



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL WEEK EIGHT

Intimacy With God: The Way to True Fulfillment



REST IN A RESTLESS WORLD

THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK EIGHT

DAY ONE

FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:11-17

READING: Romans 1:7 NLT; 1 John 3:1 AMP; Psalm 25:14 ESV

CHAPTER SIX: FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that, someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you”. **John 15:12-15 ESV**

The parable of the Master Gardener, the Vine and the branches in John 15 is about relationship. It's a relationship built on the foundation of love and the byproduct is fruitfulness. God calls you to a relationship with Him. And in today's devotional, God is calling you into a friendship kind of relationship, “A Friend of God”. Jesus highlighted two qualities of friendship in John 15, and they are: First obedience “*You are My friends if you do what I command you*” and the second is sacrificial love.

“I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be His own holy people” (Romans 1:7 NLT). The most important calling on your life isn't something you do. Your most important calling isn't to a role. It's not to regulations, rules, or rituals. It's not even to a religion. Your first call, above all else, is to a relationship with God. God wants you to be a

part of His family. He wants you to be His child. The most important thing that'll ever happen to you isn't something you'll do. It's something God will do. He'll call you, His child! He wants you to know Him and love Him and be His beloved son or daughter. The Bible says it like this: *"What an incredible quality of love the Father has shown to us, that we would be named and called and counted the children of God! And so, we are!"* (1 John 3:1 AMP).

As you follow God, you don't have to check off all the things you think you should do with your life. Focus on your relationship with God, and He will not only reveal your unique calling, He also will show you how to do what He wants you to do. There are five distinct relationships that the Lord is inviting you to connect with Him. The first is to know Him as your **FATHER**. A Father and son/daughter kind of relationship is defined by **LOVE**. The second is to know Him as **GOD**. Knowing Him as God means you are His creation. "Creator – Creation kind of relationship which is defined by **STEWARDSHIP**. The third is to know Him as **KING**. A King and His subjects. As subjects we become citizens of His kingdom. Knowing Him as KING is defined by **DOMINION / DOMAIN** – "Thy Kingdom Come, thy will be done"! The fourth is to know Him as a **JUDGE**. God knows you will go through injustices in this life and doesn't want you to be the judge, rather present your case to Him and let Him judge in righteousness and justice. Knowing Him as Judge is defined by **JUSTICE**. And the last one is **FRIENDSHIP**. Being a friend of God is determined by God and not you and being a Christian doesn't make you a friend of God. Friendship with God is defined by the **FEAR OF THE LORD** and **SECRETS**. You become God's secret bearer. Psalm 25:14 ESV says, *"The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant"*.

New International Version: "The LORD confides in those who fear Him; [Friends] He makes His covenant known to them.

Good News Translation: The LORD is the friend of those who obey Him, and He affirms His covenant with them.

RESPONSE

As a child of God, what are some of the truths you can claim for your life?

How does your family background shape your concept of being a “child of God”?

Why do so many people assume that God’s primary call is to do something rather than a relationship with Him?

- **FATHER** – Do you know God as a Father and are you, His Child?

- **GOD** – Do you know God as Creator and are you a faithful steward?

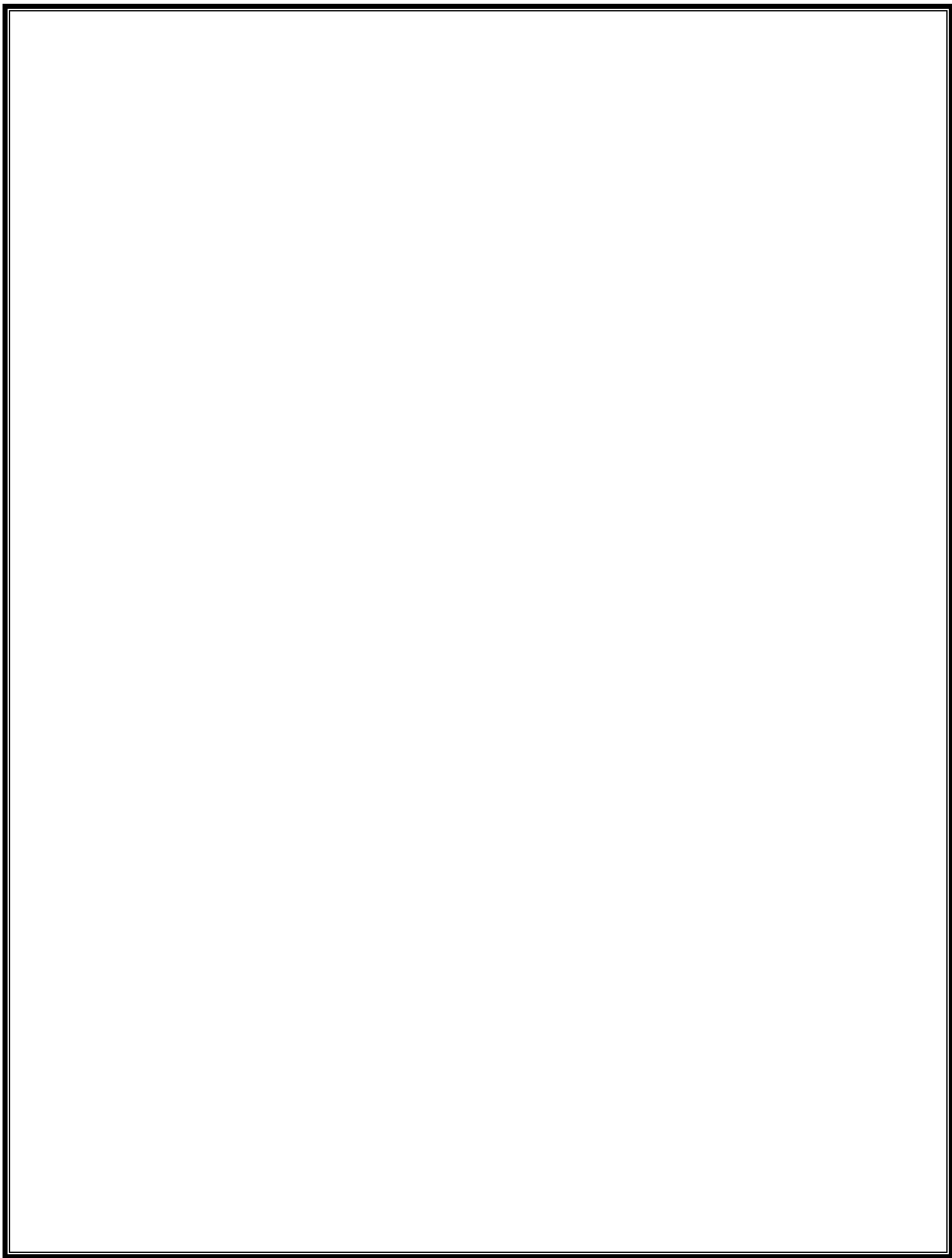
- **KING** – Do you know God as King and are you a citizen of His kingdom?

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“The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant”. Psalm 25:14 ESV

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THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK EIGHT

DAY TWO

OBEDIENCE – A QUALITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:14

READING: Isaiah 1:19; John 14:21; John 14:23; Luke 5:4; John 14:23

CHAPTER SIX: FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

You are My friends if you do what I command you. John 15:14

Obedience is one of God's love languages. John 14:15 AMP says, "*If you [really] love Me, you will keep and obey My commandments.* There are two parts to obedience, the first is our willingness and the second is our actions. Isaiah 1:19, "*If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the best of the land.* There are great benefits to living the life of obedience to God. Here are a few examples: **An obedient life makes you a candidate for divine visions and revelations of God** - John 14:21, Whoever has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him." **An obedient life makes you a habitation for God** - John 14:23, Jesus replied, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. In Luke 5, Simon Peter had been fishing all night and caught nothing. For first-century fishermen, it would have been an awful setback. But Jesus came by and used Simon Peter's boat to preach. Then Jesus told him: "Now go out where it is deeper and let down your nets to catch some fish" (Luke 5:4 NLT).

Jesus told Simon Peter what to do—and then Simon Peter had to make the choice to obey. Jesus' instruction was completely illogical. On the surface it made no sense. After all, they had fished all night and caught nothing! So why did Jesus tell Simon Peter to go out again—and into the deeper water? It's in the deep water where you find the most fish. But it's also where you find the biggest risk. And there's no faith without risk. So, did Simon Peter decide to obey? "Master," Simon replied, we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again" (Luke 5:5 NLT). And, through his obedience, God gave Simon Peter and his companions a bigger business success than they could have dreamed. The Bible says God gave them so many fish that their nets tore, and they had to enlist the help of other fishermen. But none of that happened until Simon Peter obeyed Jesus. A relationship is built on two pillars, Love and Trust. You cannot love someone deeper than you can trust them. Trust is built on truth. In John 14, Jesus declares that He is the truth. To love, you must have trust. Trust is based on truth. Truth is revealed through action. Words are not to be trusted. Action reveals the heart of a person. Action validates love. This is true in all relationships - including our relationship with God. Five times in John 14-15 Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." He then lays out for them four benefits of walking in obedience before God.

Obedience leads to walking in the power of the Holy Spirit- John 14:15-17. The more you obey, the more power you have to obey. The less you obey the less power you have to obey.

Obedience leads to intimacy with God – John 14:22-26.

Obedience leads to peace - John 14:27-31.

Obedience leads to fruitfulness- John 15:8-10

RESPONSE

A Prayer to Pursue a Life of Obedience

“When you obey My commandments, you remain in My love, just as I obey My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.” John 15:10–12 (NLT).

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your great love and Your compassion that never fails. Forgive me for all acts of disobedience. I want to live a life of obedience because I love You. I know that delayed obedience is still disobedience. Just as You command children to obey their parents, You command Your children to obey You. I want to make wise decisions that honor and please You above all. I need Your grace and Spirit to empower me to obey, so I rest in You and trust You are working in my regenerated heart.

Father, I need Your grace to walk in total obedience. I pray that Your strength and wisdom would be with me as I make decisions that follow Your path. Help me to put Your Word to the test in my life so that my obedience will be a blessing to everyone who sees You working in me. Lord, help me to stay focused on You so the obstacles that come up won't seem impossible to overcome. I know all things are possible through You, and I thank You for the privilege of doing any small task that brings You glory. Let my name be forgotten, Lord, and Yours be remembered.

*In Jesus’ name,
Amen*



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK EIGHT

DAY THREE

LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE – A QUALITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:13

READING: John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10; John 13:35; Rom. 12:10

CHAPTER SIX: FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

Greater love has no one than this, that, someone lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

This statement upholds sacrificial love as the ultimate expression of love. In saying this, Jesus prepares His disciples for His crucifixion and shows them what He meant when He told them to “love each other as I have loved you” (verse 12). All true love involves some kind of sacrifice, as the lover seeks to benefit the loved one. It stands to reason, then, that the greatest love of all would involve a total laying down of one’s life for the loved one. God, Who is love, revealed His love for mankind through sacrifice (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Sacrifice is paramount in 1 John 4:10: “This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” The sacrificial love of God, also known as agape love, stands as the “greater love” and is how the Source of Love saved us.

Another reason why laying down one’s life is considered the greatest love is because it’s counterintuitive human nature. Humans tend to prefer taking rather than giving, so instances of selflessness leave us amazed. When a father dives into raging water to rescue his child, when a woman asks the doctor to prioritize her child, or when a

soldier falls on a grenade to save his brothers-in-arms, we're humbled and awed. In the modern concept of love, the focus often gravitates toward self-satisfaction, and in many circles, the idea of sacrifice is considered unnecessary or even repugnant. In contrast to our diluted version of love, agape shines brightly. David who was called a man after God's own heart said in 2 Samuel 24:24, "... I will not offer to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing".

For Christians, the expression of this "greater love" isn't limited to literally laying down our lives. We don't have to wait for a grandiose moment of sacrifice to love others as Jesus loves us. Our daily lives should be characterized by selflessness and deference, a denying of ourselves for the good of others. Such displays of love should be common in the body of Christ (John 13:35). We are called to follow Christ, which includes showing love in the way He demonstrated. Laying down your life for another is the heart of servitude. In that, you will have to make God your reason, motive, and motivation and not pleasing yourself.

Other portions of scripture also reflect the truth of John 15:13. For instance, Philippians 2:3–4 instructs us to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Romans 12:10 urges Christians to "be devoted to one another in love" and to "honor one another above [them]selves." The Christian lifestyle does not nurture self-aggrandizement but centers on humility and self-denial.

Does the word friend in John 15:13 only mean to love our friends? Wouldn't this contradict other passages like Matthew 5:46–47? In the context of John 15:13, the friendship Jesus refers to is the relationship He had with the disciples. Yet we know that Jesus did not just die for His "friends" alone. Romans 5:6 says, "Christ died for the ungodly."

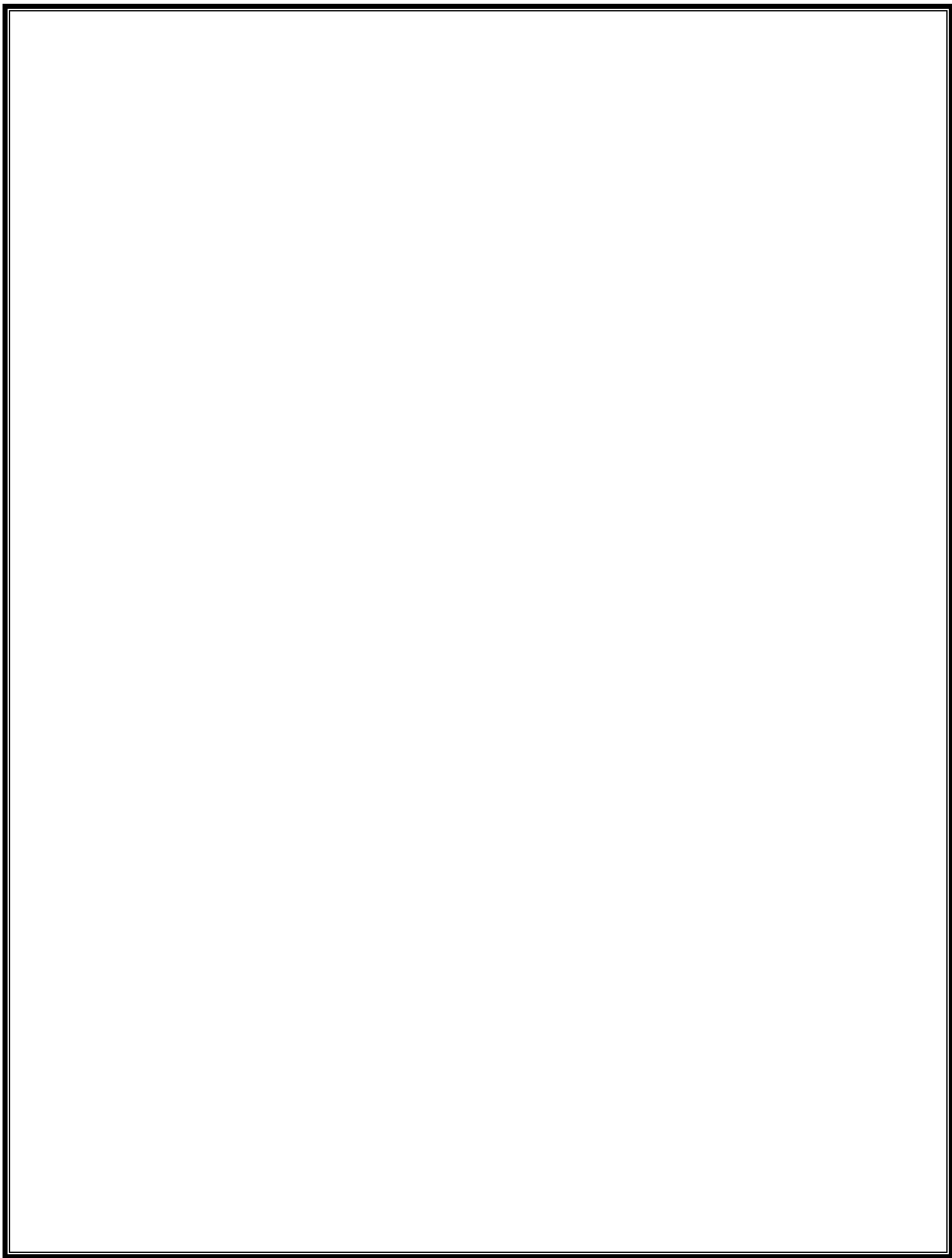
So, the principle of laying down one's life extends further than just benefiting friends. We show love even to enemies. There is no greater love than laying down one's life for others. Jesus exemplified this love for us, and we are called to walk in the same selfless love. I love how Jesus says it in John 15:12-13. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

My prayer for you today is that you would recognize the depth of this love God has for you and that this love will be a reminder of how we should love one another. May we be willing to serve and care for the needs of others, knowing that our God has done the same. There is no greater love than this! May we always be mindful of the great love that He has had for us and that He would give His life for us. May this love compel us into action and intentional service to the world around us.

RESPONSE PRAYER

Lord, I thank you for loving me. Your death and resurrection on the cross were the ultimate sacrifice for me. God help me to never take Your love for granted. Help me to see Your love as a motivator to lay down my life for You, those around me, and my enemies. Teach me how to have eyes to see the needs of others and to be willing to share my resources and support in a way that would bring you honor. Show me Lord how to love and give the way that You would call me to. I thank You for Your heart for humanity. You, Lord, are my hero.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen.*



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK EIGHT

DAY FOUR

THE FEAR OF THE LORD – A QUALITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: Psalm 25:14

READING: John 15:15; Hebrews 10:31; Isaiah 11: 3; Proverbs 1:7

CHAPTER SIX: FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He makes known to them His covenant. Psalm 25:14

In John 15:15, Jesus said no longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, **for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you** and that is to do with the secrets of God. The only way to be a steward of God's secrets is to walk in the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 11: 3 that Jesus delighted in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what His eyes see, and He will not decide by what His ears hear.

The fear of the Lord, for the believer, is the reverence of God. Hebrews 12:28-29 is a good description of this: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'" This reverence and awe are exactly what the fear of God means for Christians. This is the motivating factor for us to surrender to the Creator of the Universe.

Proverbs 1:7 declares, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” Until we understand Who God is and develop a reverential fear of Him, we cannot have true wisdom. True wisdom comes only from understanding who God is and that He is holy, just, and righteous. Deuteronomy 10:12, 20-21 records, “And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Fear the LORD your God and serve Him. Hold fast to Him and take your oaths in His name. He is your praise; He is your God, Who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.” The fear of God is the basis for our walking in His ways, serving Him, and, yes, loving Him. Some define the fear of God for believers to “respecting” Him. While respect is included in the concept of fearing God, there is more to it than that. A biblical fear of God, for the believer, includes understanding how much God hates sin and fearing His judgment on sin—even in the life of a believer. Hebrews 12:5-11 describes God’s discipline of the believer. There are amazing benefits to walking in the fear of the Lord: The following details some of the benefits of the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord:

- Adds length to life (Proverbs 10:27)
- Teaches a person wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33)
- Enables a person to avoid evil (Proverbs 3:7; 8:13; 14:16; 16:6)
- Leads to life (Proverbs 14:27; 19:23)
- Brings wealth and honor and life (Proverbs 22:4)

Those who fear the Lord:

- A secure fortress and a refuge for their children (Proverbs 14:26)
- Blessed (Proverbs 28:14; Psalm 112:1; Psalm 128:1; Psalm 128:4)
- Are to be praised (Proverbs 31:30)
- Lack nothing (Psalm 34:9)

To those who fear the Lord, God:

- Confides in them (Psalm 25:14)
- Makes His covenant known to them (Psalm 25:14)
- Has His eyes on them (Psalm 33:18)
- Has compassion on them (Psalm 103:13)
- Loves them (Psalm 103:17)
- Sends His righteousness to them (Psalm 103:17)
- Delights in them (Psalm 147:11)

Believers are not to be scared of God. We have no reason to be scared of Him. Fearing God means having a reverence for Him that greatly impacts the way we live. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshiping Him in awe.

RESPONSE**PRAYER**

Heavenly Father,

You who are clothed in majesty and righteousness, I come before You, seeking the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. Forgive me for not walking in the fear of the Lord. Just as Jesus delighted in the fear of the LORD and did not judge by what His eyes saw, or what His ears heard but by You, so do I choose to delight in the fear of the Lord. Lord, teach me, O God, to hold a reverential awe for Your holy name. Let my heart be struck with the beauty of Your purity, the depth of Your love, and the gravity of Your justice. Instill in me a profound respect and a holy tremor that recognizes Your omnipotence and Your sovereignty over all creation. Guide me in understanding that fearing You is not to be terrified but to be filled with awe, to honor You as God Almighty, and to acknowledge Your dominion in my life. May this lead me not into hiding but into a closer embrace with Your Spirit. Teach me Your ways that it may become the compass of my soul, directing my every thought, word, and deed. I ask this in Jesus' Mighty Name. Amen.



THE ABIDING CHALLENGE DEVOTIONAL

WEEK SIX

DAY FIVE

GOD'S SECRET BEARER – A QUALITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

SERIES: 8 WEEK ABIDING CHALLENGE

KEY SCRIPTURE: John 15:15

READING: 1 Cor. 2:10; Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 2:22; Jeremiah 6:16

CHAPTER SIX: FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. **John 15:15***

Jesus, in the above scripture, indicated that one of the qualities and benefits of being a friend of God is to disclose to you the secrets of God. "What He heard from His Father". Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 2:10, "But it was to us that God revealed these things by His Spirit. For His Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. And in Deuteronomy 29:29, we read, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

In yesterday's devotional, we looked at the Spirit of the fear of the Lord and how that qualifies us to be God's secret bearers. "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." - Psalm 25:14. The Fear of the Lord means to:

Obey God instantly,

Obey God even if it doesn't make sense,

Obey God even if it hurts,

Obey God even if you get nothing out of it,

Obey God to completion.

Daniel 2:22 says God reveals the deep and secret things. The English Standard Version puts it that way, “He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. God has a secret to tell us. And it’s the best secret imaginable. If we lean close to Him as a friend and walk in the reverential fear of the Lord, you will hear Him whispering the confidential mystery into our hearts. The secret of the Lord is knowing the ways of God. Moses in Exodus 33:13 said, “Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways so that I may know You [becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with You, recognizing and understanding Your ways more clearly] and that I may find grace and favor in Your sight”.

The secrets of God are the ancient paths where we find rest for our souls. Jeremiah 6:16, “Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls”. God called Amos to be a prophet and revealed secrets to him. Amos prophesied about the scattering of Israel, a famine of hearing the word of the Lord, and Israel's prosperity in the last days. God revealed a mystery that had been hidden for ages to His saints. Colossians 1:26-29: Paul revealed the mystery of God's will in Christ, which would bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth. Ephesians 1:7-10: The king recognized Daniel's God as the revealer of secrets. Daniel 2:47. Some were given insight into God's kingdom, while others were told the story in parables. Luke 8:10. The Holy Spirit is the revealer of the secrets of God. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 - However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” the things God has prepared for those who love Him, these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

RESPONSE
PRAY DANIELS PRAYER

Daniel 2:17-23 (ESV)

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream To Daniel

Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said:

Lord, I bless Your holy name! Blessed be the name of God forever and ever to whom belong wisdom and might.

Lord, You change times and seasons; You remove kings and raise kings;

Lord, You give wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding I pray!

Lord, You are the revealer of deep and hidden things; You know what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with You. Give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You. Enlighten the eyes of my understanding to know the hope to which You have called me and hidden riches in secret places reserved for me [Saints].

To You, O God, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to me what is on Your heart." In Jesus Name, Amen!

FRIEND OF GOD PRAYER

"Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. James 2:23 (NLT)

LORD GIVE ME THE FAITH OF FRIENDSHIP

*Jesus says, "You are My friends if you do what I command you". John 15:14 - ***LORD GIVE ME A HEART OF OBEDIENCE AS YOUR FRIEND****

*"Dear friends since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other". 1 John 4:11-12 - ***LORD MANIFEST YOUR LOVE IN ME****

*"God has made you His friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into His presence." Col 1:22b - ***LORD MAKE ME YOUR FRIEND AND MAY I LIVE IN YOUR PRESENCE****

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come to You in the name of Jesus. I accept Your invitation into friendship. You saw in Abraham, Moses, David and the Apostles a heart of friendship. You said in 2 Chronicles 16:9 that Your Eyes moves to and fro throughout the earth looking for those whose heart are completely Yours so that You might show Yourself strong. Please cultivate in me a heart of friendship so I can walk with You intimately and please You in every way.

Teach me Your ways, O LORD; make them known to me. Teach me to live according to Your truth, for You are my God, Who saves me.

I always trust in You. Remember, O LORD, Your kindness and constant love which You have shown from long ago. Forgive the sins and errors of my youth. In Your constant love and goodness, remember me, LORD!

*I ask this in Jesus mighty name!
Amen.*