, the knowledge, strength and resilience you need to overcome the most universally impactful and difficult barriers to joy that we have seen in ministry.

Pain, setbacks and sadness knock people off track. But, Jesus's joy keeps you on course even when the world thinks happiness is an unreasonable response. These breakthroughs to freedom help you unleash Jesus's joy in the face of what has held you back.

These days are longer and contain more in-depth work. The outcomes are worth every moment you invest. Revisit these chapters whenever you need a boost.

Continue *Joy Takes Action*, and focus on rooting out personal obstacles to your joy.

### UNIT 4: ABIDE, ALIGN & IDENTIFY

*Abide, Align & Identify* will help you truly experience God, find rest in His presence, and improve the transparency of your interactions with Him. In God's presence is the fullness of joy. You will revel in Jesus and the fullness of His joy.

Jesus encourages us to abide in Him. To abide, fill your heart with God's desires and rest in His presence. As you experience God, He establishes you in His love. You gain life and momentum just by engaging Him in these times of rest.

Ephesians 3:17 (NLT) says, "Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong." You were made for this purpose: to live in constant connection with Jesus. Adam started his life with a day of rest. It is important for you to work refreshed, as well. In the stillness of God's

presence, the bands of pain are loosened. Let Jesus bring up the subject of your pain. He will help you.

In completing your *Joy Takes Action* assignments each day, you have begun to create a space of peace in your life. Use this special environment to settle in with God and rest in His presence, every day. This will become your favorite part of each day as you grow in your personal revelation of Jesus's joy for you.

As God peels back what frustrates your joy, He gives you a fresh perspective. Your life will not seem so empty or sad, anymore. As you continue to soak, you will build up strength to shrug off heaviness and live a vibrant life. Let God do the heavy lifting as you trust Him.

## UNIT 5: UNLEASH THE ABIDING

This final unit is your take off point. It will help you, as you continue to rest in the Holy Spirit's presence, to actively walk out your day. You will feel, in a sense, that you are truly living out your life for perhaps the very first time.

To live in an engaging and transformational way is to open the door to Christ, in the world, through you. Transform your current abiding experiences into an ongoing conversation with God, a fullness of life, and an adventure.

Jesus' life was love in action. This was true in Old Testament times, too. When you put your faith in action, your joy will unleash and arise. Your impact on the world spreads the very thing God is doing within you. In this unit, we explore what it is to live joy out loud.

You are becoming an unleashed force for Jesus, living in His love and walking in it every day. Embrace the precedence of God's supernatural over the earthly natural. Walk in the truth of Jesus, and change the world around you by being His disciple. Continue in gratitude and holiness, flipping negative circumstances and trading your old ways for His new and better ones.

Spend some time, each day, doing nothing but soaking in God's presence. This anchors your identity, nourishes your soul and strengthens you to flourish in each area of your life. From a place of identity, you can live life, *out loud*, as a testament to God, His goodness and His grace. May the joy of the Lord abound in you and in everything you do.

## PICK YOUR FAVORITE VERSION

When you walk through this book, you will notice it uses a large number of Bible versions, translations and even paraphrases. The purpose of this choice is to acquaint you with as many Bible options as possible, so you

can choose what Bible translation you like best, and you can know why you choose it.

In case you were wondering, translations convert words from one language to another. Versions convert meanings, instead. Paraphrases convert effect or essence. They are wonderfully poetic, but do not offer the details most people desire for studying purposes. Translations are preferred for serious study, and versions are generally easier to understand while still keeping faithful to the details of the text.

The above is a rule of thumb; no law says publishers must label their Bibles according to it. So, to really know what kind of Bible you have in your hands, look up the publisher's writing philosophy. You will find it in the front of your Bible.

## NOW IS YOUR TIME FOR JOY

So there it is: five units in thirty-one days, and a life transformation to fuel your soul and your future. Join me. Take each challenge seriously, and apply yourself to the lessons, to gain greater intimacy with God. This will flourish your joy.

And, if you are moved by this book, please share with people who need it. God is interested in hearts, not numbers. So, if you know one heart in need of encouragement, make a difference in that one, precious life by sharing your joy. God will bless you as you bless others. Thank you for sharing God's joy and strengthening others' lives.





# Reset Your Gratitude

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## DAY 1

Eyes that focus on what is beautiful bring joy to the heart, and hearing a good report refreshes and strengthens the inner being.

Proverbs 15:30 TPT

So keep your thoughts continually fixed on all that is authentic and real, honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always.

Philippians 4:8 TPT

**W**e often try fixing our lives by looking at messes we make and pledging to improve. Give yourself a break, today. God made this day, filling it with His fresh mercies and grace. Release your worries and count your blessings.

At break time, backpackers unload their packs into others' hands. These fellow travelers stand behind one another, lifting off the burdens before sliding them to the ground.

Weary hiker, you know your journey is long. You need rest.

So, picture Jesus. He stands behind you, ready to take your pack. Shrug your worries, responsibilities and anxieties off into His capable hands. He scoops them up and deftly slides them away. Your shoulders feel light, and your back straightens. You stretch your arms into the sky and breathe, deeply. Not a single problem remains your burden to carry. Jesus is a good Friend. Nothing is too heavy for Jesus. He does not tire.

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

1 Peter 5:7 NLT

This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalms 118:24 NASB

Now, take in the joy and beauty of the day, much like hikers as they stretch after unloading. God created today, and He created a path for you. He has not placed obstacles in the way, but has given you a way around or through every circumstance, without exception, according to 1 Corinthians 10:13. Think on these blessings, and thank Jesus. Shrug your day onto Him whenever you have a problem, and when rising or resting. Jesus never leaves you, and He has the joy and strength you need, today.

...the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10b NASB

Matthew 11:29-30 says Jesus's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. So, heavy burdens belong to Jesus—and trusting and obeying belong to you. Let God carry the responsibility, and be like a child, trusting Him. Rest, and obey God's gentle voice. Then, your back will be straight, and your shoulders light, as you execute your responsibilities each day. It is more noble to rest as a child in the Kingdom of God than to wrestle with your situation as an orphan. Be God's child. Rest. Be grateful and peace-filled. Jesus will give you His answers and show you the way you should go (see Isaiah 30:21 and John 10:27). Do this as often as you need. Shift your burdens onto Jesus.

“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33 NLT

In each time of rest, count your blessings. And, practice gratitude when you can. Don't just think about people who make you happy, but actually say thanks to them. And, be kind. This fuels you and others.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet

together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,  
and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:23-25 ESV

Burden casting, gratitude and kind actions brighten your day and reap heavenly rewards. May God bless and strengthen you as you embrace your happy, new perspective and your adventure in joy.

## RESPONSE

End each day's lesson with your own prayer about the topic. Not all days will have one provided, but today's does.

If you ever get stuck, not knowing what to say, remember that Jesus is a Person as much as He is God. He likes to converse even more than you do. So, just talk to Him, and expect an answer back, in your heart.

Here is a "prayer starter" for this day's lesson:

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thanks for life and for Your goodness.*

*Please, help me focus on beautiful things, today.*

*Help me be kind and grateful to You and other people.*

*Help me see my opportunities to bless, so we can all have joy.*

*Your kindness is greater than my feelings or circumstances.*

*I am powerful beyond my means to understand.*

*You lift my pack and replace it with a light burden.*

*It is easy to handle.*

*As I give You my full attention, today, I trade...*

*my sin for Your forgiveness,*

*my judgment for Your mercy;*

*my fear for Your love, and*

*my doubt for Your eternal hope.*

*I trade my understanding for Your ways, and*

*my independent self-reliance for Your gentle Fathering.*

*I love you. Thank you, in Jesus's name.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Think about the wonder and beauty God has created. You are counted in this creation. Made in His image and baptized in His love and kindness, you are draped in His blessings which surpass your understanding. *Thank God for these things.*
- Everything in your 'cares' backpack has been dumped at Jesus's feet, and He has replaced your burdens with light ones. Think of someone God has used to lighten your burden or refit your yoke. It may be as simple as getting coffee or as significant as saving your life. Thank God for this person, and *thank them in a note or on the phone, today.* Prefer the handwritten note. It gives the recipient a long-lasting reminder that their impact is needed, and they are seen and loved.
- God made you in His image; He has emotions, too. He responds to love, companionship and action. *Ask Him to give you an idea of how to bless Him.* Schedule this for today if you cannot complete it immediately.
- Your life was purposed to flow with God's goodness, as we see in John 10:10 (NLT): "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." You do not have the capacity to contain all God's love and goodness, so your response to God creates a spillway of gratitude and kindness for other people. Let God's goodness flow. You are not a peasant, after all, desperate to gain God's blessings. And, you certainly wouldn't keep them only for yourself. You are God's royal child, a member of the heavenly priesthood. Jesus's kindness eclipses your need as you seek Him (see Matthew 6:33). With that in mind, how can you bless others? Schedule or plan it, today, if you cannot complete it immediately.
- Create a daily reminder on your phone or computer that says, "gratitude." Whenever this reminder pops up on your device, consider what you are grateful for and how you want to take action to bless others.

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Unit 1 | *Key Attitudes*

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COMFORT YOUR SOUL

**Days 2-9:**

Key to Heaven  
Key to Comfort  
Key to the World  
Key to Righteousness  
Key to Mercy  
Key to Seeing God  
Key to Sonship  
Key to the Kingdom



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# Unit 1 | *Key Attitudes*

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## COMFORT YOUR SOUL

**M**atthew records a day when Jesus saw many people following Him, so He spoke to them from a mountain. If you had a mountaintop experience with Jesus, would you ask him how to be happy?

Well, Jesus is concerned with your happiness, and it isn't circumstantial or fleeting happiness He wants to give you. In fact, it is "blessed:" happiness springing from your soul that just will not sit down, even when the crowd shouts, "Hush!" or the rain starts pouring.

Joy is Jesus's "blessed," for you. "Blessed" means "blissful, joyful and happy." In solid terms, it means you have a well-being bestowed upon you that the world cannot take away, and the world certainly cannot produce.

Be joyful! Be happy! Because Jesus wants this for you, He gives you an opportunity for your own, personal mountaintop experience through the reading of Matthew 5. This is what Unit 1 addresses.

Be happy, in Jesus.

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Note: Each lesson reflects upon Old and New Testament passages. This beautifully illustrates the unchanging nature of God's deep and abiding love for you.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

Hebrews 13:8 NKJV







# Key to Heaven

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## DAY 2

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:3 NKJV

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

**D**o you ever have a moment of realization that you are not the calm, cool and collected person you thought you had grown to become?

Doing well: check. Picking up speed: plenty; check. Aaand wiped out: Check. Yep, check.

There you are, wearing your big kid pants and thinking you’ve arrived, when life throws a stick in your bicycle spokes and you do a gainer. It’s frustrating, and often humiliating.

How does your wipe out look? Maybe you yelled at someone in traffic or “got told” at work. A million things can leave a person feeling sheepish. “I should have known better,” you think. Frustrated and ashamed, you bask in the all glory that embodies human imperfection as you try to gather your teeth and find your bicycle bell.

Argh. It’s hard to raise your head when you keep tripping over your own lack of wisdom, isn’t it? And, when our failures extend into our spiritual lives, it feels horrible.

When we blow it spiritually, the impacts are more far-reaching than your average bicycle gainer. Your spirit has authority over your soul and body, so messing up produces a domino effect. Those around you can get

caught up in it, too. Besides creating a chain of events in your own life, your faux pas can bump you into your friends' bikes, too. Then, they can fall.

Wonderfully, though, knowing you have blown it makes you humble. You crave God's comfort and direction, so just like a kid who runs home when he skins his knee, you can always run home to God to get your comfort, healing and direction.

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

Romans 8:28 NASB

God draws near to both the humble and to those who call on Him. You are doubly blessed. It looks like your gainer-got-no-bell day is working out for you after all. This is one of the many ways God works all things for your good because you love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Wow. The poor in spirit really do inherit the kingdom of heaven. That is grace.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 NIV

## RESPONSE

Do a skinned knee check. Where could you use healing, direction and a hug from God?

Run home. Let God clean your wounds and dress them. He is a good, accepting Dad Who knows how to heal, comfort and encourage you. His ways are best, and He even knows how to improve your bicycle ride so you can avoid some future pain.

As you run into bumps in your road, today, stop to receive God's grace, guidance, and blessings. Share your experiences with Him. You don't have to like what is happening. Just offer it to God, thank Him for it, and ask Him what He wants you to do.

You don't have to put on your big face for God, either. Let Him be big on your behalf. Just trust Him, obey Him, and let His peace wash over you and your situations. Jesus has made you free, and you are held in His love.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Spend time with God talking about today's lesson, how He wants it to transform you, and what it will mean for your joy. Obey His promptings to go in this direction and redeem your joy. Letting God help you understand and apply Scripture is how you build your life upon the Rock of Jesus. God will flourish you and anchor you in His love as you do this each day.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Key to Comfort

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## DAY 3

“Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Matthew 5:4 ESV

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3 ESV

**Y**ou are not alone. God is with you. He loves you. He has never let go of you, and it is not in His nature to do so. Even when death prevails in the earth, God’s will and His life are abundantly available to you. Jesus lives inside every redeemed person, and He wants His children to open their hearts to Him.

It is hard to deal with the pain of life, alone. You were not meant to live alone, though. It is God’s will, *and your destiny*, to have God actively live inside and through you. Ask, and He will comfort you through pains, big and small. God created time. He has plenty of it for you.

So, pour out your heart to God, and let Him comfort you. And, when He brings people to mind, share comfort with them. That way, you can comfort one another with the comfort that Jesus has given you.

It is such a gift to be with those who love you and can share comfort. Even if you do not see it now, you are most certainly not alone. You have God, angels, and a great cloud of witnesses who are cheering you on. God believes in you, and the crowd is going wild, knowing that you are going to make it through.

You have the ability to rise above your situation and carry on the joyful calling of a full life, even in the middle of your mourning. Jesus does that. He is the only One Who can. He has bought your joy for you with His blood. You cannot be alone, because He promises to never leave you. He

has promised to comfort you in your mourning. He has promised to bring you joy.

Jesus gives you peace and joy as you humbly unload your burdens onto Him, calling them out as you hand them over, in your heart. Hold nothing back, including the outcomes that your hopes had promised you. You don't need to continually carry the weight of that loss. You need God's perspective and comfort that Jesus gives. Just ask. Ask the Holy Spirit to comfort you, give you wisdom and anchor you in His perfect perspective.

## RESPONSE

*God, I need You now. I can't even fathom  
the depth  
of my need.*

*As I rest in You and spill my heart,  
please, God; show me  
Your comfort,  
Your strength.*

*I accept it.  
I will choose the fresh perspective  
You offer me.*

*And, if this perspective is not new,  
but something You have tried to impress upon me earlier,  
I apologize.  
Please forgive me for not being responsive back then.*

*I abandon my reluctance,  
ask for Your mercy and grace, and  
choose Your wisdom  
instead of my own.*

*Thank You for Your kindness and  
Your healing love.  
Amen.*

Spend time with God. Take all the time you need. Tell Him what is going on inside you, not censoring your prayers to sound proper or pleasant. Gideon was fearful, frustrated and honest with God about how he felt. He was used mightily. So, be hopeful, and give a true representation of how you feel and what is really bothering you. Let God

be your Friend. Let Him comfort you and breathe upon what He wants to heal in your heart. This takes time, but is worth it.

You can revisit this action again and again. He wants this of you. It is an inherent part of a trustworthy relationship with a Parent Who loves you and is deeply committed to your good. Get ready for a steady and strengthening transformation of your heart and for a shedding of the burdening weight of life's hindrances and frustrations. The Rock of Ages has never stopped coming alongside broken hearts to give strength and hope to their owners.

### JOY TAKES ACTION

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.







# Key to the World

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## Day 4

"They are blessed who are humble, for the whole earth will be theirs."

Matthew 5:5 NCV

The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

Proverbs 22:4 ESV

"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

Luke 17:10 NASB

**P**ut yourself last, and others first. See what happens! You are more than the sum of your parts, and so is the Body of Christ. When you forego your desires for the good of others, you serve God and bless people in many ways. It is worth the sacrifice. It is totally worth it.

I get it; you have things to do. But, God will make time for that; He has so much invested in you. Your ship can only come in after you first send it out, casting your bread upon the waters to feed many.

Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.

Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 NASB

You do this every day. In your job, you work to produce value, reach milestones and pursue company objectives. When these things come to pass, a ship has come in. Continue to do this, feeding the plans of those who God has entrusted to you. You will blossom and grow, and it will root you in trust and feed your endurance.

Do this for your own life, as God shows you your talents and interests. Think of one “ship of promise” that God has entrusted to you, either by words of prophecy or by virtue of your responsibilities and current station in life (e.g., parent, manager, hobbyist or caretaker). Ask God to help you identify the correct ship on which to focus.

Now, take a solid, measurable action step toward sending out that ship. This is your immediate contribution to God’s will.

Keep taking these steps. Prayerfully continue, asking God to give you clarity, direction and wisdom to complete the next action before you. Count on God’s goodness and faithfulness, and focus on the obedience, not on the outcome. We make plans, but God directs our steps. Have you ever noticed how successful He Is in rerouting our plans to accomplish His perfect and glorious will? Sometimes, we just need to get moving, so we can be wisely directed by His mighty and loving hand.

Not every ship that comes in looks as we had planned or hoped. But, you would be surprised how many do, in the long run. As you focus on walking in Jesus, doing what He tells you to do, your odds will greatly improve.

## RESPONSE

Ask God to tell you who He is, Who He wants to be for you, who you are, and what you mean to Him. He will put you in awe. Your perspective will become renewed and beautiful. Then, ask God to teach you what humility does and how to become humble.

Ask God what boats He is constructing in your life. Where does He want you to set sail on this adventure of humble obedience with Him? It is probably the case that most adventures will require the partnership and authority of others. Get ready to re-up your game on casting bread upon the water, or take a time of rest if the Holy Spirit asks. God is always right, and He knows the correct timing for everything.

God has a new direction and new things for each person in this life. This prayer time will look different from person to person, and even from prayer time to prayer time. Experience it, relish it, and don’t cut it short. You will get, measured back to you, in proportion to what you have given in your time with God, submitting to His authority and adoring Him as He is due. You are the one who does this measuring. So, enjoy this with reckless abandon. This is going to become your favorite part of the day, and you will become very eager for it.

Show God your love for Him by spending time with Him and giving Him your undivided attention. He is with you all day and loves to spend time with you. Humbly enjoy the delight of being loved by the Creator of the universe. Listen to His voice, and respond every time He speaks.

### JOY TAKES ACTION

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Key to Righteousness

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## DAY 5

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

Proverbs 4:18 NASB

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Matthew 5:6 NKJV

**I**t sounds like a good promise, right? But, how many times do we forget that God is in it for the long haul with us? It is so easy to get downhearted. It is so easy to forget that we are in process, and God is patient with us. But now, I propose to you that God is in it for you, that He is faithful, guides you in truth, and He sees a better day ahead for you than you can possibly imagine.

God wants a better future for you. He does not want you navel-gazing or worrying about the past. He crucified and buried your old man; you are new! God wants you to trust Him and know that he's going to be truthful with you and good to you.

God is always good, and He is focused on your good. There is no shadow of selfishness in Him, no impure motive. So, when His Boy, Jesus, says that He'll fill you with righteousness if you hunger for it, He is telling you the truth: the absolute truth.

What you really want to ask yourself is this: "Do I hunger for righteousness?" One nice aspect of Jesus's nature is that He is able to help you manage your hunger. If you don't feel like you are hungry for righteousness, then just ask Him for that hunger. God is a good Dad. He

will give you that, just like He gives you the Holy Spirit when you ask for Him.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10 ESV

God understands righteousness better than you do. He has good ideas about filling your life with righteousness. It's all about the blood of Jesus, and trust, and faith. God is excited about His plans, and He will see this mission through to the end. He has a bigger investment in you than you do in Him! He loves you. He has carved you into His hands.

Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

Isaiah 49:16 NASB

For today, settle your soul in the truth and knowledge that Jesus is your victory over all unrighteousness. That includes situations where you have been treated unrighteously and those times when you have treated people unrighteously. God doesn't leave anything out. He is the victor today, tomorrow, and forever. Let's just celebrate that.

Jesus is in the business of winning—and because you're on His team, you are invited into the winner's circle. From the view of the throne room, that looks pretty good. And, it gets better: since you are seated in Heavenly places, you have the right to God's perspective.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus

Ephesians 2:6 NIV

Instead of making your own righteousness, feast on His. Enjoy it. Relax. Then, when He tells you to do something, go for it. You'll be glad you did. This is how you grow righteousness. Pretty easy, isn't it? He will even go alongside you and help you do whatever it is that He is asking you to do.

Sometimes, we want righteousness, vindication or a positive judgment on our behalf. Instead of worrying about all that, ask God what He wants you to do. God's winning business is a better platform for His glory than your agenda. And, it works better for you, too.

Peter tells us to give our burdens to Jesus instead of trying to carry them ourselves (see 1 Peter 5:6-7). When we cast our cares on Jesus, we

feel heard. When we humble ourselves under His hand, we accept His judgments over our own. Our desire for a particular outcome is no longer part of the equation.

Give your burdens to Jesus, stay (or get) humble, and roll with whatever He has to say. In agreeing with God and His attitudes and choices, we make a better future for ourselves and others. This is how we are to position ourselves to be filled with righteousness. The Lord will bless it and give us His strength.

## RESPONSE

Spend some time, today, meditating on God's Word. Let Him point out to you where He is working on your behalf, and the righteousness that produces. You will be profoundly blessed to see the way God is championing your cause, and how your cause is really His cause, expressed through you and your life.

Trust God. He is good. And, obey Him immediately when He asks you to do something.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do today. Write His response down, and make a point to complete whatever He asks you, by His grace, and with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him, and give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.







# Key to Mercy

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## DAY 6

“They are blessed who show mercy to others, for God will show mercy to them.”

Matthew 5:7 NCV

With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

2 Samuel 22:26 NKJV

The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.

Psalms 145:8-9 NLT

**H**ave you ever nursed a pot of sourdough starter? It is a beautiful thing: a living organism capable of transforming flour into delicious bread. As you use it, you continue to feed the batch and foster its growth so more will be available to you the next time. Like sourdough starter, mercy begets more mercy.

God has given each one of us the ability to foster mercy in the world around us. He knows giving it can be difficult. He showers mercy on us and holds back His anger when we are unloving or unkind. So, we learn gracious love is good, and it is devoted to others. God floods us with His mercy, then invites us to do the same for other people.

Because we have been made in God’s image, it is supernaturally natural for us to behave as He does. That is why it feels so wonderful to show mercy and do good deeds; it is part of our spiritual nature. God gets

us to this place of understanding by softening our hearts with His kindness. Then, we ride on that God-given grace to change our minds and make better choices. God is compassionate toward us, and He sees us for who we really are, not what this fallen world has made us.

Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

Romans 2:4 HCSB

God's compassion moves us to help people when they need it. His mercy quickens us to forgive, even if we are still in pain. It quickens us to serve, even if we are tired. When you help someone, you help Jesus. And, He rewards you and helps you. How many times have you seen this? You can probably think of several right now.

Jesus tells about His starter dough mercy later on in the book of Matthew. It is better said in Jesus's words than my own, so here is the scripture:

“When he finally arrives, blazing in beauty and all his angels with him, the Son of Man will take his place on his glorious throne. Then all the nations will be arranged before him and he will sort the people out, much as a shepherd sorts out sheep and goats, putting sheep to his right and goats to his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why:

I was hungry and you fed me,  
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,  
I was homeless and you gave me a room,  
I was shivering and you gave me clothes,  
I was sick and you stopped to visit,  
I was in prison and you came to me.’

“Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick

or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’

Matthew 25:31-40 TM

Mercy is not an elective study at The University of Messiah. Jesus teaches the class, and it is a requirement for graduation. Here is the rest of the passage from Matthew according to the Passion Translation:

“Then to those on his left the King will say, ‘Leave me! For you are under the curse of eternal fire that has been destined for the devil and all his demons. For when you saw me hungry, you refused to give me food, and when you saw me thirsty, you refused to give me something to drink. I had no place to stay, and you refused to take me in as your guest. When you saw me poorly clothed, you closed your hearts and would not cover me. When you saw that I was sick, you didn’t lift a finger to help me, and when I was imprisoned, you never came to visit me.’

“And then those on his left will say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and not give you food and something to drink? When did we see you homeless, or poorly clothed? When did we see you sick and not help you, or in prison and not visit you?’

“Then he will answer them, ‘Don’t you know? When you refused to help one of the least important among these my little ones, my true brothers and sisters, you refused to help and honor me.’ And they will depart from his presence and go into eternal punishment. But the godly and beloved ‘sheep’ will enter into eternal bliss.”

Matthew 25:41-45 TPT

So, this is not a side note in the story of your faith. It is a central issue. If you are wondering why you are hot or cold for Jesus, this will be why. I know these are strong words, but they are Jesus’s words, and He has never lied to you. This message is worth taking to heart. The decision you make about it now will change your life forever.

Faith, in action, looks like love.

You can only please God through faith, and that faith shows up as works. James, Jesus's half brother, said this:

“Now someone may argue, ‘Some people have faith; others have good deeds.’ But I say, ‘How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.’”

James 2:18 NLT

How you stand with Jesus isn't a secret to anybody, in case you were wondering. How you love people is how you love Jesus. How deeply you love Jesus shows how well you understand and respond to His tender heart for you. Your actions show your heart.

Compassion is the basis for every growing fruit in your life. God made you, reached out to you and redeemed you in His compassion. You are an expression of His compassion, and the world is dying to see it.

God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them!

John 3:16-17 CEV

You are a supernatural child of the Living God, the Father of Compassion. All you have to do is flex your supernatural mercy muscles. Do it again, and again. Make a habit of love. This is how we prove we are God's kids: by loving each other. Love God, and love people. When you do that, you feed Jesus's sourdough mercy for you. It doubles and bubbles over, and gives you all the mercy you need.

This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:35 ISV

May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be yours!

1 Corinthians 1:3 ISV

## RESPONSE

There are people all around you who need mercy right now. Can you think of three or four of them? Can you do something, today, to make a difference for them?

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do today. Write His response down, and make a point to complete whatever He asks you, by His grace, and with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him, and give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Key to Seeing God

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## DAY 7

“God blesses those people whose hearts are pure. They will see him!”

Matthew 5:8 CEV

Create a new, clean heart within me. Fill me with pure thoughts and holy desires, ready to please you.

May you never reject me! May you never take from me your sacred Spirit! Let my passion for life be restored, tasting joy in every breakthrough you bring to me. Hold me close to you with a willing spirit that obeys whatever you say. Then I can show to other guilty ones how loving and merciful you are. They will find their way back home to you, knowing that you will forgive them.

Psalm 51:10-13 TPT

**S**ometimes, the only way you will learn something is by experiencing it. Today is such a day.

Take a moment and close your eyes, steady your heart in faith, and ask Jesus to reveal Himself to you.

Did you see that? Jesus gave you something. Perhaps it was a picture of Himself, a flooding of peace that washed over you, a welling up of joy, or something else. It was apparent only to you, a kiss from heaven. It shows He exists, loves you and rewards you for seeking Him. You were able to enjoy this heavenly moment because your heart is pure. Your heart is pure because you have revered Jesus and drawn near to Him, in faith.

You are going to see more of Jesus. Even if this exercise did not work for you, press in and ask God to reveal Himself to you in a new way—one you did not expect. Keep trying, because God promises to reward you, and even if you think you’ve been left out, you most certainly have not.

When you have a clean heart, you tend it. You keep it clean, not putting filth in front of your eyes, not listening to bad inputs, and not doing anything that attracts or invites the wrong things. As you become increasingly sensitive to God, He will become more and more apparent to you. God rides through life with you, so as you honor Him, you enthrone Him to greater measure, and His voice become clearer and more vibrant within your soul.

One day, you will whisper, “God,” in your heart, and you will hear His response,

“(Here) I Am.”

This precious connection between you and God is worth growing and preserving. It is not uncommon, but few foster it and build it to the strength it can become. I am working on it. You have been, too, I would suppose.

Even when we cannot physically see God or His movement in our lives, we know *He is there*. This is a gift of salvation, which cleansed us from all unrighteousness. But, this is not the end of the promise.

Faith also protects our hearts so we can see Jesus when what is going on around us threatens to dim our convictions and break our stride. God isn’t into hopelessness. In fact, He is the God of all hope. His hope brings His peace, and His peace improves our sight, even more.

When we sin, even in neglecting time with God, the eyes of our hearts become foggy, and our faith wavers. Yet, when we turn back again, our thoughts and motives are cleared, and so is our view of Jesus.

It is important to draw near to God, and to listen and obey. Your responsiveness in this exercise determines how well you can carry God’s glory. The Book of James speaks to this truth.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:8 NKJV

James was addressing the Church, not unbelievers. So, take each moment as a gift, and use it as a thank you and a love response to God. It is simple; not as difficult as it seems. Because, when you are in love, things get easier. When your heart slides off-center, it becomes more difficult. No shame; no guilt. Just an opportunity to run to Jesus and fix your focus. That helps you make good decisions.



Sometimes, we pray for better vision before we make a decision. Not everything we need to do is obvious. But, one of the ways we grow in faith is by stepping out as we think God has told us. This, again, improves our vision. Even if we get our decision wrong, God beams with pride because we tried. And when we learn from the decisions, we make better ones in the future.

Another way to improve our sight through good decisions is by thinking about what makes our decision so hard.

For instance, sometimes we get stuck in a making a decision because we think we don't know what God wants. Believe it or not, when you are stuck on a decision, it isn't usually because you do not know what God wants. Somewhere inside of us, our spirits recognize the peace of God when rests upon a decision. Something inside of us wars against that decision that would bring us peace, and we get trapped between the longings of soul and spirit. The breakthrough comes when we pray the right questions, carefully listen, and obey in faith, not trying to help Jesus out with our own imperfect ideas.

Let's face it; this could happen pretty often. For example, we try to give Jesus help when we don't know how to do what He wants. We think He needs it when we know a shortcut, or we have a a better or more familiar way, or we know an opportunity for personal advantage. We are quick to help Jesus with our input when His ideas create personal loss. Sometimes—can we admit this?—we underestimate the value and gravity of Jesus's commands if they seem trivial to us or we think we are already doing something more important. That's horrible, isn't it? Yes, we think Jesus needs our help making decisions. And, in this, we sin.

The truth is, our desire to rewrite God's instruction can signal an opportunity for personal growth. Each time we resist is a burning bush along our path. If we turn in for these burning bushes, we will hear what God has to say. These experiences will improve our relationship with God and our understanding of the glory He wants to place upon us.

So, instead of worrying or feeling bad, we can joyfully recognize that Jesus has given us an opportunity for adventure: to learn more about Him, how He made us and these new, great plans He has for us.

Jesus's help rises above the mountains of our unbelief. He did the impossible for the ungrateful, turning our hearts soft and Godward. When we humbly submit to God, in gratitude for the answer He has already given us, we see doors open up for His plan. And, don't we look smart for obeying and agreeing with God? Yup, we sure do.

Our trust in, and obedience of, God can help others follow Him, too. When we second guess God, or hop off the "Jesus team" when it becomes inconvenient for us, we mislead others, and we confuse ourselves

regarding God's plans for us. Let us stay the course and experience the fruition of His plans for us.

Obedience is not an easy path all the time. It is as simple as following His voice, though, and that is the way of holiness. This keeps your heart more simple and pure toward God, and it makes you a force to be reckoned with in the world, which desperately needs His glory to shine upon it. When you walk in single-minded obedience, you grow in God's grace, which He willingly gives us as soon as we turn our hearts toward Him, to know His ways.

God pours His grace upon us so thoroughly, washing our consciences with His Word and renewing our minds. Then, our hearts are purified, and our love is perfected.

## RESPONSE

*God,*

*I'm not as close to You as I want to be.  
Make my heart pure.*

*Please, renew my sense of wonder in You,  
and my trust in You.*

*Help me to dig into Your word every day,  
and be transformed by it.*

*Help me to put You first,  
knowing Your eyes are always upon me, and  
You put me first when  
You took on the cross for me.*

*Cleanse my heart of earthly things, Lord.  
Fashion my life to be the highway  
upon which Your truth and glory freely travel, so  
I will magnify You in all I think and do.*

*Teach me to steward this clean heart, so  
I will see You more clearly each day and  
dwell with You in the intimacy  
You have intended.*

*Thank you!  
In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.*

Be awakened by the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to fill you, reveal His love for you, and help you understand it. Be transparent and humble in God's presence, tenderly hearing and obeying. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do today. Write His response down, and make a point to complete whatever He asks you, by His grace, and with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him, and give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Key to Gonship

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## DAY 8

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Matthew 5:9 ESV

LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.

Isaiah 26:12 NIV

**P**ace is one of the greatest gifts the Lord can give you. It gives you a position of strength in battle, and gives you confidence in good works. Peace comes from wisdom: knowing what God wants and doing it.

You can find out what God wants by reading the Bible and praying. When the Bible tells us to pray without ceasing, it means to keep an open posture toward God and an ongoing exchange throughout the day. Just as you would talk all day with a work partner, you can talk all day with God. He made your yoke, and He is the one pulling the heavy weight in your day.

Peace is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, promises to show us how to be peaceful, because He has established peace and gives it generously to us. That means we can ask and receive peace from God. When we do, God’s blanket of peace will rest on us. This blanket thickens and warms as we step into faith and obedience, trusting God instead of what we see with our natural eyes.

God’s peace is beyond your comprehension. If you trust that you can contain it all in your mind, you will only grasp a sliver of what is available to you. Your mind stumbles over these things, but your heart understands

eternity, love and all things of God. Your mind is magnificent, but it is incapable of grasping this. Do not make your brain do your heart's job.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJV

As you carry more of God's peace, you may be called to become a peacemaker. This means when you walk into the room, the atmosphere shifts. Where there were problems and bickering, hearts relent and become more congenial. You can see this happen, sometimes. A hush falls over a room, and you look around to find that one person has entered it. People may not have even noticed, but heaven was invited in. Your heart understands the shift even though your brain hasn't picked up on what has happened.

If you love God's peace, you will eat the fruit of peace. You will grow in grace with God and man, and you will see possibilities exist that weren't available before. God creates a highway of righteousness for those who will run on it, and the fruit of righteousness is peace.

When you feel your boat being rocked, call out peace over the storm. When you feel you lack it on the inside, grab your Bible and start studying peace. God's ways are pleasant and wholesome, and He creates peace for those who seek it. You will have peaceful joy that you didn't expect just by flipping the pages of your Bible and diving in. You will have even more when you empower the words on the page by putting them into action.

As a peacemaker you will create strength and calm where others need them. When faced with a situation lacking peace, or when unease suddenly comes over you, ask God what is happening and what He wants, instead.

It may be that He is letting you feel that lack of ease so you can pray for a solution or peace. It may also be that something has upset your peace, and He wants to address it so you can feel free again. The Bible says people who love God's law will have such peace that they cannot be offended. If God wants to move the furniture in your head, let Him. It is the job of your limited mind to line up with your enlightened spirit so you can have the righteousness, freedom and peace that God freely gives all His children.

Sometimes, the opportunity for peace exists wholly outside your person. Ask God what outcome He wants and what part He has for you in His plans. You might be surprised to see He wants you to reconcile adversaries, comfort an outcast, see someone's viewpoint, or give grace and forgiveness when someone is—or seems to be—flat-out wrong. Maybe

someone just needs a fresh start, and you have the grace for helping them take the opportunity.

Because Jesus is our peace, we embody it when we embody Him. When we have peace on the inside, we can carry it to where it is needed. We just need to listen to Jesus, do only what He is asking, and leave everything else—including the results we see—to Him.

Happy *is* the man *who* finds wisdom,  
 And the man *who* gains understanding;  
 For her proceeds *are* better than the profits of silver,  
 And her gain than fine gold.  
 She *is* more precious than rubies,  
 And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.  
 Length of days *is* in her right hand,  
 In her left hand riches and honor.  
 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness,  
 And all her paths *are* peace.  
 She *is* a tree of life to those who take hold of her,  
 And happy *are all* who retain her.

Proverbs 3:13-18 NKJV

## RESPONSE

Ask God to bring His will and His kingdom to earth through you. Invite the Holy Spirit to change your heart and mind regarding anything that does not line up with His peace and righteousness.

As He brings up thoughts of what He wants to change, ask God to plant the truth in your heart. Trade your peace-less thoughts and plans for His peaceful ones by repenting of yours and agreeing to adopt His. Allow Him to help you understand and live out this peaceful way as He brings things to mind throughout the day.

Ask God to envelope you with His peace. Rest in it. Feel the weight of it. Remember that peace is found in God's presence. In His presence, God fills you with His love, and the world He is creating for you becomes the one you adopt.

As you walk in this world, you will also adopt the joy and peace that walking in His pleasure brings. As sheltered in His shadow, you, His child, will experience more and more joy. This world that God is showing you is called "His ways" in the Bible. God's ways are peaceful. His ways are not our ways, but we can adopt them, just as God, through Jesus, has adopted us.

Today, make a concerted effort to spend your day resting in God's peace. Ask Him to reveal His peaceful presence to you in everything you do, task by task and experience by experience. In the peace of God, your heart will well up with joy, and that joy will be wholesome. It will build the rapport between you and God.

In peace, you learn to trust God more. In trusting God, you release your weights. In releasing your weights, you ready yourself to carry more of Jesus's joy. Peace is why Jesus could sleep in a storm. You, too, can remain at rest during trouble.

Ask God to remind you that He has peace for you whenever you need it. Consider each opportunity as an invitation to rise up in peace, united with God in His thinking and the way He works out His solutions.

Rather than letting the weight of an unwieldy yoke drag you down, set yourself up for success. Ask God to usher His peace into each situation, removing your burdens and replacing them with His peaceful wisdom. Lean into Him for creative solutions for peace. Then, put those creative solutions to work by implementing them. God will show you that He is always there for you, and He Is the Worthy Ruler of Your Peace.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do today. Write His response down, and make a point to complete whatever He asks you, by His grace, and with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him, and give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Key to the Kingdom

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## DAY 9

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:10 NASB

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:4 NASB

**H**ave you ever heard a persecuted Christian give a testimony of Jesus’s love for them? How are they so fervently on fire, and alive with grace and joy? They love even the people who have hurt them. This happens when God establishes His kingdom inside the persecuted church.

The transformation of the persecuted is as difficult for us to grasp as the experiences that have birthed their transformation. Just as some seeds are only quickened by fire, the kingdom of heaven comes upon those who need God’s reign. And, if we look at our own lives, we do see opportunities for God’s kingdom to advance. This happens when we submit our pain and harsh treatment for righteousness to God.

When we do what is right and end up taking a hit for it, we sense God’s help for our spirits, as He wraps His loving presence around us in our grief. Even when we do not feel Him, assuredly, He is there. Because God carries our weight, our burden is light. When we know He is doing this, we are overwhelmed with renewed love and gratitude.

In every life, there is opposition. When you do wrong, you are opposed, and the opposition is for your correction. When you do good and are opposed, God is proud of you for doing the right thing and following His leadership.

Even when your lightened yoke brings you earthly pain and grief, Jesus brings to you His comfort, compassion and truth. His pride and joy over you outshine the darkness of your momentary pain. In all things, be in Christ, because *you are held in the Father's eternal love.*

There are times when God wants you to back down, and times He wants you to stand. It is important to have the mind of Christ so you do not suffer needlessly by pressing forward, or treat Jesus lightly by retreating. The Holy Spirit will guide you in all things.

As long as we are alive, we still have hope, just as a live dog is better off than a dead lion.

Ecclesiastes 9:4 CEV

Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:62 ESV

The Spirit shows what is true and will come and guide you into the full truth. The Spirit doesn't speak on his own. He will tell you only what he has heard from me, and he will let you know what is going to happen.

John 16:13 CEV

There are times when we must remind ourselves to care more about what people think of Jesus than what they think of us. This gives us a great boldness to spread the Good News about Jesus.

Even though our kind and wise actions may back this message of peace, we can still suffer discrimination or face trouble as a direct result of speaking about our Lord.

When people ridicule you about your faith in Jesus, follow God's lead. Be gentle and wise with them, knowing God has done the same for you. In the end, you will be rewarded for your suffering, and heaven will be filled with people who have heard and accepted the Gospel of Peace.

## RESPONSE

Rejoice in the times you have been shamed for bearing Jesus's name. Decide to go through your day, doing your daily work, and all other things, as an expression of the tender love and mercy you have received from God.

This creates perseverance: proof God is invested in your future. He Is, and He loves you dearly. His blessing are upon you, and He rejoices as you, His child, walk in the Truth: Jesus.

*Lord,*

*Thank You for always having my back as I do the right thing. Help me shine brightly for You, so I can be a witness of Your goodness.*

*In Jesus's name,*

*Amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



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Unit 2 | *Chase Wisdom*

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PROSPER YOUR JOY

**Days 10-16:**

Delight in Wisdom

Sure Foundation

Love Others Well

Thanks, Praise and Worship

Joy is Good Medicine

Discover Your Value

Faith for Victory



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## Unit 2 | *Chase Wisdom*

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### PROSPER YOUR JOY

**B**efore the Holy Spirit lived inside each believer, the Old Testament was the primary source of God's wisdom for joy and right living. The poetic books of Psalms and Proverbs are especially practical for softening hearts and informing choices.

The people of long ago did not have the gentle nudge of God within them, did not feel the warmth of His pleasure when they did right, and did not experience the hush of the Spirit calling the wandering home. They needed physical instructions to guide them.

The Word of God is still important and practical for directing lives. People don't really change. God never changes. Because even Spirit-filled people still need God's wisdom each and every day, we continue to read and consider what the Bible tells us so we will live holy lives.

I have treasured Your word in my heart so that I may not sin against You.

Psalm 119:11 HCSB

We align our ways with God's, positioning ourselves to receive His joy. God's guidelines for successful living still work, today.

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Note: Each lesson reflects upon Old and New Testament passages. This beautifully illustrates the unchanging nature of God's deep and abiding love for you.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Hebrews 13:8 NKJV





# *Delight in Wisdom*

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## DAY 10

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!  
Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.  
Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;  
Love her, and she will watch over you.  
The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom;  
And with all your acquiring, get understanding.  
Prize her, and she will exalt you;  
She will honor you if you embrace her.  
She will place on your head a garland of grace;  
She will present you with a crown of beauty.

Proverbs 4:5-9 NCV

“How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?  
How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate  
knowledge?”

Proverbs 1:22 NASB

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to  
all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5 NASB

**I**t is so good to laugh! The right kind of laughter will build your spirit and embolden your faith. Just as joy is good medicine, the right kind of wisdom—godly wisdom—will help you to choose the correct source for your joy.

Taking joy in foolishness can destroy godly progress in your life. Fortunately, God's grace is more powerful than our stumbling. Shake it off. Get back up again, and move forward in wisdom.

The "right kind of wisdom" does not mean you turn into a sourpuss. Was Jesus ever accused of that? Not even once. Please--enjoy your diversions and fun. Just weigh the wisdom of your actions in choosing them. Life's freedom is in making and owning your own choices.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

James 3:17 NASB

Poor choices can break hearts and derail plans, but wise ones produce life in the doer and bring strength to his or her soul. Take a moment to analyze your situations and your choices carefully, today. Where could you shine in wisdom? How can you change your actions and attitudes to produce a godly, wholesome joy?

When you search the Bible to get wisdom, the first thing it teaches you is to get wisdom. Sin brings curses and decay, but wisdom keeps us from these poor choices that would derail us. If we can get wisdom and put it into action, we can stop much of the pain and sadness that we are experiencing in our darkest moments. If you get a speeding ticket, God forgives you, but you still have to pay the earthly fine. Wisdom helps you to avoid the fine by avoiding the behavior.

The Bible also tells you to get understanding, even if that lesson is costly. That is because, while wisdom tells you what to do, understanding tells you why you do it. Understanding anchors your wisdom. Instruction tells you how to put wisdom into motion. So there it is: the what, why and how of Godly living. Wisdom, understanding and instruction. Anytime God is offering you these, grab them up like gold, because they are worth far more than that. In everything, get and choose wisdom. To choose otherwise, by definition, is foolishness.

For this reason we have always prayed for you, ever since we heard about you. We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.

Colossians 1:9 GNB

Since we do not want to be foolish, we choose to apprehend wisdom. Getting wisdom is not as difficult as it may seem. The Bible says you can find it in many places. Watch the wise, and learn; watch how people use

wisdom in commerce and other daily activities. Foolish people openly display, by their outcomes, why their foolishness is foolish. Finally, listen to your parents, who love you and want you to do well. Trust in a large pool of wise advisors, to be safe in your decisions.

When there is no guidance a nation falls, but there is success in the abundance of counselors.

Proverbs 11:14 NET

In all this, make sure Scripture backs your conclusions. Proverbs offers wisdom to anyone who will read it and give it thought. Know that, as you take delight in learning wisdom, God is delighting in you.

Then he taught me and said to me,  
 “Let your heart hold fast my words;  
 Keep my commandments and live;  
 Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!  
 Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.  
 “Do not forsake her, and she will guard you;  
 Love her, and she will watch over you.  
 “The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom;  
 And with all your acquiring, get understanding.  
 “Prize her, and she will exalt you;  
 She will honor you if you embrace her.  
 “She will place on your head a garland of grace;  
 She will present you with a crown of beauty.”  
 Hear, my son, and accept my sayings  
 And the years of your life will be many.  
 I have directed you in the way of wisdom;  
 I have led you in upright paths.

Proverbs 4:4-11 NASB

There are several methods people use to absorb the wisdom of Proverbs. Here are two that are popular and effective.

One method is to read a chapter per day, according to the day of the month. So, you would read Proverbs 1 on the first day, Proverbs 2 on the second, and so forth. This way, you get through the entire book of Proverbs each month. When you inevitably forget a day, you give yourself grace and move forward to the correct day of the month. Do a *SOAP* study on a verse that stands out to you by writing out the *Scripture* verse, your *Observations*, and how you can *Apply* what you are reading. Then, *Pray* the verse back to God, including any confession of sin or request for guidance or help.

Another method is to leave a bookmark in Proverbs and open up to it each day. Read just a few verses. As you go through your day, meditate on these verses, talking with God about them and looking for opportunities to apply them, as God leads. This will get you through Proverbs in about one year, and even though the exercise took less than three minutes, the verses will sink deeply into your soul, because you thought on them, sought God and acted them out. You can also SOAP the verses to get the effect the first version offers, as you are inclined.

So, there they are: two methods, and one great result.

## RESPONSE

Try one of the Proverbs study methods. Use either the SOAP version, or ask God to lead you as you apply it in your day, walking with Him.

*God, confront me, today,  
and I will not have to suffer  
for foolishness.*

*Show me what is wise, and why.  
Instruct me in Your ways.*

*Fill my heart with wisdom,  
so I will walk in the pleasures You have waiting for me.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person, and show someone kindness, today.



# Gyre Foundation

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## DAY 11

Your word is a lamp that gives light wherever I walk.

Psalm 119:105, CEV

But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the Lord. “And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.”

Jeremiah 31:33-34, NLT

**G**od doesn’t want you to just love and trust Him; He wants you to be certain He is loving and trustworthy. God created your heart, your intellect, and everything else about you. His character far exceeds your prerequisites for faith.

Please, ponder God’s Word, the Bible. Meditate upon it. You cannot get too big for God’s greatness. You cannot get too wise for His wisdom. However deep you go, He resides even deeper. Your very life invites you to taste and experience His goodness, His trustworthiness and His holiness. After all, He created you to enjoy a relationship with Him.

Dive into Scripture, daily prayer and biblical meditation. Jesus has so much awaiting you that you can not yet understand. Study the Scriptures

and adjust your beliefs to match the standard it prescribes. Then, act upon what God says to do.

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

Matthew 7:24-27 NCV

Make God's words the most important of your life. Let Him teach you, building your life to conform to God's image as you abide in Him, walking in faith, hope and love. Jesus loves you. Every day offers a new opportunity for you to let Him show you how in practical, applicable ways. You will be doubly blessed—*joyful*—as you do, because joy comes in stepping with Jesus through His will for you and from seeing the results of your partnership with Him.

Spend time with God, today, talking about the lesson, the meaning of it for your life, and the way(s) He wants to walk, in a special way, with you. Let Him teach you trust, and show you how to read the Bible for yourself. Be willingly transformed by it.

Be transformed in your quiet times, and let God show you how to actively build your life on His Word as you invite Him into each hour of your day. God will lead you in building your life upon His Word, by faith and obedience. Live by His truth, today.

As you make these choices for each day, your faith will become real, and will correctly rest upon your faith and hope in Jesus. It will become vibrant in its expression, and you will shine in joy. Settle for nothing less than to offer your life as an expression of worship in Spirit and in Truth, every day. Let God flourish you in His blessings and leadership.

Pay attention to what you are taught, and you will be successful; trust in the LORD and you will be happy.

Proverbs 16:20 GNB

Choose to live in tandem with God's Spirit, according to His Word, each hour, today. Choose it tomorrow, and the next day, and the next. You will sense an immediate mind shift, and over time, life in the Spirit will

become easier and more fulfilling than your old life. You will never want to return because life in tandem with God is relationship, and true living.

## RESPONSE

*Lord, help me to understand Your Word;  
to learn it, be transformed by it, and do what it says.*

*In doing so, may I bring glory to You,  
and Your light to the Earth.*

*Heavenly Father, have Your way with me, so  
when my days are through,  
You will call me Your good and faithful servant.*

*I want to fully live out Your faith-walk  
and build my house upon the Rock of Ages: Jesus.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.







# Love Others Well

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## DAY 12

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 22:36-40 ESV

Hatred stirs up strife, but love makes up for all offenses.

Proverbs 10:12 NLT

**O**ne of the wisest things we can do is love others well. Love encompasses the body of the law, because when we love God and others, we are fulfilling the law. We love God because He first loved us. God's love for us, shining in our hearts, shows us our true value, or worth.

When we see our love, our value that God has already given us, we love God back, and we see our own value as individuals. We are amazed by this, and stand in awe of Him.

When we see our values as individuals, we are able to see that other people are equally awe-inspiring and fearfully made. We revel at the awesome wonder and greatness of each human being, and we want to love them and show God's esteem for them. This is the way we love each other: by following God, accepting His love for us, resounding in love back to God, and eagerly pouring it out upon other people.

Let love and loyalty always show like a necklace, and write them in your mind. God and people will like you and hold you in high esteem.

Proverbs 3:3-4 CEV

Loving people makes us like God, because God is love, and we are made in His image. This is the most important thing we can do for God.

Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

Psalms 119:11 NASB

We are made in the image of God. God Is Love, so we are the image of God--the image of Love. When we walk in love, we bring life to our purpose and put God and our identity on display for the world to see. We fulfill the calling of God on our lives as we follow Him in love. Because we bear God's loving image, everything we do in union with God, and in His love, is in His will. When we do not express His love, we cannot be in His will, because He Is Love, and we have been made in His image to bear and carry it throughout our lives. Everyone's purpose is different, but everyone's purpose—*everyone's*—looks like an expression of God's pure and holy love. And, everyone's purpose is sacred and important.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NIV

We love, because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19 NASB

To love is to give people the very best, according to God's kind will. When we love people, we want the best for them, and we do something about it. It doesn't mean we solve all their problems or give them all our time or resources, but it does mean that we ask God what to do for them, and we follow His lead.

Sometimes, an act of compassion is all we need to do to unlock the door to love.

If we do nothing more in life, we complete our calling by loving God and others well. To complete our calling well, we must be connected to God. He is the Source of all love, and knows what each of us needs. He

knows our unique identities and the love He has for us. He knows the love He has for other people, and how we can enter into His Joy by giving love to others.

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time.

Proverbs 17:17 HCSB

then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Philippians 2:2 NIV

Today, make a special point to ask God how to live in love.

## RESPONSE

*God,*

*I'm sorry for not living in love.  
Please forgive me.*

*I want so much to feel Your love:  
the love that You have had for me  
since before the beginning of time.*

*Please help me to feel your love wash over me.  
Help me feel my worth.  
Let me see You the way that You want.  
Help me see others clearly, too.*

*I'm sorry for not seeing people the way You do.  
Sometimes, I get a glimpse of it:  
the glory and the majesty that you've placed in each person.*

*But, I don't always do that,  
and sometimes I totally miss it.  
Please forgive me.*

*I sit in Your presence and receive Your love.  
Help me make this a habit, so  
each day I am renewed and refreshed,  
and closer to You.*

*Let me see my opportunities  
to dwell in Your presence  
and love others well, today.  
Make this my daily habit.*

*I want to fulfill Your law of love.  
This is an easy yoke  
that heals my soul  
and the souls of many others.*

*Thank you for Your love.  
In Jesus's name I pray,*

*Amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.

# Thanks, Praise and Worship

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## DAY 13

Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise.  
Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

Psalm 100:4 NASB

My whole being, praise the Lord; all my being, praise his holy  
name.

Psalm 103:1 NCV

Then we said, "Let's go to the throne of the LORD and worship  
at his feet."

Psalm 132:7 CEV

**A**pproach God with a heart of thanksgiving, praise and worship.  
Worship Him with all that is in you, and remain in His presence. As  
you do, He will reward you with the fullness of joy. Savor it. Hallelujah!

Thanks, praise and worship are different from each other, but they  
build on one another in progression to bring us nearer to God. They  
change our mindsets and give us heavenly thinking.

In order to thank, praise and worship God, you have to know what  
those words mean. Many people don't, and they interchange them. Words  
are important to God, so let's agree to define them right now, so we can  
move forward to a wonderful breakthrough time with God. For this lesson,  
we will define thanks, praise and worship in this way:

Thanks: Show gratitude for what God has done (e.g., salvation, healing,  
and His presence).

**Praise:** Honor, bless and give glory to God for His Identity and attributes (e.g., holiness, goodness, kindness, purity, that He is your Deliverer).

**Worship:** Give humble reverence to God, respecting Him and agreeing with Him upon His worth. You can express this in many ways (e.g., words, actions, a heart posture or kindness to others. Our lives are to be expressions of worship).

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Romans 12:1-2 TM

**Note:** You don't have to be especially happy to praise and worship God. You don't have to feel strong, or have all the answers, either. God is worthy of our worship, even when we don't feel like it. And, when we worship and praise God, we safeguard our minds from thinking foolishly and getting off track.

Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

Romans 1:21 NLT

Thanks, praise and worship are habits you will strengthen, and God will help you build inner strength as you engage with Him. God slathers grace all over your life, and He does not consult your enemies or look at your weaknesses before doing so. He reveals His strength in your weak times, and fills your heart with His joy as you enter His presence.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

...I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

Isaiah 43:19, 20b-21 NIV

Rest, fully, in God. Give Him your highest praise. Invite Him to live through you in every way. Your life is a good, valuable and wonderful adventure, because God has made it. All He makes is good. God Is Good, and He Is Enough for You. This is true, even in your weakness. He provides a way for those who will listen and obey, and He Is very near you, even now.

## RESPONSE

*Heavenly Father,*

*I'm just going to take a moment to praise You...(reflection)*

Today's lesson is intentionally short so you can focus your attention on action: thanking, praising and worshiping God.

Spend some time thanking God for whatever comes to mind. You can ask God to help you think of things, and He will show you His ways in doing so. This is another cause for gratitude! God has done so much for you, and this is a precious time to connect with His heart as a grateful child. Spend at least five minutes doing this, but take as long as you would like.

When you are ready to move on, praise God for His wonderful attributes: His kindness, His humility, His willingness to be very present with you. Take at least five minutes, or as long as you want. You can use your Bible to look up attributes of God if you would like. Really dwell on this, because it is going to draw you nearer to God than you thought, and you are going to understand Him far better than you did when you started.

Finally, spend some time worshiping God. The word "worth" is the root of "worship," and God is truly worth your time to give Him this. Turn on music, read the Scriptures, sing and let God have His glory.

To help you connect in worship, find a scripture or set of scriptures you can read, pray and even sing back to God. Provided, later, are a couple possibilities. Many more exist.

Take your time and read these aloud, worshiping God and praying them to Him. Because your power comes from God's presence, it is

important to worship Him with the honor, holy fear, and reverence He deserves.

Have a happy worship time! This is a wonderful lesson to revisit on at least a weekly basis. You will find that it strengthens you and gives your spiritual life the lift it needs when the week gets long. Here are some favorite Bible worship passages from Revelation:

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Revelation 4:8-11 ESV

And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb



be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Revelation 5:9-13 ESV

## MORE POPULAR SCRIPTURES FOR GLORIFYING GOD

Today's verses are useful for your intimate time with God. Here are a few more of many passages you can find in the Bible:

- Psalm 103:1-5
- 1 Chronicles 16:23-31
- Isaiah 25:1
- 1 Chronicles 29:11
- Philippians 2:9-11
- Ephesians 3:20-21
- Daniel 2:20
- Habakkuk 3:17-18
- Deuteronomy 10:21
- Psalm 71:8
- Psalm 75:1
- Exodus 23:25
- Psalm 42:1-6
- John 4:21-24

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Joy is Good Medicine

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## DAY 14

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Proverbs 17:22 ESV

Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5:2-5 ESV

**J**oy heals and strengthens you. As it does, it fills you with God's powerful peace, which settles your soul as it works in and through your life. This peace gives you dynamic boldness and confidence in Jesus.

Why should you be bold and confident in God? Because He Is Bold and Confident, and He knows the plans He has for you! They are good plans for an outcome you want. And, if you think about it, you know that God's will is what we would choose if we had all the facts.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:19 NIV

God does have all the facts. He knows the plans He has for you, and He knows the thoughts and devices of those set against you and against His will. You see, you were designed in the beautiful image of God. Hence, any enemy can see the striking family resemblance between you and God, and that ticks them off.

Whenever we encounter opposition, we must follow our Heavenly Father's lead. Your only true enemies are the devil and his minions. Sometimes, people get played by evil forces, and they act in terribly ungodly ways. We must pay attention to God's direction, and be in line with His attitudes and actions. This includes forgiving people, and slathering love and goodness all over their situations.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?[...]  
He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord holds them in derision.

Psalm 2:1,4 ESV

When you are under spiritual attack, take a moment and first laugh about it. Picture yourself sitting safely on your Heavenly Dad's lap, in the courts of heaven. There He is, laughing at the plans of the enemies. It makes you feel better, doesn't it? Now, ask God what to do, and obey His instruction as He goes with you and guides you on the way. He will give you this instruction through the Bible and by His Spirit, Who lives in you.

Laughter is powerful, because it short-circuits fear. We know fear casts out love, and love casts out fear. When you are afraid, you might have trouble hearing from God, because God is Love, and love is His language.

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

John 5:19 NIV

Even if you do not hear Him, Jesus Is the One Who Is Always Near. He promises to never leave you or forsake you. So, laugh, and dislodge fear from your heart. God is bigger than anything you fear, and God promises you a way of endurance or escape. So, laughter is an accurate response to any situation God has not ordained for you. Press in with God, and cleave to joy. Laugh.

## RESPONSE

At this very moment, write down all your troubles. Ask God to help you write the list. He is really good at writing!

Now, look at them from heaven's perspective. Laugh about it. Ask God to help you see them through His eyes if you are struggling at all.

Now that your troubles are smaller than you, laugh again, and ask God what He has to say about your future.

Did you do it? If you did, you experienced a release and lightening of heart ordained by God. You can move on in power and strength. You have opened the door to much strength, growth and even healing because you were willing to laugh instead of being intimidated by the darkness your light is meant to chase away. This is a key for biblical living.

God is good, kind and omnipotent. Because He is greater than your life or situation, you can laugh at whatever tomorrow may bring.

She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future.

Proverbs 31:25 NLT

Strategically, in choosing to focus on joy during suffering, you unlock your potential to build endurance, character and hope. Hope is the platter upon which God hands you victory over suffering. It quells bitterness and despair.

When you catch the light of hope, you can endure. Why? Because God floods your soul with His sustaining love. All of this happens because you chose joy when it was difficult to do so.

When was the last time you thought of joy as an important spiritual muscle to be developed or a powerful medicine in God's pharmacy? In times of weariness, joy refreshes. In peril, it disarms fear. And, in weakness, it strengthens your spirit. Embrace joy! To do so is not selfish, but wise.

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank You for giving me joy for my well-being. Please help me see Your joy in me, in what I do, and in how You orchestrate goodness in whatever comes my way.*

*If I have locked away any places in my heart from Your joy—I apologize. I give You the keys to these dusty, darkened rooms: doubt, sadness, humiliation, falsehood, abuse, dark works and any thoughts or actions that go counter to Your will.*

*I submit to You anything that fights against You and the Truth. You can have all of them, Lord. I hand You all my keys, not one lacking. I ask You to replace them with Your presence, love and truth. Infuse, into each one, Your grace, mercy, Lordship and joy. I am fully Yours.*

*I receive Your mercy and grace, knowing You do not hold my faults against me. I release this same freedom over every single other person in my life. I do not retain their sins, and I refuse to judge them again.*

*I bless them because You have blessed me. We are restored in Your mercy, we are bound in Your love, we are kept in Your peace, and we are healed in Your joy.*

*Please show me how to stay aware of You, sensitive of Your presence and continually transforming in Your joy.*

*And, show me how I can laugh, not fearing the future. Then, show me what You want me to do to share this joy and proactively live in a fearless manner.*

*I will write down Your words, heed them, and obey them in the fullness of Your joy.*

*In Jesus's beautiful name, amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Discover Your Value

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## DAY 15

Long ago, even before he made the world, God chose us to be his very own through what Christ would do for us; he decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault—we who stand before him covered with his love. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to!

Ephesians 1:4-5 TLB

God gave them his blessing and said: Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth.

Genesis 1:28 CEV

**I**n the depths of your mother's womb, God knit you into the creation He decided, long ago, you would become. God made you because the thought of you makes Him happy. His thoughts toward you are many.

Isn't this amazing? You are so well-planned, so thought out. You were not placed upon this earth merely because people made the decision, but because God predestined you to exist and enjoy the life He gives you. He created the miracle of you.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

Psalms 139:13-14 ESV

You are an expression of God's goodness on the earth. And, when your heart became willing, He redeemed you to be His spiritual child. Your truest lineage and heritage comes from God, and your sin cannot erase His identity, love or gifts for you. He values you highly, and the proof of this rests in His righteous trade that He made of His Son, Jesus, for you.

We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Hebrews 10:2 NLT

Picture the Trinity, up in heaven, in Their holy boardroom. God, the Father, asks, "What shall We do to bring My child back to My love?"

The Holy Spirit is getting excited just at the thought of you! He says, "We would rather die than live without this child, wouldn't We?"

Jesus jumps up and exclaims, "Good trade!" So, that is just what Jesus does. He lays down His own life and pays for the chance to redeem yours, by your own permission. God is excited about this opportunity, and once you recognized and accepted this amazing, eternal offer, you were, too!

"Don't fear: I am First, I am Last, I'm Alive. I died, but I came to life, and my life is now forever. See these keys in my hand? They open and lock Death's doors, they open and lock Hell's gates."

Revelation 1:17-18 TM

You are so highly esteemed in heaven that Jesus put you first. God is smart, so He can only act wisely. He is just, so justice must be fulfilled. He Is Life, so even though His human self can die, He was able to rise up with the keys of death and hell. That means nothing stands in the way of your freedom. God likes you a lot. He likes you, and you should like you, too.

God prefers you. You are special to Him, and He always smiles when He looks at you. He is always looking, always smiling. And, when He smiles, He looks like Jesus.

God is good, and He is loving. He has good things for your life. When He looks at you, He sees the finished product, not one marred by life or by the mistakes of others who have gone before you. When God looks at you, He sees a miracle. And, He smiles.



For we are God's masterpiece, created in the Messiah Jesus to perform good actions that God prepared long ago to be our way of life.

Ephesians 2:10 ISV

See yourself through God's eyes, and you will think of yourself more highly. You will love better, produce more, and carry more satisfaction in your soul. Moreover, seeing things God's way is righteous. And, there is a reward for righteousness. What a wonderful blessing!

## RESPONSE

*God, I am so precious to You!*

*Help me  
see myself  
as the exquisite creation  
You have made me to be.*

*I need to see  
myself, through Your eyes.  
Then, I can walk  
in joyful confidence,*

*able to experience  
those very good works  
You have prepared  
in advance  
for me.*

*Thank You!  
Amen, and amen...  
in Jesus,  
my Redeemer and King.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
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- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Faith for Victory

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## DAY 16

Every child of God can defeat the world, and our faith is what gives us this victory.

1 John 5:7 CEV

So you must remain in life-union with me, for I remain in life-union with you. For as a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to mine.

John 15:4 TPT

**G**od is strongly invested in your victorious life. He doesn't want you to live in defeat, because that goes against His good and kind will for you. God knows what you need to move from defeat to truly victorious life. He will faithfully lead you, and you can trust Him.

Understanding Jesus's love for you means, in part, trusting Him to see you through for your good. It is crucial to seek wisdom, so you know what to desire and how to proceed for it. Then, you obey Jesus in faith. That faith protects your soul and forces God's victory. Faith is the hinge point of the promises of God. We connect with Jesus by faith, and that faith will continue, forever.

The promise depends on faith so that it can be experienced as a grace-gift, and now it extends to all the descendants of Abraham. This promise is not only meant for those who obey the law, but also to those who enter into the faith of Abraham, the father of us all. That's what the Scripture means when it says:

“I have made you the father of many nations.”

He is our example and father, for in God’s presence he believed that God can raise the dead and call into being things that don’t even exist yet. Against all odds, when it looked hopeless, Abraham believed the promise and expected God to fulfill it. He took God at his word, and as a result he became the father of many nations. God’s declaration over him came to pass:

“Your descendants will be so many  
that they will be impossible to count!”

Romans 4:16-18 TPT

Do not wait to see victory before you shout your praises to heaven! Be proactive, and rend the heavens, now. Anticipate God coming alongside you. He wants to make His ways known to you so you can see your victory and apprehend it. He Is Moving more powerfully in your situation than you may have ever believed, before.

Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will intervene for us. Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few.”

1 Samuel 14:6 NET

Continue, persistently, to seek God for the outcome He desires, like the widow who hassled the judge in Luke. God is not offended by tenacity; He gave us this parable. Persistent prayer shows you are truly committed to God’s will being done.

Faithfully continue to trust, enjoy and obey God. Let these offerings accompany your praise to The One Who Is Enthroned Above All Situations. In Christ, you have the victory.

And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. And I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Jehovah.

Psalms 27:6 ASV

Future lessons will help you understand Who God is, who you are in Him, and how you can live out of a place of abiding, You can live in God’s victory, rather than pandering, aimlessly, for crumbs of earthly success.

You are made in God's image and blanketed with His care. Fix your faith upon Him, remembering the power of His love. Take active steps to activate your faith, so it reaches beyond your limits of self-confidence.

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

Ezekiel 37:1-6 ESV

When we actually step out in faith, God comes alongside us to direct our steps and fulfill His purposes. Today is a day of action, so get ready to move forward in God's plans.

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

John 10:10 NLT

## RESPONSE

You are going to make a list, today. Pray, and think of something you want to do. This should be something that inspires you, or that God has been nudging you toward. It may be the first thought that pops in your head when you read this. Write your dream down, then flip your paper over.

Pray again, and start thinking of things that could stand in your way. Shyness, time poverty or lack of funds might be examples. Now, think of an alternate word or phrase that counters that limitation (it might even be the opposite word or phrase). Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire you.

Write down your alternative, empowering word or phrase. Do not write down the limitation that first came to mind, because it is not part of your success. Ask God to come alongside you and empower you to write the very best, most accurately powerful words that will help you.

As you down write each empowering alternative, thank your Heavenly Father for it. Your prayer might sound something like this:

“Thank You, Heavenly Father, for giving me boldness.”

“Thank You for helping me to say ‘no’ to others, when I need to focus.”

“Thank You for caring for me and showing me how to get what I need.”

Put your paper within reach, for when you need it. When your progress bogs down and you need a reminder of how very strong you are, how God cheers for you and protects you—pull out your list and think of your source of help: Jesus.

To reinforce the truth of what God says about you, take a measurable action step in your written plan. It may be a phone call, an errand or another small (or big) task. In whatever form it takes, it is forward motion that proved your fears and roadblocks could not stop God’s plans in your life.

As you make a habit of stepping forward in the face of obstacles, you will find your progress quickens and those obstacles get out of your way.

In Jesus, you are powerful.

*Jesus, Please help me. Give me wisdom and peace.*

*I know my victory is already won, in You.*

*I trust You.*

*I will listen to Your voice, and walk in Your ways.*

*You deserve all the glory and praise.*

*I give it to You, Lord.*

*All my trust and my affection are Yours.*

*Hallelujah!*

*I know where my help comes from; it comes from You, Lord.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes you can follow, later. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.

- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





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Unit 3 | *Break the Chains*

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BECOME FREE TO EMBRACE JOY

**Days 17-22:**

Lavish Forgiveness

Humble and Zealous

Get Real with Jesus

Comfort and Deliverance

Unlock Your Hope

Answering the Call



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## Unit 3 | *Break the Chains*

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### BECOME FREE TO EMBRACE JOY

**I**t is time to remove the most common roadblocks to joy: lack of forgiveness, pride, wounding, apathy, hopelessness and rebellion.

These mindsets creep in while we are not paying attention, creating undercurrents that pull us down and create sin and detachment from God. Usually, we find ourselves frustrated by their effects before we ever identify the cause.

Jesus never wanted us to feel so broken, so out of control, as to be swept away with pain. Eject even the most remote shadow of any of these from your life, immediately and permanently.

Your first love is reflected in your actions and your focus. When your constant focus rests upon Jesus, you will walk in lavish forgiveness, humility, hope and obedience. Because your life is free of roadblocks, you hear God's voice, feel His presence and revel in His joy dynamically and powerfully. You cannot help but bring heaven to earth when you are in love with Jesus, because you shine. Come back to this section whenever you want to go deeper in your journey with God.

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Note: Each lesson reflects upon Old and New Testament passages. This beautifully illustrates the unchanging nature of God's deep and abiding love for you.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Hebrews 13:8 NKJV



# *Lavish Forgiveness*

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## DAY 17

“The king said to him, ‘You scoundrel! Is this the way you respond to my mercy? Because you begged me, I forgave you the massive debt that you owed me. Why didn’t you show the same mercy to your fellow servant that I showed to you?’ In a fury of anger, the king turned him over to the prison guards to be tortured until all his debt was repaid. In this same way, my heavenly Father will deal with any of you if you do not release forgiveness from your heart toward your fellow believer.”

Matthew 18:32-35 TPT

I, yes I, am the One and Only,  
who completely erases your sins, never to be seen again.  
I will not remember them again.  
Freely I do this because of who I am!  
Help me remember the past. Let’s debate!  
Bring me your version to prove your innocence.  
Your earliest ancestor sinned,  
and your spokesmen rebelled against me.  
So I brought disgrace on the holy priests  
of the holy sanctuary  
and brought destruction to Jacob,  
humiliation and scorn to Israel.

Isaiah 43:25-28 TPT

**W**hen you don’t forgive people, you are actually holding mental rocks in your hand to protect yourself from future attacks.

But, people don't live in your mind, where you hold those rocks. They live in the world, dealing with their own lives. The people who have hurt you have walked away and moved on. They may not even realize they injured you in the way you remember.

You have moved on, too; one of the reasons you have a hard time forgiving is because you aren't the same person who got hurt. You have moved on, too, and you think and reason differently, now. But you need to back your emotional train up, and forgive from the perspective of who you were at the time: how you thought and felt, and how you perceived the injustice. If you have tried to reason with someone who has hurt you, you know that they never had your perspective, and time widens the gap. That happens on both ends of things. And, now, here you are, hurting—and understanding, less and less, why.

How can that person be so happy and free when you are not? It is so unfair! Don't they owe you an apology or something? The pain exists, and you relive the moment. Sometimes, you get angry and throw rocks: rocks of condemnation, retaliation and plans to thwart future attacks. You might not be saying a word, because you are a good Christian. But, you are thinking it, and it aches inside your head.

When you hurl an internal judgment or thought of retaliation, it bounces around in your mind and damages your own humanity. You only strike yourself, causing pain in your own noggin. Hurts, doesn't it?

Stop torturing yourself! Why do this?

Yet, every time we get hurt and don't forgive completely, we gather grievances, picking up pebbles of contention with which to stone them, and even shoving these little pieces of artillery into our proverbial pockets--mindsets and world views--when our hands are too full. Our pockets fill up with stones, and we can hardly walk under the weight of them.

Still, because we find ourselves getting hurt more and more, we gather more and more rocks to protect ourselves. Our fists are so full of rocks that we can not open them up to receive God's blessings.

Jesus whispers, "Drop your rocks; I'm the Rock."

"Nope; my hands are full, Jesus. I can't drop a fake rock to get a real blessing. Try me when I'm not angry." And, we continue to self-batter.

You are not hopeless, if this describes your state. The mind of Christ resides in former rock chuckers, everywhere, my friend. These people just realized it was time to stop fighting, at some point. They got tired, started

listening to Jesus's heart, instead, and followed His plan for relief. They waved the white flag and forgave.

Whenever you stop waving your own banner and surrender to God, His banner becomes the flag of the sovereignty of God in your life. And, God's banner over you...is love.

Your hands were intended to hold the blessings of God, not the burdens of pain.

## RESPONSE

*God, thank You for Your forgiveness.*

*I was hurt when (name the offense) happened. From the perspective of when I was hurt, and without making excuses for (name the one who hurt you), I forgive him/her for it. I hold nothing back, and forgive them the way I would want to be forgiven by You if I did the very same thing. I let go of their sin, completely and forever. I release mercy over them, right now.*

*God, please bless them and do Your will in their life. Let their love for You become a great testimony to Your love and grace. And, please show me anything You would like me to do to bless this person: giving a gift or doing a kind turn, or whatever else You put on my heart.*

*Also, please show me where You want me to address the pain I have caused others. I know when I sin against anyone, I have sinned against You, because all people belong to You.*

*You have made all people. You feel their pain, and You love everyone. We all belong to You. You say You are not willing for anyone to perish, which means You are not will for them to be left forgiven. Please, help me to be forgiving, and give myself and others the grace we all need.*

*Amen.*

Ask God to bring to mind someone who has hurt you. Describe to God your hurt as a result of the infraction. This can be real or imagined; if you are hurting, it is real in your heart.

Don't bother to point fingers right now. Just cry out to Jesus, and mourn. Jesus is with you, even when the cause of your pain seems to be yourself or Him. Let that sink in: even then.

Don't make excuses or allowances for the person, because your job is not to create grey area for sin. That doesn't help you or anyone else. Just state the facts of what happened and how it affected you or others.

Ask God to describe to you what was really happening and how He was moving in the time of that situation. If you have failed in something you were supposed to do, apologize to God and receive His grace. Then, obey what He is telling you, now. *Isn't it amazing that He offers to commune with us?*

Now, choose to forgive that person with all your heart, like it was you in trouble, and it mattered for your own spiritual future. Tell God that you know what was done to you was wrong, and although you don't agree with it, you honor that person and forgive them without condition. It's like you threw the sin in hell so the person could go free. That's what you want, right?

Agree with God in refusing to judge this person. As you do, offer God the hurt in your heart, along with your attitudes and your understanding. Jesus died for every sin, and He is Lord of all. Picture it in your hands, if you need. Then, hand it all to Him.

Next, as God what He wants to give you in return. It may be peace, joy, freedom, love or something more. God has love, forgiveness, a good attitude, and great, compassionate understanding in His heart. You can have these, too, for this other person.

If you feel those "rocks" you wanted to throw are still stuck to your hands—if you are having trouble shaking off your anger or indignation—ask Jesus to scrape those pebbles off, along with your pride and expectation that He will retaliate on your behalf. There is one white throne judgment, and if you are reading this, today is probably not the day. If Jesus's mercy can extend to obliterate your sins, it can extend to obliterate every last sin of every person who has ever hurt you. You want that.

Now is not the time to compare holiness, but to escape and run from the snares of judgment, lack of forgiveness, and bitterness. If you are angry at God, now is the time to address that, too.

God is always good, but life is hard. There are many troubles, many heartbreaks. And, even if we do everything right that we can think to do, tragedy will eventually strike within our circumstances. If you are blaming God, forgive Him, and use the same method as earlier. After all, forgiveness is actually repentance from judgment and bitterness. We all need to release God from from our judgment, from time to time. It does not mean that God has sinned, but that we have. It means we are ready to repent and enter back into His grace by putting down our rocks against Him and surrendering, anew, to His love, grace, and very *Person*.

Your relationship with God will improve once you get over the hurdle of judging Him. So, be sure you are good with God when you think of people to release from your judgment. What a silly thing: to hold



something against God. Right? But we do it, so often, until we really relent and choose freedom.

Once you are done forgiving whomever you need, pray for them the way you would want prayer. Fervently pray for their happiness, forgiveness, blessings, holiness and the fulfillment of all God wants in their life. Do it as though your life depends upon it, because, in a way, it does. Put others first.

Love people with this kind of fervency, and you will begin to grasp what was going through God's mind as He, in the form of man, hung on the cross and died for you. He is so good. He is the only true God, and He really is. compassionate, kind and wonderful. God secured justice at the cross, and He Is the Beginning and the End. That is enough reason to let Him be the only Rock (or rock) in our lives.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Humble and Zealous

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## DAY 18

The third that is left I will test with fire, purifying them like silver, testing them like gold. Then they will call on me, and I will answer them. I will say, 'You are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'"

Hosea 6:3 CEV

Many of the Samaritans in that town believed in Jesus because of what the woman said: "He told me everything I ever did." When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they begged him to stay with them, so he stayed there two more days. And many more believed because of the things he said.

John 4:39-41 NCV

**J**esus confronted the woman at the well with her sin. She could have lashed back and walked away. She could have been silent about her embarrassment. But, she was not.

Perhaps it was the way Jesus loves so well even when delivering painful truth. Perhaps it was the excitement of her discovery of someone who could be the long-awaited Messiah.

Whatever her reasons were, this woman had the presence of mind to put aside her embarrassment in order to save the village. Some things are more important than your pride or the humiliation you fear. Some people are. Jesus Is. And, the people who you can affect for Him are, as well.

We are all imperfect. Tell your story. God can take your dross-filled life and make something precious and beautiful of it. In doing so, you will draw others to His kindness, and He will do this same kindness for them.

We see an example of this in the story of the Samaritans and the woman at the well.

Although the Samaritans were not precious to Jews, they are very precious to God. Although women were not as precious as men, they are to God. Although those lacking virtue are overlooked by many, Jesus stopped and had the single longest conversation of the New Testament with a Samaritan woman who could not keep a relationship intact, and whose community had completely shunned her. Jesus did not shun her. In fact, He holds her up as an example, even today, of His loving grace and the value of every person—whether you like them or not.

Jesus is very kind. He is very loving. This woman was changed by Jesus's pure and holy love--the same love for which she had searched all her life, and found she lacked time and time again.

Jesus's love and respect for her was obvious. She detected it, then questioned it, then appreciated it, and was transformed by it. She immediately embodied Jesus's kindness and love by alerting a village full of people who did not actually deserve her consideration...because they had judged her so badly. She wasn't judging anybody. She was telling everybody the Good News!

She didn't care about what anybody thought. She recognized the astounding opportunity of all ages, and she jumped to share it with others! She gave like Jesus gives. She gave at the expense of her last shred of dignity. She led a city out of a spiritual burning building--the hell of their unbelief—because she recognized God standing right there in front of her, and she shouted it out for everyone to know.

What a virtue, to share the Good News, even though she knew she wasn't worthy. Jesus saw her, redeemed her and let her shout His message. He let her represent Him, knowing everything about her. Because of Jesus's faith in her, this precious woman lived as a force for God. Anybody can do this; you just have to choose it.

Now, let's be real. Not a single one of us has a spotless past. As the Bible reminds us, some of our sins are obvious, and some are found out later, as we see in 1 Timothy 5:24. We are all holding a whole host of ugly realities God has already turned upside down to set us free.

Dare you struggling from being neglected as a child? Or, have you sinned beyond your own morals? Did you forget to forgive someone, and treat them like dirt? Guess what, dear friend? You are a testimony waiting to happen. Do not fear the shame. Someone needs your story. Shed the light of God's gracious and merciful love upon someone's darkness in the way God shed it upon yours.

You and I are the woman at the well, my friend. Let's face it; we know we aren't perfect. But, we can look to God for answers. And, when we know we can trust Him, we trust Him with our lives. When God stepped

into our desperation, He changed everything. He has loved us fiercely, covering the multitude of all our nasty sins. Now, we can love fiercely, and our love spills out to cover a multitude of others' sins as well.

Why can you love and forgive so freely? Because you know what it is to be desperate. Jesus took the dross out of your life, so you know a good Refiner; you can refer people to Jesus wherever you go. Send people to Him, rather than leaving them hurt.

God didn't look to see if you are worthy. He said you are worth it. Don't hide behind your former sins, and don't make excuses for your shortcomings or because you think you haven't arrived. "Arrived" is more of a lie than you believe, anyway. The world needs your story. Jesus will help you share it, and He honors you.

Look, your redemption is the catalyst for others' redemptions. Don't let these forerunners down, but be the light on the hill others need to see. Be the clarion call for others to hear, so they can come running to God. Jesus is proud of you, already, for choosing it. Can you see that?

## RESPONSE

*God,*

*I struggle with the idea of being embarrassed, of exposing myself or or feeling less than whatever appearance I have tried to create. But, I know You love my humility. And, I know You love people. Just like me: people.*

*I am so sorry for holding back what I could have given. To hurt You was not my intention, but I know I cannot be all You want me to be if I hold it back and hide it under a bushel. Help me to see my opportunities, and to share in wisdom, prudence...grace and love. Please, help me.*

*I forever forfeit the weapons, the excuses, I have used against You to protect my privacy and my dignity. It's time to be real. I love You, I trust You and I will follow You.*

*Thank you for loving me, for seeing my beauty, and for refining from me the dross that has held me back.*

*In Jesus's precious name, amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.

# Get Real with Jesus

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## DAY 19

The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;

Lamentations 3:25 NIV

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6 NIV

**H**ow many times have we chosen convenience, relationships or social pressure over what we knew God wanted?

Or, have we been “sold out on the outside,” yet failed to read the Bible, connect with God and stay in His abiding presence? You can follow the rules, yet break every one of them, if you worship God only in spirit, or only in truth.

In order to approach God in an any-way-pleasing manner, we need to believe He both exists and rewards us for seeking Him. This means we consecrate ourselves to Him, giving Him everything, and following Him in both spirit and in truth.

Jesus is not looking for a Sunday Christian or even a well-behaved Christian. He doesn't need your opinions (nobody does). He is not looking for your politeness. He is looking for your sold-out, can't-settle-for-anything-less, giving-your-ownership-to-Jesus heart.

Your salvation journey is not completed the moment of your conversion to Christianity. It is a pledge and a way of life. Now is the time to get all your eggs in God's basket.

Consecrate yourself to God. You are His, and you have no right to hold anything back. God will walk you through the process of living the life you have in the way that magnifies Him and blesses you. He *wants* to bless you.

Become intimately close to God, and best friends with every member of the Trinity, exploring their Persons and enjoying true, abiding and lovely relationships with each.

Be guided by the Lord every day. Be guided each and every moment. Share, with Him, the life He has given you. He has a will for you to live, and nothing short will satisfy you. You were destined for glory, made for His love and bound to Him by the very image of Him that you carry.

God's intentions for you are good, and in following Him you will find fullness of life, fullness of joy. Experience what it is to let Him take control and keep it. You will walk, side by side with Him, your hand in His, His blood and love flowing down onto your life in a magnificent and comforting way. And, at the end of this abundant life, you will be led by God into His holy dwelling.

Let Jesus be your true Lord, not by event, but by continual, habitual experience. Do not give Him lip service; He deserves better treatment. Your opportunity and moment has come; you would despise yourself for not pressing in. The journey is too great, and the reward too plentiful, to not make this your constant pursuit. He loves you. He loves you.

Go after Him. Grab onto Him. The joy will follow. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then all you need will be added to you, as promised in Matthew 6:33. This is how Joshua went from being a servant of God to becoming a friend of God. You can, too.

Intimacy with Jesus can become a wellspring of life within you. His friendship will become the most satisfying adventure of your life.

## RESPONSE

*God, I am sorry.*

*I should have stopped and been with you instead of following people and their agendas. That was wrong. I shouldn't have pushed my own agenda, either--not upon myself or anyone else. Please forgive me.*

*I should have rested in You, listened to Your voice and drawn near. Then, I would have something to share, and I would have cared more about being with You than about being with people or influencing them.*

*Please forgive me. Silence my inner babble, and please fill me with Your gracious presence and Your overwhelming love.*



*Thank you, in Jesus's name. Amen.*

Seek God by spending time with Him and giving Him your undivided attention. Instead of speaking, listen for His voice. Let today—and everything you do and say—be all about Him.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
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- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# *Comfort and Deliverance*

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## DAY 20

The LORD your God wins victory after victory and is always with you. He celebrates and sings because of you, and he will refresh your life with his love.

Zephaniah 3:17 CEV

Then Peter realized what had happened. He thought, “Now I know that the Lord really sent his angel to me. He rescued me from Herod and from all the things the people thought would happen.”

Acts 3:11 NCV

**G**od doesn't want you to be overwhelmed by your circumstance, but overwhelmed by Him, His sovereignty, His goodness and His close companionship with you day by day.

If you live long enough, you will have plenty of chances to be frustrated or overwhelmed. You may even be defeated, in the world's estimation. Whether it be with your health, your family, the government or any other aspect of living, disappointments and obstacles can arise.

Are there times when you feel overcome? Yes, it can happen. Your life might be full of “opportunities to fail.” But every situation, according to the Bible, is overcome by a gracious God Who holds you in the palm of His hand. He holds you tightly, and He will not let you go. Not a single circumstance can take you away from His love. He promises to show you the best way to deal with your situation if you will listen, abide and be humble.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV

Obey His voice! He is not causing you trouble. He is getting you out of it, or seeing you through. God's ways will amaze you. But, in order to grab onto them, you must first let go of your own.

You see, God has been on the emotional journey of every person on the planet, including yourself. He has felt the wrath of the oppressor upon the oppressed and the desperation of those who have tormented others.

Take heart; He Is With You (Emmanuel), just as He has promised.

God does not like the pain we are in. He takes no joy in evil. He does not want us stuck in any way, not even emotionally. Rather, He wants freedom and love for each and every person, and He wants us to live in calm, settled peace with one another. Like a mother who separates children fighting by nestling one under each arm as they calm and quiet, God is healing hearts all over the planet. Let yours be one of them, friend.

God is good, and His love for you exceeds your desperate moments, or the times your heart has been ripped to shreds.

He loves you. He loves you.

Psalm 91 says,

He will cover you with His pinions,  
And under His wings you may seek refuge;  
His faithfulness is a shield and a bulwark.

Psalm 91:4 NASB

When has God ever seen you hurt and not been near you? When have you felt pain, and He wasn't cut? Never, not once. He has kept your tears in His bottle, and He holds every one precious, as a prayer and a sacred vow.

He loves you.

You see, the vow is not from you to God. It is from God to you. And this is the vow: God Is for you.

Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call;  
This I know, that God is for me.  
In God, whose word I praise,  
In the Lord, whose word I praise,  
In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?

Psalm 56:9-11 NASB

## RESPONSE

*Father, I trust You.*

*Please settle my fights, within and without. Let us walk together and examine them together, one by one. You will put them to rest. Even now, Lord, bring to mind things You want to address that have overwhelmed me. You have a way through for every situation.*

*Speak into my heart and show me the way You want me to go. Speak to me the reason You choose what You do, so I will adopt Your ways and become more loving, whole and godly. Your personality is love, and your character is perfect.*

*I trust You and I accept Your instruction and direction.*

*In Jesus's name, amen.*

Be humble and candid with God. Allow His Holy Spirit to awaken you to His truth: Who He Is and what He wants of you. Spend time at rest, with your heart open to Jesus. Listen tenderly and choose to trust. The more you know God, the more you fall in love with Him. Let God direct your time with Him. This will become a communion of great enlightenment and love. His love will fill your heart, and spill back onto Him and others.

Spend time asking God what He wants to heal in your heart right now.

For example, there might be a lie you have believed, and He wants to tell you the truth. Renounce lies you believe about God, yourself or others, or even the way the world should work. Ask God to show you the truth, either in the Bible or by speaking through His Holy Spirit. Then, accept it. God is not cookie cutter, and neither is life. Your constant communication

with God is necessary for victorious living. So, walk in the truth and love. This crucial act of obedience fosters godliness, goodness and blessing that produce godly fruit in your life.

Too, there might be pain in your heart. Jesus wants to talk about it and let you rest in Him, healing. Jesus feels your pain, and He already died for the forgiveness and healing of your wounding. Wounds, like lies, keep us from living the fullness of life God has for us.

Again, even when we are excited about life and feel it is full, God has more: deeper revelation, joy, truth, peace, clarity, wisdom and grace. The fruits of the Spirit thrive where people live in freedom and union with God and in His Body, the Church.

In order to thrive, you may have bandages to unwrap and wounds for Jesus to doctor. He Is The Great Physician, and He knows the medicine you need right now. He knows the medicine you need for every day, so come back to this day as often as you need.

Whatever Jesus wants to show you or adjust within you, allow Him, and ask for His peace and perspective. God is a Person: a capital "P" Person, so He has bridged the gap between God and man. He encompasses all it means to be both. He knows your pain, and He provides the way, even in the labyrinth of your thinking, to make a straight path for you to let go of former hurts and confusions. God's way is the right way. So, for everything amiss in your life, God has the best way, the best perspective, and a sovereign plan of action--or inaction.

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path. In the way where I walk They have hidden a trap for me.

Psalm 142:3 NASB

If you want counseling on deeper inner healing, please contact Global Healing Rooms through our website, [globalhealingrooms.org](http://globalhealingrooms.org), and we will be glad to assist you or direct you to resources for healing.

God wants people to feel healthy. Healing is the first step to health, just as salvation is the first step in our journeys as God's sons and daughters.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to

activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.

- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Unlock Your Hope

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## DAY 21

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope and overflow with confidence in His promises.

Romans 15:13 AMP

For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth.

Psalms 71:5 NASB

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT

**F**aith, hope and love will continue long after the earth has passed away. Let us then grow strong in our hope, which will bridge into eternity.

Hope means we recognize, by faith, that God is capable and loving, and we ourselves are recipients of His powerful love as He expresses it toward us in countless ways.

God will never stop being God, and we will never stop being ourselves. So, all through eternity, we will never stop needing God. We will always feast upon the delights of His perfect love and expectations for His kind blessing.

But he said to me, "My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you." So I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ's power can live in me.

2 Corinthians 12:19 NCV

When people lose hope, they forget Jesus's plans to care for them. They lose vision and stop working on those plans, even though the plans are more stable than the way they feel. When hope no longer fuels your actions, your strength and endurance wane. Hope is expectation for good, and it is as much the foundation of our actions today as it was for Peter the day he stepped onto the water to meet with Jesus, Who called him.

Every day, we walk on water toward Jesus, Who calls us. When the waves crash, our eyes can drift from Jesus. When they do, we begin to sink. We need to rise above, and that requires hope. Hope comes straight from from God, Who generously gives it to His children by proclaiming and fulfilling His promises.

God's promises put a handle on our hope. When we shout out to Jesus, we grab onto this hope, and Jesus pulls us out of our desperate waters. God's hope is powerfully effective when it hits the earth.

Therefore we do not become discouraged [spiritless, disappointed, or afraid]. Though our outer self is [progressively] wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day by day. For our momentary, light distress [this passing trouble] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory [a fullness] beyond all measure [surpassing all comparisons, a transcendent splendor and an endless blessedness]! So we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are visible are temporal [just brief and fleeting], but the things which are invisible are everlasting and imperishable.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 AMP

Jesus told us in John 16:33 that He has overcome this troublesome world. Because of done this, He can ably step us through the clear path He has provided, not so we will avoid all difficulty, but so we will overcome and thrive. He offers hope and direction. Hope is the fuel for faithfulness and zeal. It keeps our hearts soft toward God, ourselves and one another.

## TWO TYPES OF PROMISES

The Bible is full of promises, and promises inspire hope. When you follow God's guidance to secure your promises, your hope grows. God's hope does not disappoint. Some of God's promises require nothing on our part, and others are activated when we do something.

## FREE PROMISES

Some promises are just given to you, like a present. Presents reflect the nature of the giver, not the recipient. You don't have to be good to receive them. You don't have to be worthy, valuable or beautiful in anyone's estimation. You receive the gift just because God is good, and He is always eager to show you how very valuable and loved you really are. God just wants to give you gifts. So, He does. God is incredibly thoughtful, and you cannot count or measure the number or depth of the thoughts He thinks about you.

This scripture shows God's generous nature toward all people. It applies to everyone, good or bad, and the example encourages us to take up God's ways and treat people with the same lavish kindness regardless of belief or action. We have it on good authority when Jesus describes the goodness of the Father. After all, He and the Father are one, just as we are to be one with God.

But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong.

Matthew 5:44-45 CEV

What a beautiful promise! God gives sun and rain to the earth. He will shine on us and water us, whether we are good or bad.

## PROMISES WITH REQUIREMENTS OR CAUSES

Unlike the one found in Matthew 5:45, some promises are ours only when we do something or a chain of events is set off. Until then, they lie dormant, and we do not experience the effect of their glory in our lives. Here is a simple example about having confidence that you are connecting to God in prayer:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the

confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

1 John 5:13-14 NIV

For this example, we are going to use a verse that is becoming increasingly relevant on a glocal—*global and local*—level. We will go into depth with it, because I want you to easily glean its importance and impact for today. When you do, you will see why gleaning promises and redeeming them can change the world, not just our particular situations but for many, many people. Promises are important, and God stands beside His. Let us look at 2 Chronicles 7:14.

2 Chronicles 7:14 gives God's direction for people in peril.

If my own people will humbly pray and turn back to me and stop sinning, then I will answer them from heaven. I will forgive them and make their land fertile once again.

2 Chronicles 7:14 CEV

Hey, wait a minute. Didn't that last verse say God would give us sun and rain? Yes, and this does not contradict it. Anytime Scripture seems to contradict itself or what you know to be true, God is inviting you to a deeper level of wisdom and understanding. It is time to think harder and evaluate.

As any farmer will tell you, you can have sun and rain, but still see your crops fail. When things get bad, God gets your attention. God will use the things you think you need to correct you before you blow it on the eternal essentials.

Let's face the facts:

- If you gained the whole world but lost your soul, did you keep your priorities straight?
- If nations destroy nations, and nobody remains, does it even matter that their lands produced crops for the people?
- If you are correct but not right, are your relationships thriving?
- If you heal a person but break their heart, do you look like Jesus?

These are important questions. And, they point to the reason God does things we do not like. Sometimes, it takes a sound wakeup call to shake us

out of our slumber. And sometimes, when we have to work together to save the crop, we get humble and cry out to God.

If we, as members of the church, will each commit to turn ourselves around—stop being so proud, start praying to God, commit ourselves to Him, and stop our sinning—then everybody gets fed. Like Jesus, our first food is to do the will of our Father in heaven, and to finish His work. So, when we seek God’s kingdom and righteousness, everything else follows. What will it matter that our bellies are full, if we are all going to hell with a Jesus sticker on the back of our cars? We need to get this right.

The correction of the Lord trains us if we are looking to Him in our distress. We are in exactly that point of history, and we have the power to back out of much of the distress we have caused. The promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 tells us what to do when we finally see our need.

As you can see, God’s hope is housed in His promises. Those promises are relevant for today. Jesus does not leave us in the dark on how to fulfill our hope, but gives us steps wherever we need them.

Sometimes, we have to search the Scriptures, pray, listen to God and use common sense to piece things together. As we grow and mature, we find promises in Scripture that only become evident as we acquaint ourselves with God and His Word. These require more attention and investment to secure, but the outcome is always worth it.

## REDEEM THE PROMISE, UNLOCK THE HOPE

Today, you are going to learn how to unlock your hope by redeeming promises requiring your action. You can uncover some of God’s promises as easily as you would open the lid on a can of soup! By delving into Scripture, you are sure to taste and see how good Jesus is to you as He strengthens you in His promises. Dig into Scripture to see what He offers!

## GRAB YOUR CAN OPENER

Grab a sheet of paper, and get ready to write. You are going to record a verse, then what you know about its context, conclusions to draw, and actions it recommends.

We can redeem a Scripture promise when we read, weigh and act on it:

### **Read It**

1. Verse
2. Promise
3. Actions

### **Weigh It**

4. Source
5. Audience
6. Context

### **Act on It**

7. Digging
8. Response

Let's use Isaiah 40:31 for our sample study. A set of answers is provided, and a blank sheet for you to copy is in the back of the book. This is how you will answer the questions:

- **What does the verse say?** Write the verse and the address on your paper.
- **What is the promise?** Write the promise this verse offers.
- **What actions are required?** What must happen to fulfill the promise?
- **Who delivered the message?** Write the name of the speaker or writer, and ask yourself whether this source is reliable. For example, the reputable prophet Jeremiah is a good source, and Job's friends, who angered God with their words, are not.
- **Who was the audience? May I be included?** Write down the original intended audience and current audience. For example, God's promise to shepherd Israel extends to us, because we are adopted into God's family. His edenic requirement to eat only fruit does not apply to anyone, because nobody lives in Eden any longer.
- **What were the circumstances? How can this apply to me?** Read the surrounding text to understand the verse and its setting, because not all promises apply at all times.
- **Dig into power words and questions, here.** Write down questions that come to mind or words with big impact. You can look them up by reading other Bible verses, different translations/versions of the same verse, sermons, commentaries, concordances, or web searches/materials of reputable ministers or ministries.
- **Should I respond to this? If so, how?** Write down your response to this promise. For instance, you might post the verse, "Be still and know that I am God," in a place where you do stressful activities, so you are reminded to pray and rest.

The following page shows a completed *Redeem the Promise* worksheet.

# REDEEM THE PROMISE

<u><b>READ IT</b></u>	<u><b>WEIGH IT</b></u>	<u><b>ACTION IT</b></u>
Verse	Source	Digging
Promise	Audience	Response
Actions	Context	

## **READ IT:**

What does the verse say?

*Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. - Isaiah 41:31 NKJV*

What is the promise?

*Strength, refreshing, and endurance for the long haul*

What actions need to happen?

*If we wait for the Lord, He will do it for us*

## **WEIGH IT:**

Who delivered the message?

*Isaiah was a holy prophet who was close to God. He is a reliable source.*

Who was the audience? May I be included?

*The Jews, who were God's people. Yes! I am too, by faith!*

What were the circumstances? How can this apply to me?

*God's people fell into captivity and rebellion. This chapter says God is always good, even if we can't see it.*

*His love and care are for everyone.*

## **ACTION IT:**

Dig into power words and questions, here.

*"Wait for" sounds like standing in line. There's got to be more! It means: God is capable, so...Trust Him and ask Him for help. Count on Him to do what only He can do. Don't take the problem back. Find out what He expects and do that, but not more. Wait and see what God does! Accept the provision or solution He brings.*

Should I respond to this promise? If so, how?

*Post this note: "Apologize to Jesus and give back his superhero cape!" On the back, write these prayers:*

*"Jesus, why am I stressed/tired?" and "What do you want me to do?" If He says to trust and wait on*

*Him, just bask in the happiness of knowing He's got everything covered. If He says to do something, obey!*

In redeeming our promise, we learned these things about God:

- He is kind and capable.
- He expects certain things of us, but carries our unwieldy burdens.
- He gives us choice whether to obey or even acknowledge His offer to help.
- He treats us as loving, respectful, trusting children...so that's who we must be, in our truest nature.

Wow, look at that. We just unearthed a portion of our identity by delving just a little further into a key word in a Bible verse. Had you noticed this in reading Isaiah 40:31, before? I had not. God is so good at rewarding His children for seeking Him!

We are His children, and God trusts us to trust Him. He sees us as loving, trusting kids who enjoy His help and listen to Him, obediently. If we don't feel we look like the picture God is painting of us, that's okay. God's view of us is complete and whole. We are in process. Our sin is forgiven, but we are still growing in God's truth and the beauty of His holiness. So, if God says you are His beautiful child, trust Him and ask Him how that looks. Then, ask Him to walk with you, leading and empowering you to live according to who He says you are. Jesus isn't biting His nails over this, so you don't need to, either.

Isn't that a hopeful thought? And, since your dependency on God extends into heaven from right now, you are building bulky hope muscles that you get to flex for all of eternity. You are looking pretty wise right now, my friend.

## KEEP YOUR CAN OPENER HANDY

In our *Redeem the Promise* exercise, we learned that waiting on Jesus produces refreshment, strength and stamina for the long haul. This is especially true when waiting requires actual resting and trusting God to act for our good.

Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

*Isaiah 40:31 NASB*



*Redeem the Promise* is an effective way to understand how God thinks of you and what plans He has in your future. When you see how God's promises work, you catch a glimpse of His ways, then get a handle on them. When you know God's ways, you can walk in them and enjoy them.

If you struggle with hope, this will be a fantastic study to revisit. If you just need a new lens through which to read God's Word, this gives you ample food for thought.

You can find a clean copy of the *Redeem the Promise* study help at the back of this book. Feel free to copy that one page, in its entirety, for future use, and distribute it as you wish.

## RESPONSE

*God, You are the Lord of my hope.*

*Please fill me with Your hope, joy and peace,  
so I will abound in hope and confidence in You.*

*When I read the prayers of the Apostles in the Bible,  
let me remember those prayers are written for me, as well.  
They prove You can speak to me  
and fill my own heart with prayers  
that bless my soul  
and powerfully help others.*

*Thank You. Amen.*

Now it is your turn to try the *Redeem the Promise* exercise. Pick a simple verse to start, so you can see where this leads. If you have trouble finding one, you can use a verse from today.

You do not have to answer all the questions, but they are there to help you. If you think of better questions, use them, and make your own Bible study help. If you would like to make (free) donations of change suggestions to bless others, email [share@spiritsongpublishinggroup.com](mailto:share@spiritsongpublishinggroup.com). We might include them on our website or in a future edition!

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Answer the Call

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## DAY 22

She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

Genesis 16:13 NIV

**E**mbracing God and His calling, without reservation, will give you relief and joy.

You must worship God in both spirit and in truth. You must take up your cross and follow His calling. Your calling: the one He has fashioned exclusively for you. It includes everything in the Bible, and is guided by the Bible, but is specific to the path He has called you to walk. It is a stirring in your soul, and you can only be happy and satisfied in God when you are doing your God-ordained (not you-ordained) part in His kingdom.

It is time to stop playing church, and start being the Church. It is up to you, and it is up to me. Let's be united in this. To make this quick and easy to remember, here are five steps to help you follow your calling.

Firstly, stop glossing over the words in your Bible. Offer the gifts of this Word, this time, and all God's intentions for you up to Him. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present and sovereign, bringing you to an encounter with Him. Ask Him to help you read and understand the Word, recognizing His message to you and what He wants to do with it. Ask Him to have His Word read you—show you who you are and how you should be acting—as you spend time in it. Let the words in the pages sink in, transform you, and take root in your heart. God is faithful. He wants to teach you His Word and transform you with it. This is one of the ways in which God leads you.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26 NIV

Secondly, trust the Holy Spirit to do a great work of faith within you. He will teach you His Word and show you His heart behind all He does. Holy Scripture makes more sense to you when you read it with a better understanding of God's nature. You are less likely to mistake God's intentions when you read Scripture through the lens of His perfect love. His kindness will leap from the pages, and you will want to follow Him better and know Him more. Your desire to be guided by Him will be based upon admiration and friendship as much as it has been on love and devotion. You will realize God has been very faithful to you, and you will trust Him even more. As you trust God with your spiritual sight, He will reveal greater measures of His kingdom to you. This changes how you live.

In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

Exodus 15:13 NIV

Thirdly, obey the whole Word of Scripture—even the uncomfortable parts, which are powerful. There is a point in holy intimacy you cannot surpass until you regularly read the Bible and obey its commands, leaning your tender heart toward God to know Him and obey Him more. Fueled intimacy is required to create more intimacy. Greater obedience requires fueled obedience. Transparent fellowship--and the longing to stay in it and grow in it--requires dedicated fellowship. Your lovesick chasing after God creates genuine tenderness and interchange between you and your Creator. Few press in beyond a certain point, but beyond is where the riches dwell. Dive in for more, as often as you like.

Fourthly, let this obedience to Christ do its perfect work within you. Jesus doesn't just forgive you, He forgives you to redeem you. And He doesn't just redeem you; He redeems you to sanctify you. He doesn't just sanctify you. He sanctifies you to make you holy, as He Is Holy. He redeemed you for this purpose: to abide in Him, to be loved by Him, to explore the Godhead, and to fulfill His great and glorious will for you. He has written His love for you in His hands, and He wants your love for Him to be written in your life from the scribe of your heart. God's will is enough.

Finally, live supernaturally. Be steadfast in this, knowing your obedience to God carries gravity. It is powerful and shakes strongholds to

the ground. It produces, within you, righteousness, sanctification and authority, without which we cannot properly do our jobs on earth. And, everything God does on the inside of you is going to produce good fruit in the world, to the praise of His glorious and matchless name.

This is ultimately important to the calling on your life and that of many others. Be love, embodied: humble, hopeful and faith-filled. Embracing your calling, and living in relentless pursuit of God, to whom obedience opens doors, will set your life on holy fire. You are going to love it. Do not turn back. Go for it. And, as you seek God, He will continually redefine the plans He has for you, to navigate you through this life and into the destiny He has for you. He says this in His Word.

For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for well-being, and not for calamity, in order to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11 ISV

God's words are true, and they trump your words. Start saying His words over your life and living His life for you in place of the one you thought you wanted. In the presence of God is the fullness of joy.

## RESPONSE

*God, please, give me Your "more."*

*I really need You. I want a full and interesting life, fulfilling Your call for me. I know You want this, because You truly see, understand me and care for me. I cherish You. I love our intimate communion. Yet, as I draw near, I continually feel I am just getting to know You.*

*Take my heart under Your wing. Acquaint me with the beauty of Your holiness. Help me feel the wonders of Your grace and truth, and encounter Your love in a fresh, transformational way.*

*May it quench my soul; I can only be satiated by You. As I drink in more of Your Word and experience its transforming power, I will seek it more. Help me become more tender and responsive in our friendship and kinship. Make my life a truthful and transparent response to this intimate friendship and love.*

*Walk with me in Your sanctification, holiness and calling. This is a new day; I have never been this way before, like an Israelite entering the Promised Land. Help me fix my eyes firmly upon You, Lord.*

*Tend my heart to grow closer with You each day. Amen, and amen.*

Starting today, choose to intentionally follow God's lead, as an act of worshipful obedience. Take godly action, and see where God is moving with you.

God's peace will rest upon His specific will for you, and you will feel His pleasure as you walk in tandem with Him, trusting and obeying Him in ways implicit and direct.

Do not settle for less than God's desires, even if this book suggests otherwise. You have permission to follow the Holy Spirit and His Holy Bible over anything written in any other book, including this one.

This book is written to an entire readership. You and Jesus, however, have a unique relationship. He will require specific steps of obedience to accomplish His big plans for your life--not for the rest of the Body, but just for you and Him. If all the things Jesus did couldn't be contained in a world full of books, then He will ask you to do things that agree with the Bible but are not explicitly recorded in its pages.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

John 21:25 NASB

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person, and show someone kindness, today.

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Unit 4 | *Abide, Align & Identify*

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BE TRANSFORMED IN  
THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

**Days 23-27:**

Draw Near to God  
Heavenly Experiences  
Pickled in Love  
Holy Spirit Life  
Discover Your Identity





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## Unit 4 | *Abide, Align & Identify*

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### BE TRANSFORMED IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

**J**esus is where you get your identity, peace and transformation. Abiding in Jesus brings you into His presence, where there is fullness of joy. This is transforming joy, life-giving joy, heavenly joy.

God's supernatural joy is powerful. It redefines your understanding of Jesus, your relationship with Him and your understanding and appreciation of yourself and others. Living in joy is a critical step in becoming a child of God who loves well and grows into the stature of the King. Then, people can see Who Jesus Truly Is. They will glorify your Father in heaven and seek to draw near Him.

God is faithful. He isn't a starchy, far-off God. No, He Is right here, right now. Picture you and the Holy Spirit so close to one another that you breathe in one another's whispers. God is even closer than this. He loves you and is with you. Not one of your thoughts of Him has fallen to the ground. He knows all of you, and all of you is exactly how much He holds precious.

Welcome to a whole new turning point in your relationship with God. May His extreme blessing rest upon you as you read the text, say these prayers and advance in deep, deep intimacy with God.

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Note: Each lesson reflects upon Old and New Testament passages. This beautifully illustrates the unchanging nature of God's deep and abiding love for you.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Hebrews 13:8 NKJV



# Draw Near to God

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## DAY 23

Let's do our best to know the LORD. His coming is as certain as the morning sun; he will refresh us like rain renewing the earth in the springtime.

Hosea 6:3 CEV

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:8 NKJV

**T**he prophet Hosea admonished God's people to know the Lord. He knew the Messiah would come, and His ministry and message would refresh and renew this tired world. Sure enough, Jesus came through.

Jesus gave us an in-person look at how much God loves us, and how a holy and free life in Him would look. He purchased us from death by surrendering His own life on the cross. This bought back our opportunity for the intimacy, freedom and holiness we had with Him from before the fall of man. Now is the time to cash in on His offer!

As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit living within us. He comforts, helps and directs us. He prays for us and fills us with joy as we interact with Him. If we ask Him to fill us with His abiding presence, He does, and He empowers us for a dynamic living incomparable to what we had before. Try it. In this way, you will draw nearer to God.

Because God is holy, we want to live a clean life, in pursuit of Him. We don't want to hurt His tender heart by sinning. God is the most sensitive, kind, compassionate Being. He is always with us, so He comes along for the ride wherever we go. We can ignore Him; we all have, before. But now, let's honor His presence and accept His invitation to a daily adventure of

supernatural living. Ask Him to help you feel His presence, receive His wisdom and enjoy His fellowship as He teaches you about life. He is a lot more fun than you think! And, once you get in the habit of living in tandem with Him, you only want this way of life. Let the adventure begin!

## RESPONSE

Spend time, now, abiding the presence of the Lord. Turn on inspiring music. Read the Bible and pray, readying your heart to hear from God. Listen for His gentle voice as He speaks into your heart directly, through the Bible, or through the lyrics of a song. God wants to refresh you, and this time will give you peace. When the presence of God is felt strongly...there is joy. It is time to abide in God's presence, and fall into alignment with His Word and His ways.

You do not have to say anything specific to receive a visitation from the Holy Spirit. Just open your heart to Him, expect His presence, and pray. Today's guided prayer contains a few things you might say, but you don't have to use it. Most of the time, you will either be silent and intentionally leaning your heart in toward God, or you will be thanking, praising and worshipping Him because He is worthy.

Spend time, here, abiding in the Lord. As you practice this one habit, through the easy and hard times of your life, you will grow into a deeper intimacy with Jesus than you have ever imagined. You will love it, and it will strengthen you beyond your understanding. Sometimes, it will leave you dumbfounded upon realizing you have unknowingly passed heavenly tests while abiding in intimate trust and obedience. This book draws you into intimate acquaintance with Christ to produce an abiding and peaceful, life-giving union with Him. This is the marriage of heaven and earth within your very being. It will fuel the rest of your reading of this book, so make sure you spend time doing this. In worship, you may call out something like this:

*Holy Spirit, come.  
Fall upon me.  
I give You this time right now.*

*I set aside my own agenda,  
and let You have Your way.*

*Let Your presence be felt within me,  
and minister to my heart.*

*You call the shots, Lord.  
I praise You!*

*I praise You.*

*You are holy!  
You are holy!  
You are holy!*

*You are good.  
All praise belongs to You, Lord.  
All praise belongs to You.*

*I praise You.  
You are good.  
You are kind.*

*I bless You, Lord Jesus.  
I bless You.*

Abide in Jesus. Receive His love. Rest. Listen for His voice, and allow His gentle nature to transform you.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Heavenly Experiences

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## DAY 24

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

John 15:5-8 NASB

You have shown me the path to life, and you make me glad by being near to me. Sitting at your right side, I will always be joyful.

Psalm 16:11 CEV

**N**ow, it is time to focus on your experience with God. It is important to abide in the Holy Spirit of Jesus, Who lives within you, as seen in Ephesians 3 and Romans 5, below. Your special time with God is known as “soaking,” because in abiding, you soak up the Lord’s anointing, which strengthens you for your day.

And I pray that he would unveil within you the unlimited riches of his glory and favor until supernatural strength floods your innermost being with his divine might and explosive power. Then, by constantly using your faith, the life of Christ will be released deep inside you, and the resting place of his love will

become the very source and root of your life. Then you will be empowered to discover what every holy one experiences—the great magnitude of the astonishing love of Christ in all its dimensions. How deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement that transcends our understanding—this extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God!

Ephesians 3:16-19 TPT

Such hope [in God's promises] never disappoints *us*, because God's love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Romans 5:5 AMP

In the Bible, soaking is called “abiding,” “tarrying,” “meditating on the Lord,” or “resting in the Lord.” Soaking is not the New Age practice that pulls people from God's truth by emptying their minds. It is, rather, a hearkening, or listening, to the Lord, while deeply pondering His Person and His Word. This is one of the ways the Bible shows us to gain strength and direction from God.

You see, prayer is a conversation with God. It is reciprocal, requiring each to both speak and listen. Isn't it amazing that God listens to you when you speak, even when you are just thinking the words in your heart? Is it not a small thing, then, that He would in turn want and expect you to listen when He speaks? This is the other side of the prayer coin, and it is as essential to your relationship with God as it is to the other relationships in your life. So, how does one do it?

Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

Isaiah 30:21 NASB

Tarrying, or soaking, is often begun by submitting your time to the Lord, thanking, praising and worshiping Him, and asking Him to draw near. You can open your heart to the Lord, tender-heartedly studying Scripture, submitting your will to it, and praying it back to Him as an offering. This does not have to be such an elaborate process, though. People hear God's whisper out of the blue, too. People have stumbled into encounters, and then elected to steward and dwell within the shelter of God's presence for millennia.



When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

Exodus 3:4 NASB

For example, Moses hearkened to the Lord in the wilderness, at the burning bush. David hearkened to the Lord and wrote of his experience in Psalm 23, 24, and other chapters. Jesus talked about it in Matthew 11:28-30 and encouraged all people to seek God by doing it in Luke 11:10-13. Ananias was soaking when he heard God speak to him in a vision. This gave him instruction and courage to minister to Paul, who was then called Saul. Saul had been a murderer of the faithful, but God transformed Ananias’s heart from reluctant fear to active boldness through the supernatural process of soaking.

The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.”

Acts 9:11 NIV

How profound is our change when we seek the Lord, and how marvelous are His ways! Now is the time to seek God—to seek Him continually and for profound transformation. Our continual quest for a deeper and more intimate relationship with Christ is what compels us in His love. You see, God is love, and all who are born of Him are love. We are embodiments of His love that is illustrated in John 1:1-3. When we each accept our position as Christ’s embodiment on earth—literally as the Body of Christ—we shine the Light of heaven where we live, and His will is completed in us. To be the Body of Christ, we must let God actively embody us. We do this by obedience and abiding. And, this abiding obedience brings us true joy.

## RESPONSE

Spend time abiding in the Lord, today. Again, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit so you will continue in intimacy, led by Him throughout your day. Ask Him to show you what it is to truly abide in His presence. Start journaling your interactions with God. Write down all He teaches you, so you have a unique map of your path to God’s divine oasis of abiding fellowship. Psalm 119:105, Psalm 32:8 and James 4:8 show us God’s intimate guidance is available to all believers.

Keep an extra sheet of paper to jot down whatever else pops into your head so that if God reminds you to do something, or an errand or

distraction comes to mind, you can record it and move on in your time of intimacy. This abiding time is a godly habit you can enjoy daily, long after you have finished this book.

*Jesus,  
I may have spent a lot of time in Your Word, the Bible. But, I don't think I have experienced us—You and me, together—in the fullest way You have intended. There's got to be more. I want to be an embodiment of Your Word: a taste—an experience—of You on the earth (Psalm 34:8).*

*As You give me opportunities to connect with You and be transformed, help me to recognize them for what they are and make the most of what You offer me. Help me to be filled with Your Spirit, afresh, and empowered to do Your will as I abide in the shelter of Your presence.*

*I love You. Thank You for Your tender kinship, for our times together, and for the way You make my life better just by interacting with me. I bless You, Lord. Thank You for all You do! Amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Pickled in Love

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## DAY 25

**H**ave you learned how to love, as a Christian? 1 John 4:19 (TPT) says, “We have come into an intimate experience with God’s love, and we trust in the love he has for us. God is love! Those who are living in love are living in God, and God lives through them.”

This is a key to unity with God and in the Church. God’s goal for the Church is unity, and Jesus won’t even come back to the earth until we are one. God places an urgency and importance on your love and unity in His well-functioning Body.

The mature children of God are those who are moved by the impulses of the Holy Spirit. And you did not receive the “spirit of religious duty,” leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the “Spirit of full acceptance,” enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, “Beloved Father!” For the Holy Spirit makes God’s fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, “You are God’s beloved child!”

Romans 8:14-16 TPT

We open our hearts to Jesus’s overwhelming, perfect love. As we accept it, we bubble over with it, spilling it back onto Him and others. This is how God designed us, and it fulfills His requirements for us: to love Him with everything in you, and to love people the way you love yourself. God is Love, and He has made you like Himself. He Is the very best Teacher of

Love, and it is by the power of His love you are able to respond in love toward Him, yourself and others.

God has created mankind in His image, and He began restoring His spiritual likeness in you when you chose to follow Him. God is Love, and because of this, you are an embodiment of His love. God Is Love, and you are His expression of Love. You are His child, His holy offspring. You are a loving person, according to your spiritual DNA. It identifies you. Your growth in Jesus strengthens your expression of this eternal and holy trait.

Think how much the Father loves us. He loves us so much that he lets us be called his children, as we truly are. But since the people of this world did not know who Christ is, they don't know who we are.

1 John 3:1 CEV

In your prayer and soaking time, you are going to ask God to baptize you--to infuse you, or pickle you--in His liquid love. This is, perhaps, the most transfiguring portion of this book, and if you short yourself on it, you will never know what wonders have awaited you.

Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.

Isaiah 55:5 NLT

Do not let God's love go stale in its effect upon your life. Really lean into this one by doing it with your whole heart and leaving nothing on the table. Jesus didn't leave anything on the table for you, and He knows when you are holding back. He does not beat you over the head with it, but you do know He understands and yearns for more, child. He longs for just one more moment with you. So, let Him have everything. Let Him have what He is due: all of it. ...this is going to be really good!

The Lord your God has arrived! He's inside of you even now! What wealth and mighty power He brings you— giving you victory and saving you. He will take such delight in you that it will make Him leap for joy, twirl and spin, even shout with great gladness! You will be His feast of joyful pleasure! Yes, He will renew you with His love.

Zephaniah 3:17 TPT

Today's lesson is meant to be an encounter with Jesus. You are going to dive right in, and experience the love and value He has for you. His love

and value for you spills out from your soul and reflects back onto God and people. Since all people are created in God's image, this isn't a secret party. Everyone is invited, not only to salvation, but to His baptism of glorious Love.

Three things will last forever--faith, hope, and love--and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 NLT

## RESPONSE

Spend time with God, praying about the lesson. What does this day mean to God? How does He want you to be changed and developed through it? God has a special treat in store for you, today, and it is alright to earmark this page so you can come back for more. It's your book, so no one can stop you.

Quiet your space and settle your heart. Ask God to baptize you in His liquid love. God wants to do this. It is worth it for Him to do this. If you never shared this love with another person, He would still want to pour it out for you, because He values you so very much. He adores you, and He will never let you go.

God's love will sustain you. It will change you remarkably.

This is how you will do the greater things: the ones you were destined to do, itching to do, but which were still beyond your comprehension. God will reveal each thing to you as you are ready, but all must be done in love. You must be infused with His love to receive the gift.

Receive; only receive. Then, as you rest in this love, you will begin to learn how to host and walk in this love. Ask the Holy Spirit how this looks and feels for you: to host and carry His presence, walking in it and affecting the world as you go. You will change the world, starting with yourself. It will be beautiful. You might not grasp most changes until heaven. You may not even notice. They will just take their places in your life as an expression of God's love, overflowing. The God Who Is Good, Trustworthy, and Kind is also everything you need in this moment and in every moment. Remove your distractions and focus only on Jesus.

In focusing on Jesus and letting His love pour into you, you will change the world. You will change the lives of those around you. You will be the keeper of His love, and embodiment of His grace. You will carry His patience to see people saved and delivered, and you will grow in this goodness. You will have what you ask. So, abide in Jesus, and let Him expand your faith and hone your direction. Dream big, and love as an

expression of Christ. Although His ways are not ours, we can adopt His mind to begin thinking and acting as children of God. This, we do by faith.

Take on God's ways, and move with His love. This is how you become a glove that covers God's hand moving on this earth. You are the tent of His presence. By this manner, you do only what you see Jesus doing. You help people fall in love with Jesus, become free, and shrug off their afflictions. You will want healing and health for everyone you know. You will want to know more people just so you can reach them with God's love.

You embody God's unstoppable love. You are a living saint, a vessel of love, and the embodiment of God's goodness. If you doubt it, just ask Him.

He agrees. Ask God for everything He has for you. He is not stingy. He is giving, and He relentlessly pursues you to give you all He has for you. Do not leave this moment until you feel the goodness of God upon you, the fullness of His love and the graciousness of His intimacy flowing through you. You will know it when you experience it.

Each time you let God's love shower and fill you, you awaken to a new depth of supernatural life. You were not saved to simply be marked for heaven; you were made for an intimate, life-giving relationship with your Creator. You are filled, covered and wrapped up in the safety of His love. Nothing can penetrate God's love, and every good thing flows from it. God's love was always meant to dwell in your heart, but this can take place only by your desire and request. You can choose how close you will remain with Him, how much headspace you offer, how much life you let Him rule, and how much you receive of His offerings for you. Eternity will show how truly simple these choices are, so you are wise when you invite the Holy Spirit to take charge, expressing His love and good nature in and through you. Choose life in the Holy Spirit. Give Him your 100%.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.

- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Holy Spirit Life

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## DAY 26

Then it will come about at a later time that I will pour out my Spirit on every person. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your elderly people will dream dreams, and your young people will see visions.

Joel 2:28 ISV

Yet when the Spirit of Truth comes, he'll guide you into all truth. He won't speak on his own accord, but he'll speak whatever he hears and will declare to you the things that are to come.

John 16:13 ISV

**W**e live in a time when God has poured out His Spirit onto the human race. People are speaking God's words of encouragement and even receiving ideas for inventions during their quiet times with the Lord.

Some begin learning about Jesus through dreams in their sleep, and they receive instruction and warnings. This is God at work in the world, through the Holy Spirit. We are living in a new era, and multitudes of people are coming to Jesus as a result of this outpouring.

Jesus said it would be better for us if He went so the Holy Spirit would dwell within us. He said we would receive power when the Holy Spirit descended upon us (Acts 1:8), and we would do even greater things than He did during His own ministry on the earth.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

John 14:12 NIV

The awe of this thought is overwhelming and wondrous. The dispensation of the Holy Spirit has already taken place, and it was recorded in the second chapter of Acts. This was not a one-time dispensation for the early church, however. The New Testament instructs us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, which means we are to continually refill ourselves with His presence, renewing our connection and strengthening ourselves, within. We are to allow Him to teach us as we abide in Him and walk in His presence. We are, further, instructed to jealously desire the gift of prophecy.

Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV

God is jealous for us, and He wants us to be jealous for Him, as well. If you feel God tugging at your heart right now, please know that this is one of the ways in which He can speak to you. Sometimes, we say, “Something told me...” But, “something” is actually often Someone: the Holy Spirit, trying to get your attention. Have you ever pondered the phenomenon? If you have, this probably answers a few of your questions and offers you peace and encouragement.

The Holy Spirit always instructs you for your good. His instruction is always borne of love and accompanied by peace. God’s love is so pervasive in all He does that it earmarks our experiences with Him.

These “something” moments stick out in our memories, because our hearts know they are remarkable. They are God’s personal love notes to us. He sends them our way often as an introduction, or to remind us that He cares. We perceive them even before we have acknowledged His existence or understood His kindness and tender desire to relate with us in intimate, Fatherly conversation.

How could God be so taken with you or me? Each of us is one in a sea of billions of souls. Why would He desire our company? It seems so unlikely. And yet, He does. Just as a parent is wrapped up in a child, God is wrapped up in us. Yes; smitten. Taken. Never to return from whole-hearted love and commitment to these little souls who do not understand Him or regard Him in any way proper. But He does not care. He just loves us.

Instead of tucking declarations of God's tender care into the footnotes of our own personal theologies, let us address the Holy Spirit in the room. Take your moment, now. Be humble before Him. Set aside all you think you know or have been instructed. God has been speaking to your heart for years. It is time to tune in, further, to what He has to say. Like Elijah, who heard God not in a fire or an earthquake, but in a gentle wind, you may hear God's love as a whisper in your soul. God is so gentle with you. Let Him speak to you in a gentle way.

Jesus says, in John 10:17-18, that His sheep hear His voice. He wants you to hear Him. Again, Hebrews 3 instructs us to be tenderhearted toward hearing God's voice, to listen for it and to obey it whenever we hear it. Hebrews 3 says hardening our hearts toward God's voice forces us into a form of spiritual wilderness. We don't want that, and God doesn't either. He does not put us there. We do this to ourselves, unwittingly--so God warns us about it in black and white. Heed His loving warning.

God wanted the Hebrews to travel through the wilderness only forty days, not forty years. The choices and attitudes God's chosen people adopted buried all but two of them in the desert.

You were not born for the wilderness, my friend. You were born for the Promised Land. As one of God's chosen people, you are called to listen and hear God's voice. He is willing; how willing are you? Will you set aside anything that distracts? Put your heart into this prayer.

## RESPONSE

*God,*

*You say You seek people who will worship You in spirit and in truth. Here I am! I want to be one of those people, Lord.*

*Please help me to hear Your voice. Make me tenderly sensitive toward You. Speak in a way my heart will hear and understand. Give me a very soft and responsive heart that bends its ear up toward You in the meekness and tenderness with which You have stooped down to meet me.*

*May I be so generously tender toward You that I clearly hear You, abide in the safety of Your presence and tenderly obey You in all things.*

*I want to revel in Your goodness and worship You in the way You deserve. Help me respond to You, conforming to Your beauty and truth. Then, I will reflect Your goodness as I follow You in all Your ways.*

*May I choose this path each day of my life. Amen and amen. Let it be so, in the mighty name of Jesus.*

Spend some time abiding in the Lord. Begin to ask Him how to carry the intimacy, peace and the joy you now experience throughout the rest of your day. When you feel it slip, take a moment to stop and regain precious intimacy with the Lord. God is always near you, living on the inside of you. He wants your fellowship to continue and grow. Begin weeding out the behaviors and thought patterns that distract your heart and wane your intimacy with Jesus.

### JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.

# Discover Your Identity

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## DAY 27

Then the Lord passed by in front of him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth (faithfulness); keeping mercy and lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; but He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting (avenging) the iniquity (sin, guilt) of the fathers upon the children and the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations [that is, calling the children to account for the sins of their fathers].”

Exodus 34:6-7, AMP

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 NET

Together you are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of his body.

1 Corinthians 12:27 ESV

**Y**ou are God’s child and His creation. He knows who you are better than you do. In order to know yourself better, please take the time to search the Scriptures. See what God says about Himself and you.

So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 1:27 KJV

God is love, and He has made you in His image. You are the reflection of His perfect, almighty love. As you study the Scriptures and pray, come to see yourself as an expression of God: a chip off the Almighty Rock of Ages, Who loves you limitlessly and trusts you to bear His image.

But to as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the right [the authority, the privilege] to become children of God, that is, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) His name—who were born, not of blood [natural conception], nor of the will of the flesh [physical impulse], nor of the will of man [that of a natural father], but of God [that is, a divine and supernatural birth—they are born of God—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified].

And the Word (Christ) became flesh, and lived among us; and we [actually] saw His glory, glory as belongs to the [One and] only begotten Son of the Father, [the Son who is truly unique, the only One of His kind, who is] full of grace and truth (absolutely free of deception).

John 1:12-14, AMP

Does this floor you? It should. The love of God, and His greatness, are beyond our comprehension. But, in the future, we will all know Him even as well as He knows us.

God is so kind that He does not make us wait until heaven to meet and grow in our understanding of Him. We can go vastly deeper into the gratitude, wonder and awe of God as we further develop our corporate and individual relationships with Him.

Your walk in God lies in your own, powerful hands. As you seek to know God and ask Him about your identity, you will understand Him and yourself better than you have ever imagined. As you realize how wonderful God Is—and how wonderfully He created you—you will boldly walk in your identity, dropping habits and fears that do not agree with who you are.

Pay attention to what God says to you in the Bible and through His Rhema Word. “Rhema” refers to God’s words, spoken into your heart. Just as you can read an author’s books and attend his or her speaking engagements, you are blessed with the greater and more advantageous

ability to read the Bible and listen to what God speaks to you. Invite Him to engage you.

As God speaks to you, He will give you encouragement and direction. Follow it, and know that God is always looking out for the good when He instructs or corrects you. So, when you falter, pick yourself up and walk forward, wiser for the experience. It is God Who carries you in His grace, moving, guiding and encouraging you. He applies no shame to your failures, but offers renewed grace for all who call on His name.

## RESPONSE

*Jesus,*

*I believe I should trust You, more.*

*I have trusted You in many ways, but some days test my faith. I will trust You with the test, knowing obedient faith aces every test.*

*Please help me to know the certainty of my faith and adjust it to Your truth. Then, my faith will be real, correctly rested upon You, and vibrant in its expression. You and I both want this.*

*I want to settle for nothing less than offering You my life as a rightful act of worship, in Spirit and in Truth.*

*Thank You for blessing me and leading me in Your will. Amen.*

Grab your Bible, notebook and a pen. If you do not have a notebook, use or photocopy the worksheet, *God and Identity*, in the back of this book. If you are using your notebook, draw dividers on your paper to look like the worksheet. Now, invite God to join you in this exercise.

Pray and ask God to show you who you are through Scripture and the words He speaks into your heart. Select Romans 12, Ephesians 4, or Revelation 7 (especially verses 9-14). Read through your chapter, and choose one passage that stands out to you.

Use the worksheet to take notes on what the passages mean and what they are saying to you. What does God declare about and expect of you? Where do you see a picture of Christ in these chapters? Where do you see a good or a bad example? Write all of these down, and study them for a moment.

One by one, ask God how each of these items identify who you are, and why they are important to Him. These are among the many ways you can ask God, "Who am I?"

Come back to this day, again and again, to anchor yourself in the truth of who you are in Christ. Who you are in Christ is exactly who you are, period. New Testament epistles are incredibly useful for gleaning identity through this method, but other Bible verses work, as well. Give it a try, If it works, you will know right away. Bible passages aimed at an audience that includes you are generally most effective.

Each time you read, ask God what He wants you to do about any scriptures that challenge you. You will be surprised and amazed at the completeness of His response, and the brevity, simplicity, peace and power of His words.

God's words always line up with Scripture, because He Is the Word. The Bible is the written expression of God

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to do, today. Write His response down, and complete whatever He asks, with His presence and help. Leave all the results to Him. Give Him all glory, praise and thanks.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



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Unit 5 | *Unleash the Abiding*

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ABIDE, IN ACTION,  
TO TRANSFORM THE GLOBE

**Days 28-31:**

Run with Your Purpose  
Lead When Others Follow  
Unite the Body in Love  
Stay Hungry to Seek Him



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## Unit 5 | *Unleash the Abiding*

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### ABIDE, IN ACTION, TO TRANSFORM THE GLOBE

**O**f all units, this has the ability to create the vibrancy in your life you have always yearned to possess. This has become a relationship-changer for me and Jesus. We are tight; “homies.” But, I always know I have never felt as close to Jesus as I will in the future, and for that, I am grateful. Why? Because Jesus is always offering me more, which is exactly what I always want.

Enjoy this final unit. Even writing and editing it rocked my boat twice, and stepped me out onto fresh waves each time. This is such a beautiful experience. God’s joy is powerful, and His presence sustains you.

I hope you enjoy a deepening experience of the exquisite company of Jesus. I hope you will also drop a line on our ministry page or in an Amazon review to tell us how Jesus has changed you in reading the text and doing the exercises.

May God bless and strengthen you in many ways as you venture forward into dynamic intimacy and sustained responsiveness with God.

[globalhealingrooms.org](http://globalhealingrooms.org)  
[iflourishforlife.com](http://iflourishforlife.com)

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Note: Each lesson reflects upon Old and New Testament passages. This beautifully illustrates the unchanging nature of God’s deep and abiding love for you.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Hebrews 13:8 NKJV



# Run with Your Purpose

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## DAY 28

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

John 2:5 NIV

Then the LORD answered me and said, “Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run.

Habakkuk 2:2 NASB

That is the way I run, with a clear goal in mind. That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow boxing.

1 Corinthians 9:26 ISV

**D**eep inside each of us lies a desire to know our purpose. God knows His very good plans for us. But how do we find those plans, and how do we figure out what to do once we know them?

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?

Micah 6:8 NKJV

Micah 6:8 says God requires us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly before Him. Jesus, too, echoes the sentiment by telling us to love God with our whole hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves. These callings apply to every one of us.

Loving God and others is a broad commandment. All of our thoughts, deeds and desires should embody God’s love. When in doubt, we can ask ourselves, “Does what I am doing, right now, show love for God and

people?” If you have to explain it in your head, it does not. Ask God how to best express His love in this moment. Then, obey Him to build a moment of love. Moment by moment, you build momentum. Over time, your moment will build a life of love.

The way you love God and people looks different than it will for others. This isn't because someone is “missing it,” but because each one of us is unique. We are each a piece of God's big picture in showing love for the world.

Come before God in humility and reverence. Listen for His voice, and obey him. Your calling is unique to you: *beautiful you*. God's calling looks different for everybody. It does not usually require us to enter the ministry. Our lives are the ministry: to love God and to love people. Besides, where would anybody get parishioners if everyone was a pastor? Enjoy the beautiful calling of just being yourself, without excuse or apology. Hit the streets with your God-sized love, and change the world right where you are, in the context of who you are.

If you are an architect, loving God and people means you design buildings that withstand the test of time and the impacts of nature. If you are an artist, loving God and people means you create beauty that draws people nearer to God and one another. If you are a cook, loving God and people means you make delicious food that warms hearts and feeds bodies. If you are a pilot, loving God and people means you use your skills, and abide by regulations, to safely fly people around the world, wherever their destination.

Even outside of your vocation, you have a certain calling on your life. That purpose will not be fulfilled without you first pursuing it. Ask God to show you what it is like for you to be living in the fullness of your identity and calling. Pay attention to the exact words He uses and the context in which He says them, including the place, time and circumstances under which He is speaking to you. Resist the strong urge to change His words to make them fit what you know. Instead, humbly ask Him to help you understand His message in a way that you can easily express and clearly execute. Then, obey Him. And, as you need, adjust your course, renew your focus and continue to refine your understanding of what God is saying. Finally, focus on what God is telling you to do, rather than on what you think He might be instructing others to do. This, practiced globally, gives everyone latitude to follow God with the freedom He has given each of us.

Your life's purpose can be described as “loving God, and others, well.” The way that looks for you is different from everyone else, because you are unique. Jesus made your yoke to fit your life. He is your reliable Yokemate, and He does the heavy lifting. Listen to Jesus's instruction and abide in Him as you walk in what He shows you He is doing. Living in

tandem with Jesus will produce more joy for you than you can imagine. It is unlike anything you have ever done or can ever do. It will create true life for you, true joy, and more prosperity for your soul than you have ever experienced. It is the abundant life you have been promised.

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

John 10:10 NLT

## RESPONSE

Quiet your space. Turn on music, or do whatever you need to create a place where you can hear God clearly and interact with Him. Open your heart to Him in humble reverence, and ask Him to descend on your space, fill your heart and speak to you. Ask Him to give you a loving and understanding heart so His compassion will flow in and through you, and you will see yourself the way He does. Ask Him to give you the right questions to ask Him, and the correct responses to His questions, so you will be conformed to His love. This will be wonder-full!

*Ask God your purpose and your calling. Ask Him how your purpose, calling and identity should look, walked out in your life.*

Write down everything God says to you. Do not change the words He gives you. Leave everything as it is, and ask God to give you the meanings. You can listen for God's details, but settle for what He says. Do not strive. You cannot improve upon God's will; it is better and more fulfilling than you can imagine.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8 NKJV

When you ask God to give you the questions you should ask, Him, He will transform your understanding. You will better understand Him and how He sees you. This grounds you in the Bible, in Who God is, and in who you are, as a uniquely and wonderfully made expression of Him.

All of what God says lines up with the Bible, because He wrote it through His prophets and kings. You should reference the Bible and seek Christians with integrity, wisdom and knowledge to test the words you are hearing from God. God's words are grounded in truth. They are often

brief, and they give you a great, weighty peace as you hear, ponder and obey them.

Now, ask God what your “big letter items” are: what Habakkuk might describe as “vision words,” or “words for running.” These big letter items will look like what God has already told you. But, they will be very easy to explain to others and simple for you to remember and act upon.

Finally, spend time in pure communion. Tell God you love Him and why. Thank Him for the purpose and plans for your life. They once lived only in His heart, but now they belong to both of you. What a glorious and humbling opportunity this is, to partner with God and in His plans for you! Welcome to the wonderful adventure!

The safest place for to be is in the center of God’s will. Humans are spiritual beings, and your spiritual welfare is more important than anything other aspect of your life. Love yourself well by caring for your spiritual health and running with your purpose.

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to get done, today. Do it, in His presence and with His help. In thanks and praise, leave all the results to Him.
- Remain in tandem with God by maintaining your tender, worshipful connection. Thank Him and obey as He walks with you and guides you.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.





# Lead When Others Follow

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## DAY 29

I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

*Philippians 1:6 HCSB*

**W**hen things get hard, people look to Christians for answers. We are known for our connection with Christ, and rightly so. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice, and we will not go to a stranger. It is time for us to go deeper in our relationship with the Lord.

God has all the answers; He actually is the Answer to what every human on earth needs. Share. It is only right and honoring to God, who has saved you. If you point God's love at any human being, you will have 100% accuracy in finding someone He wants to save, heal, deliver or touch in some remarkable way.

Even if pointing God's love at a person looks like prayer, it matters. But don't let it just be prayers, unless God stops you there. After all, what if people only prayed for you, instead of sharing the Gospel and leading you through the Prayer of Salvation? This world would be in a sad state, indeed, with "action" like that. Hear God's voice, move in it, and shape the world.

Grow in hearing God's voice, each day and in every way you can. We have a gift most of the world cannot comprehend: the discernible words of God, speaking into our hearts. That equips us so we are powerfully able to help others in ways we could not have known without having the hand of God in our lives. We can bring God's good will to people, and lead them into the goodness of the Lord and into hearing Him for themselves.

We hear God's voice and receive identity, peace and wisdom for moving forward. Each day we spend with our Lord and invest in Bible

time, we become more acquainted with His ways. We know who God really is because He becomes familiar to us over the days, and months, and years. Over those years, we become more appreciative of His love, we identify with Him as His children. We still ourselves and rest in Him, holding the skein of time and circumstance loosely so He can pull on it to feed this divine relationship and knit our hearts together with His. Forever, He Is Knitting Us.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember  
your miracles of long ago.

I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty  
deeds.

Psalm 77:11-12 NIV

When we so closely acquaint ourselves with Jesus, we build a history of experience with Him. This history spans good times and bad. It trains us to loosen our grip on fear when things get tough. We also stop basing our security on what good might happen to us. Why? Because everything on this earth passes away. It is all passing, unlike the immutable nature of God, Who cares for us. These are facts.

God is not situational in His nature; He remains constant in every circumstance. In fact, when we feel an increase of God's favor moving upon our lives, we know God is up to something: He is moving on our behalf.

We gain confidence and learn to stand firm in the midst of our situations, because we know God has integrity, and He hastens His Word to perform it.

Even though the fig tree does not blossom,  
and there are no grapes on the vines;  
even if the olive harvest fails,  
and the fields produce nothing edible;  
even if the flock is snatched from the sheepfold,  
and there is no herd in the stalls—  
as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will find my joy in the God who delivers me.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 ISV

Knowing God's love ethic, let us place our faith on Jesus, now. This is how we show the world to trust and obey God, Who they cannot see with natural eyes, but Who may be seen clearly through spiritual ones. Our

living faith creates testimonies that bring others to Jesus and His life-saving grace.

## RESPONSE

*Heavenly Father,*

*In Jesus's name I come to You, knowing  
You will carry me  
through every trial  
in Your tender favor.*

*You have shone Your grace and favor  
upon me, today;*

*as I pray this, I see and feel  
Your love in my life.*

*I embrace it!*

*Lord, may I  
(too) shine this grace and favor  
upon the people around me.*

*Thank you for today,  
for the gift of leaning in,  
and for Your many other blessings,*

*especially Your love and companionship.*

*Thank you for strengthening my heart as I choose Your joy.  
I relinquish my sorrow and my regrets.*

*I choose to delight in You  
(oh, how I delight in You!)  
in all my love,  
amen. Amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear

tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.

- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to get done, today. Do it, in His presence and with His help. In thanks and praise, leave all the results to Him.
- Remain in tandem with God by maintaining your tender, worshipful connection. Thank Him and obey as He walks with you and guides you.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.

# *Unite the Body in Love*

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## DAY 30

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brothers to dwell together in unity!  
It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Coming down upon the beard,  
Even Aaron's beard,  
Coming down upon the edge of his robes.  
It is like the dew of Hermon  
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forever.

Psalm 133 NASB

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;

1 Peter 2:9 KJV

**G**od is so kind to you. He loves you with His whole heart. That is why He reminds you of His rules for living well.

It hurts a parent so badly to see his child in anguish because of a misstep. God feels no differently, and He is the best, most caring Parent of all. He would never want to see you hurt. Because of this, the Holy Spirit showers His love and direction upon you daily, by reminding you of His Word and by nudging your heart.

In the book of Deuteronomy, God gave the Israelites a long list of rules for living. He didn't just give instructions without a reason, however. Time

and time again, He said “You Are Holy people to the Lord your God.” His view of them was divine and perfect.

You have been set apart as holy to the LORD your God, and he has chosen you from all the nations of the earth to be his own special treasure.

Deuteronomy 14:2 NLT

That is the point: you are part of a Body. It is divine, and perfect in God’s sight. As He brings us up to His vision of who He has made us to be, we must bring ourselves together as a body, united in love and purpose. We must honor ourselves and each other, to honor God.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. [...]Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. And the parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, while our representable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 23b-27 NIV

How are you looking at your neighbor, today? Do you share God’s perspective of the person in front of you? When God looks at your neighbor, He smiles. Everything you, I, or anyone else has done has been covered by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus. What is left to see in them, then, is the image of Christ in the body of a believer or a future believer.

Instead of focusing on the faults of others, let us recognize their importance and help them to see it, too. Then, they will rise up to the glory within them: the glory God has intended for them to embody. It is when we see people as Christ does that we are truly freed to love them, and they are freed and encouraged to live as Christ has called them. Joyfully honoring people brings opportunity for redemption and transformation.

Today, ask God to show you where you may have not been kind, or where to exercise more kindness. Ask Him what His opinion is on it. Take

His opinion in the place of your own. Become habitual in deferring your attitudes for Christ's, so you will take on His mind and begin to become a uniting member of the Body of Christ instead of one who brings division by carrying an errant thought. It hurts when we know we have wounded Jesus with our thoughts or actions. But, blessings and grace come with repentance to God—especially repentance with actions backing it. No matter where you go or what you do, God extends this invitation: *Release your heavy burden to me, and I will give you My easy yoke.*

The burden of God's thoughts toward you and His Body are light. Take on His future, take on His love, and don't just settle for the lessons you have learned in this book. Use them as springboards for bigger, better things. They are only a mustard seed of what God wants to do with you. It is time for an adventure. It is the adventure of a lifetime, and Jesus is your Captain. Won't you come along? This adventure is life: your new life.

## RESPONSE

*Jesus,*

*Please forgive me  
for not seeing people  
through Your  
compassionate eyes.*

*I haven't loved people  
the way You do.*

*I haven't seen their strengths  
or their capabilities.*

*Help me, now,  
to set aside  
my former thoughts  
of people*

*and honor them the way You do.*

*Help me to be one with the Body of Christ.*

*I purpose, from this day,  
to see and treat people  
through Your eyes.*

*Lead me in how You love others well,*

*and I will follow.*

*Amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
- Ask God what He wants you to get done, today. Do it, in His presence and with His help. In thanks and praise, leave all the results to Him.
- Remain in tandem with God by maintaining your tender, worshipful connection. Thank Him and obey as He walks with you and guides you.
- Thank God for something He has done, and show Him an act of kindness, today.
- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.



# Stay Hungry to Seek Him

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## DAY 31

My child, never forget the things I have taught you.  
Store my commands in your heart.  
If you do this, you will live many years,  
and your life will be satisfying.  
Never let loyalty and kindness leave you!  
Tie them around your neck as a reminder.  
Write them deep within your heart.  
Then you will find favor with both God and people,  
and you will earn a good reputation.

*Proverbs 3:1-4 NLT*

**Y**ou stop learning when you think you know a topic. But, God is doing a new thing every day, and you need to consume fresh bread and act upon what you have learned, every day of your life.

If you will daily seek God in soaking and Bible study, prayerfully applying the Scriptures and God's counsel to your life, you will assuredly experience more blessing and success than you can ever imagine.

Proverbs says to remember and live out all you have been taught, remaining steadfast in love and faithfulness.

This is the Christian life: to look into the face of a loving God, to conform to His perfect image, and to remember who we are as we walk through life, closer and closer, day by day.

But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works—this person will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:25 HCSB

James also echoes this sentiment: continually search, understand and live out the Word, because it will give you liberty. Continue living in the Word, baptizing your actions and intentions in its freedom and truth. Then, your very own actions will become blessings to you: happiness produced from this life of liberty in Christ that you continue to choose through your perseverance.

So far, you have been given *Joy Takes Action* exercises to get you into the habit of nurturing your faith and joy. If you have been giving your all, you have not escaped joy that has chased you, even in the midst of your circumstances.

Because Revelation 12:11 says we will have overcome our enemy by the blood of Jesus and by His testimony, I will give you His testimony for me as I was writing this book. I hope it blesses you. This is not a prescription for what you should do, but I challenge you to just bring it before the Lord, knowing that He is powerful to change your world. This is my story.

## MY JOY TESTIMONY

I actually forgot to renew the prescription of strong antidepressants I had been using for a decade and a half. This happened during the writing of this book. It was in the midst of COVID-19 fears, riots in the city where our children live, unrest across the nation and many other events that could have unsettled my hope, my peace and my joy, for good.

I just happened to realize, one day, that I never did renew it.

It had been months since I had taken a pill. When I realized this was the case, I also realized that I felt as good or better than I had for a long time.

Isn't it like God to ask you to write a book on joy, and then pour out all its benefits onto you as you obey? I am so grateful! God is like that; He sneaks up on you. I love it. I was simply writing out of obedience and love. He was positioning me for victory over my greatest internal nemesis: longterm depression.

That's how I know this book works. It works. It works. Save a life and share it. If it didn't move you, read it again. If you can read it, understand it, agree with it, and give it your true, honest effort, I feel you can be transformed. I believe it, and I believe in you.

I am ready to read this book again, friends, to go deeper with the Holy Spirit. I feel so blessed to have the very tool I have wanted and needed for decades. I hope you feel the same way.

If you would like to share your joy story with other readers, please send it by email to [share@spiritsongpublishinggroup.com](mailto:share@spiritsongpublishinggroup.com). Include your written permission and a release, so we may publish it freely.

Your testimony of what Jesus does for you is powerful. It can strengthen and encourage others, helping them walk away from the lies in

their heads, their low self-worth and the futile actions—or inactions—that have kept them down.

the accuser of our brothers and sisters,  
who relentlessly accused them  
day and night before our God,  
has now been defeated—cast out once and for all!  
They conquered him completely  
through the blood of the Lamb  
and the powerful word of his testimony.

Revelation 12:10b-11a TPT

I bless you, my friend. May your life be filled with God’s joy, unleashed. May it relentlessly flood your soul when you step into God’s quiet presence, and may you carry His presence and His joy wherever you go. The Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, your Savior and your Lord, wants you to be happy, feasting upon His will.

May God bless you, keep you and help you do just that, all your life.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This is the way you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them:

The Lord bless you, and keep you [protect you, sustain you, and guard you];

The Lord make His face shine upon you [with favor],

And be gracious to you [surrounding you with lovingkindness];

The Lord lift up His countenance (face) upon you [with divine approval],

And give you peace [a tranquil heart and life].’

So Aaron and his sons shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Numbers 6:22-27 AMP

## RESPONSE

*Father, I choose Your ways over mine.*

*Thank You for Jesus  
and His powerful blood*

*for the lovingkindness by which  
You have consumed me.*

*You affix Your love  
and faithfulness to me  
in tender ways that glorify You  
and make me who I am.*

*Help me fan this spark of joy  
into a passionate, relentless pursuit of You, alone.  
Then, I will glorify You  
in all I think and do.*

*I will worship Your Name forever.*

*In the Greatest Joy  
(Jesus), I pray.*

*Amen.*

## JOY TAKES ACTION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal His love for you in a way you understand. Be transparent and humble in His presence. Hear tenderly, and take notes so you will obey. This enriches your intimacy and accelerates your growth.
- Discuss today's lesson with God. Ask how He wants it to transform you and what this will mean for you. Obey His promptings to activate the Bible and this lesson, so you will build your life on the Rock of Jesus, allowing Him to flourish you and anchor you in His joyful love.
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- Thank a person for something they have done, and show someone kindness, today.

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GEAR DOWN | *The Wrap Up*

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MORE INFORMATION

**Further Reading:**

Questions About Joy

God and Identity

Redeem the Promise

Many Thanks

Other Books by Carolyn



# Questions About Joy

**Q1:** Can a joyful person experience sadness?

**A1:** Sure; it happens all the time. But, Jesus can teach you--through His Word, the Bible, and in relationship with Him--to transform reactive mechanisms into thoughtful responses and wise strategies that give you an upper hand over your circumstances, turning your tests into testaments of God's goodness.

You will find yourself better equipped and motivated to self-encourage, build your inner strength, redirect your focus toward the positive, and honor your God-given value by getting help when you need it.

Wherever you are on your journey with joy, please remember that you are worth your own investment. Get professional help if you need it. Your brain is an organ, and like your heart or lungs, deserves the utmost care and honor.

**Q2:** Is this what you experience, now?

**A2:** Yes, with Jesus's help. I feel the best when I am staying connected with Him genuinely and intimately. To feel my best, I focus on these five things: praying, reading my Bible, connecting with others, sharing God's love and walking in tandem with Jesus, the Lover of my soul. It is a worthwhile investment to live a dynamic life.

I invest in myself because I know my value. I know my value because I know the One Who created me. He has placed my true value upon me, and He Is completely faithful and truthful.

In God's presence is the fullness of joy. Joy is a product of being in Jesus's presence. Jesus is love, and He loves you. As love has its work in our lives, our joy grows. As our joy grows and has its work in us, our peace grows. As our peace grows, we become more patient in turmoil, because peace puts sadness and pain into perspective.

Sadness cannot grip our souls in the same way as before we pursued Jesus and He flooded us with joy and the other fruit of His Spirit. This is especially true as we stay in strong relationship with Jesus, grounded in the Bible and incorporated into the Body of Christ.

Each person's connection with Jesus is important to Him and transformative to the person. This book will help connect you with Jesus so you can be filled--and transformed--by His joy.

**Q3:** I have learned so much. How can I continue to grow in my faith?

**A3:** Here are seven things I personally recommend to grow and strengthen your faith:

- 1) Read your Bible. Not just a little, but every day. It is not unreasonable to read the Bible each year, and you will appreciate and love Jesus more as you do! And, don't just read your Bible, but obey it. This is an easy way to keep your joy fresh and alive.
- 2) Pray without ceasing. Let your day be an exchange of love between you and God: His love to you, and yours back to Him and others, in response.
- 3) Hang out with other believers. It is okay to not go to a big church, as long as you are gathering together very regularly with other believers in the format described in the New Testament. You can always meet with people you love to share a meal, exchange Scripture and encouragements, sing a song and teach each other, from Scripture, what you are learning. Make sure you are following the Bible. Don't worry about impressing people—just God! And, make sure that you give your tithe (10%) and offering to the church, regardless of what your group looks like. The church has a function in the community and truly needs your support to fulfill it.
- 4) Share Jesus with others. He has changed your life, and others will want Him, too. You would be surprised how many people really need Jesus and don't know they aren't going to heaven without making the choice you made. Share, and save lives for eternity. You are a supernatural superhero!
- 5) Live in tandem with Jesus. Abide in Him as you live out your day, actively expressing His goodness through your identity, purpose and calling.
- 6) Stay hungry for Jesus. If you feel your love waning, get away and spend special time with Him in thanks, praise, worship and Bible time.



Encourage yourself in the Lord. Give and receive that encouragement with other believers, and pray for one another whenever one or more of you needs to be built up, cheered up or fired up for Jesus. May God encourage you as you do, and bless you in everything you do.

- 7) Give. You will never have fresh water within you if you do not let it bubble from you. Give. Do nice things for others, and meet their needs. And, as hinted in #4, always be ready to tell people about the hope within you. This isn't for a select few; it is for you.

I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6 HCSB



# God and Identity

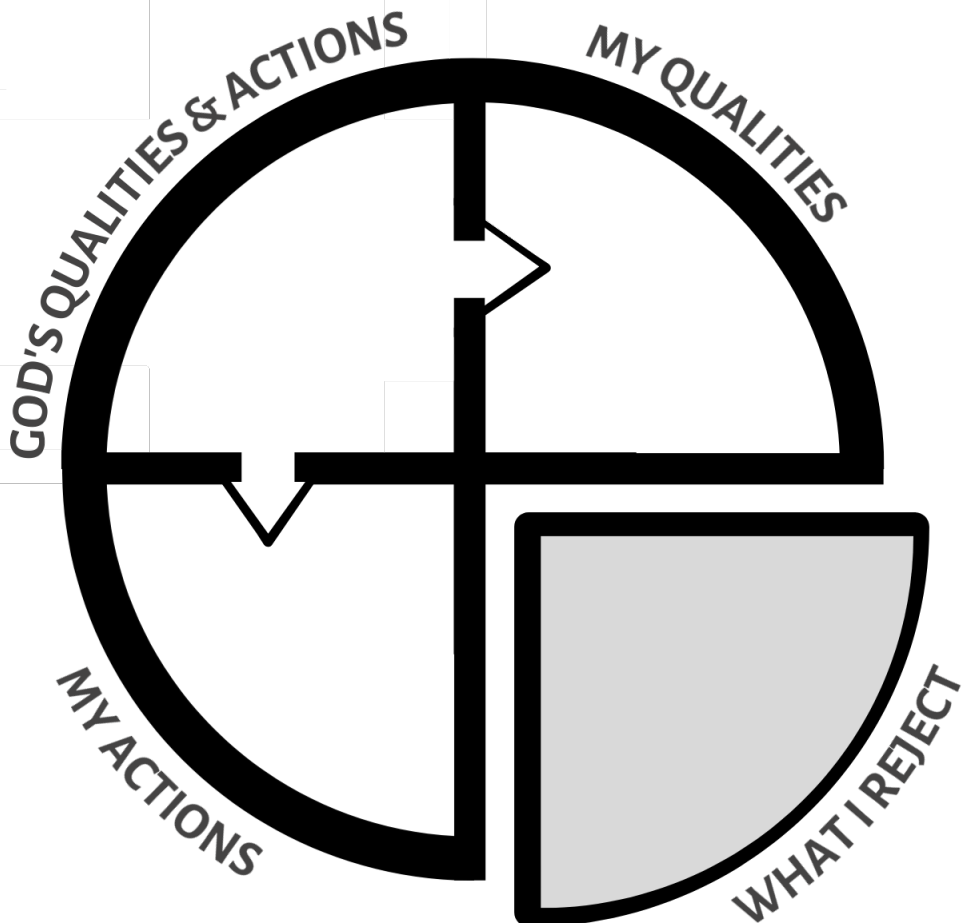
**YOUR IDENTITY IS A GIFT FROM GOD. YOU CANNOT EARN IT. GOD CREATED YOU IN HIS IMAGE, AND THAT IMAGE IS GOOD. HIS IMAGE DEFINES YOUR IDENTITY, WORTH AND UNIQUE INDIVIDUALITY. THESE ARE ALL EXPRESSED THROUGH YOUR LIFE. YOU ARE LOVED! YOUR LIFE IS A CELEBRATION OF THAT.**

## **THIS IS HOW YOUR IDENTITY LOOKS, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD**

**STEP 1:** Pick a verse that describes God or His people. Write the verse down, here.

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**STEP 2:** In the areas labeled below, write this verse's words which point to qualities or actions belonging to God or His people. You are made and redeemed by God to be like Him, so you share many qualities and actions corresponding to His. Add those to your own qualities and actions, as well. For example, God is loving, so you are loving (even if you haven't always acted this way). Anything ungodly does not belong to you. Go ahead and reject it. Separate it from your life.



Jim and Carole Smith, Global Healing Rooms and Flourish for Life Ministries.  
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# Redeem the Promise

<b><u>READ IT</u></b>	<b><u>WEIGH IT</u></b>	<b><u>ACT ON IT</u></b>
Verse	Source	Digging
Promise	Audience	Response
Actions	Context	

**READ IT:** \_\_\_\_\_

What does the verse say?

What is the promise?

What actions need to happen?

**WEIGH IT:** \_\_\_\_\_

Who delivered the message?

Who was the audience? May I be included?

What were the circumstances? How can this apply to me?

**ACT ON IT:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dig into power words and questions, here.

Should I respond to this promise? If so, how?



# Many Thanks

Thank You, Jesus, for getting me out of the pit, inspiring me, choosing the words, and encouraging me. I don't want to drag my heels with You.

Thanks, my beloved Jimmy, for having faith in me. I believe in you, too! Thank you for helping me lay it all out there so God could use my life to help others walk in Him, united and abiding, to unleash His magnificent joy. You are patient and kind, just like our Heavenly Father. I adore you. God bless you, my love.

Thank you, my children, for teaching me so much. You are woven into the pages of this book. I love you with all my heart.

Thanks, Jamey and Nicole VanGelder, for teaching me and Jim well, and guiding us in ministry. Your humble and frank address of so many elements of Christian life has made us happy and whole. We are grateful and glad you are in our lives.

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## *Other Books by Carolyn Smith*

The following books were written by a collective of freelance writers including Carolyn (listed as “Carole”) Smith. They are authored, published and fully owned by BroadStreet Publishing Group LLC of Savage, Minnesota, USA, with all rights reserved.

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My Strength and My Song, 2015

A Little God Time for Teachers, 2016

The Fruit of the Spirit, 2017

A Little God Time for Graduates, 2018

Be Brave, 2019



## About the Author



Carolyn Smith, a Montana native, is a pastor, missionary and author. She is Founder and President of Flourish for Life Ministries and Global Healing Rooms, which she runs with her husband and best friend, Jim.

Carolyn's heart is for people to live a full and abundant life, in Jesus.

Jim and Carolyn introduce people to Jesus. They show them His kingdom and teach them His ways. People receive the Holy Spirit, become healthy, embrace identity, grow in their giftings and accept God's unique and marvelous plan for their lives.

The Smiths' mission work meets human needs and partners with Jesus to breakthrough for people hungering for firsthand encounters with a loving and practical God

The Smiths met in the beginning days of The House Church. This family worshipped in rented spaces in Burnsville, Minnesota. They loved well and followed God's lead, equipping members and cheering them into service. The House is now in Eagan, Minnesota, having grown remarkably. Jim and Carole are still members, and work in close relation with the sister churches.

Jim and Carolyn live in the Phoenix metro, where they share fellowship and lead missions with their beloved spiritual family at Lakeview United Methodist Church. It was the encouragement of Lakeviewers that hastened the publication of this book.

Back in the Midwest, Jim and Carole have six amazing kids and one fantastic grandson.