

2024

ONE COMMUNITY CHURCH

40 DAYS OF PURPOSE

VOL 2

JAN 18 - FEB 16



DAY 11

BECOMING BEST FRIENDS WITH GOD

Passage to Read:

Gen. 27-28 • Ps. 4 • Luke 11

Point to Ponder:

God wants to be my best friend.

Verse to Remember:

“Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence him.” Psalm 25:14a (LB)

God Wants to Be Your Best Friend

Your relationship with God has many different aspects: God is your Creator and Maker, Lord and Master, Judge, Redeemer, Father, Savior, and much more. But the most shocking truth is this: Almighty God yearns to be your Friend!

In Eden we see God’s ideal relationship with us: Adam and Eve enjoyed an intimate friendship with God. There were no rituals, ceremonies, or religion—just a simple loving relationship between God and the people he created. Unhindered by guilt or fear, Adam and Eve delighted in God, and He delighted in them.

We were made to live in God’s continual presence, but after the Fall, that ideal relationship was lost. Only a few people in Old Testament times had the privilege of friendship with God. Moses and Abraham were called “friends of God,” David was called “a man after [God’s] own heart,” and Job, Enoch, and Noah had intimate friendships with God. But fear of God, not friendship, was more common in the Old Testament.

Then Jesus changed the situation. When He paid for our sins on the cross, the veil in the temple that symbolized our separation from God was split from top to bottom, indicating that direct access to God was once again available. By looking at the lives of God’s friends in the Bible, we learn six secrets of friendship with God. We will look at two secrets in this [session] and four more in the next.

Becoming a Best Friend of God Through Constant Conversation.

You will never grow a close relationship with God by just attending church once a week or even having a daily quiet time. Friendship with God is built by sharing all your life experiences with Him.

A common misconception is that “spending time with God” means being alone with Him. Of course, as Jesus modeled, you need time alone with God, but that is only a fraction of your waking hours. Everything you do can be “spending time with God” if He is invited to be a part of it and you stay aware of his presence.

Through Continual Meditation.

A second way to establish a friendship with God is by thinking about His Word throughout your day. This is called meditation, and the Bible repeatedly urges us to meditate on who God is, what He has done, and what He has said.

Start today by practicing constant conversation with God and continual meditation on his Word. Prayer lets you speak to God; meditation lets God speak to you. Both are essential to becoming a friend of God.

FURTHER READING

HOW TO PRAY THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY

SCAN TO
READ



Question to Consider:

What can I do to remind myself to think about God and talk to Him more often throughout the day?

Thought to Take Away:

There are six secrets of friendship with God. The first two are as follows:

1. Constant conversation with God.

A routine “devotional time” with God is insufficient. Friendship with God is built by sharing all of one’s life experiences with Him—through a continuous, open-ended conversation with Him throughout each day. God should be included in and consulted for all activities during each day. Elaborate prayers are not necessary. Short, to the point, from the heart, breath prayers (the spontaneous verbalized or thought-directed requests or statements of praise that can be completed in “one breath”) will do the job.

2. Continual meditation with God.

Meditation is “thinking about God”—His essence, His desires, His plans, His mercy, etc. — throughout each day. And the only way a Christian can know God is through His Word. Meditation which is only “focused thinking,” is accomplished when one mulls over God’s Word continually during the day. Meditation allows God to share His secrets (revelations) with His children—to speak to His children in a close and personal way.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for framing our relationship with you as friends. Thank you for showing your friendship by becoming one of us and for setting us free by dying for us and giving us new life. Help me to enjoy a greater intimacy with you by walking with you throughout the day. Let my thoughts continually be upon you. Teach me how to converse with you all day long, not just when I have quiet times with you when I am away from everything but also during the loud, busy times of my day. Help me to hear your voice throughout the day as I meditate on your Word. Amen.

DAY 12

DEVELOPING YOUR FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

Passage to Read:

Gen. 29-30 • Luke 12

Point to Ponder:

I'm as close to God as I choose to be.

Verse to Remember:

“Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you.” James 4:8a (NLT)

You Are as Close to God as You Choose to Be.

Like any friendship, you must work at developing your friendship with God. It won't happen by accident. It takes desire, time, and energy. If you want a deeper, more intimate connection with God you must learn to honestly share your feelings with Him, trust Him when he asks you to do something, learn to care about what he cares about, and desire his friendship more than anything else.

I must choose to be honest with God.

The first building block of a deeper friendship with God is complete honesty—about your faults and your feelings. God doesn't expect you to be perfect, but He does insist on complete honesty. None of God's friends in the Bible were perfect. If perfection was a requirement for friendship with God, we would never be able to be his friends. Fortunately, because of God's grace, Jesus is still the “friend of sinners.”

I must choose to obey God in faith.

Every time you trust God's wisdom and do whatever He says, even when you don't understand it, you deepen your friendship with God. We don't normally think of obedience as a characteristic of friendship; that's reserved for relationships with a parent or the boss or a superior officer, not a friend. However, Jesus made it clear that obedience is a condition of intimacy with God. He said, “You are my friends if you do what I command.”

I must choose to value what God values.

This is what friends do—they care about what is important to the other person. The more you become God's friend, the more you will care about the things He cares about, grieve over the things He grieves over, and rejoice over the things that bring pleasure to Him.

I must desire friendship with God more than anything else

The truth is—you are as close to God as you choose to be. Intimate friendship with God is a choice, not an accident. You must intentionally seek it. Do you really want it—more than anything? What is it worth to you? Is it worth giving up other things? Is it worth the effort of developing the habits and skills required? There is nothing—absolutely nothing—more important than developing a friendship with God.

Have you been missing out on the most important thing in life? You can do something about it starting now. Remember, it's your choice. You are as close to God as you choose to be.

FURTHER READING

TALKING TO GOD AS A FRIEND

SCAN TO
READ



Question to Consider:

What practical choices will I make today in order to grow closer to God?

Thought to Take Away:

There are six secrets of friendship with God. The final four are as follows:

3. Complete honesty with God.

Perfection is not required by God of His children; complete honesty is required!

4. Faith-based obedience with God.

God considers all acts performed for him, regardless of size, that are executed in the proper attitude of love and gratitude as worship.

5. Embracing God-based values.

Friendship deepens between individuals who care about and share the same things.

6. Earnestly desiring friendship with God.

Friendship with God must be the Christian's first priority—it must become a passion.

Prayer:

God, I confess that it is my own imperfection that makes it hard to appreciate your perfection, and that I would rather bend my image of you to please me than vice versa. Father, help me to trust you enough to be honest with you and be honest enough to discover that I can really trust you. It is hard even to imagine that you are truly strong enough, good enough, and loving enough to not just accept me as I am, but make me like you. Stretch my imagination through the acts and habits of worship, so that I may enjoy the true blessedness and peace that only comes from being a genuine friend of God. I ask this in and by the name of Jesus, Amen.

DAY 13

WORSHIP THAT PLEASES GOD

Passage to Read:

Gen. 31-33 • Luke 13

Point to Ponder:

God wants all of me.

Verse to Remember:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30 (NIV)

God Wants All of You.

God doesn't want a part of your life. He asks for all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. God is not interested in halfhearted commitment, partial obedience, and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion, not little bits of your life.

A Samaritan woman once tried to debate Jesus on the best time, place, and style for worship. Jesus replied that these external issues are irrelevant. Where you worship is not as important as why you worship and how much of yourself you offer to God when you worship. There is a right and wrong way to worship. The Bible says, “Let us be grateful and worship God in a way that will please Him.”¹ The kind of worship that pleases God has four characteristics:

God is pleased when our worship is accurate.

People often say, “I like to think of God as . . . ,” and then they share their idea of the kind of God they would like to worship. But we cannot just create our own comfortable or politically correct image of God and worship it. That is idolatry. Worship must be based on the truth of Scripture, not our opinions about God.

God is pleased when our worship is authentic.

When Jesus said you must “worship in spirit,” He wasn't referring to the Holy Spirit, but to your spirit. Made in God's image, you are a spirit that resides in a body, and God designed your spirit to communicate with Him. Worship is your spirit responding to God's Spirit.

God is pleased when our worship is thoughtful.

Jesus' command to “love God with all your mind” is repeated four times in the New Testament. God is not pleased with thoughtless singing of hymns, perfunctory praying of clichés, or careless exclamations of “Praise the Lord,” because we can't think of anything else to say at that moment. If worship is mindless, it is meaningless. You must engage your mind.

God is pleased when our worship is practical.

The Bible says, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”¹¹ Why does God want your body? Why doesn't he say, “Offer your spirit”? Because without your body you can't do anything on this planet. In eternity you will receive a new, improved, upgraded body, but while you're here on earth, God says, “Give me what you've got!” He's just being practical about worship.

When you praise God even when you don't feel like it, when you get out of bed to worship when you're tired, or when you help others when you are worn out, you are offering a sacrifice of worship to God. That pleases God.

LIFE GROUP

LIFE IS DONE BETTER IN COMMUNITY

SCAN TO
JOIN A
LIFEGROUP



Question to Consider:

Which is more pleasing to God right now—my public worship or my private worship? What will I do about this?

Thought to Take Away:

If a Christian's worship is to be pleasing to God, it must be wholehearted and genuine.

Worship that is pleasing to God has the following four characteristics:

1. Accuracy.

To worship God “in truth” (John 4:23), is to worship Him in accordance with accurate Bible doctrine. To think of God correctly, each thought must reflect the essence of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. To think of or worship God according to one's own personal opinion is a form of “idolatry.”

2. Authenticity.

To worship God “in spirit” (John 4:23), is to worship Him in genuineness of attitude (with one's whole “heart”). Authentic worship is not merely “emotion,” true worship flows from an “honest” heart.

3. Thoughtfulness.

Worship that is pleasing to God is worship that employs the mind of the worshiper. Vain, empty of thought repetitions, means nothing to God. Mechanical methods of “customary worship” (singing, praying, etc.) and the use of “religious clichés” (“Amen,” “Praise the Lord,” “Hallelujah,” etc.) bring no special pleasure to God.

4. Practicality.

Worship that pleases God must employ the body. To worship in a practical fashion will cost the Christian his self-centeredness, his comfort, his convenience, his time and his energy.

Prayer:

Father God, it is easy to worship you with my body, mind, and truth, but neglect the Spirit. I get so focused on doing and thinking that I neglect “loving”. Teach me to get back to the “Heart of Worship”, where it is all about you. Help me to learn what it means to worship you in Spirit and in Truth, and not settle for one or the other. Draw my heart to yours — even if you have to break it first. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 14

WHEN GOD SEEMS DISTANT

Passage to Read:

Gen. 34-36 • Luke 14

Point to Ponder:

God is real, no matter how I feel.

Verse to Remember:

“For God has said, ‘I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.’” Hebrews 13:5 (TEV)

God is Real, No Matter How You Feel.

It is easy to worship God when things are going great in your life—when He has provided food, friends, family, health, and happy situations. But circumstances are not always pleasant. How do you worship God then? What do you do when God seems a million miles away? The deepest level of worship is praising God in spite of pain, thanking God during a trial, trusting Him when tempted, surrendering while suffering, and loving him when He seems distant.

Friendships are often tested by separation and silence; you are divided by physical distance or you are unable to talk. In your friendship with God, you won’t always feel close to Him. That’s when worship gets difficult. To mature your friendship, God will test it with periods of seeming separation—times when it feels as if He has abandoned or forgotten you. God feels a million miles away.

The truth is, there’s nothing wrong with you! This is a normal part of the testing and maturing of your friendship with God. Every Christian goes through it at least once, and usually several times. It is painful and disconcerting, but it is absolutely vital for the development of your faith. When God seems distant, you may feel that He is angry with you or is disciplining you for some sin. In fact, sin does disconnect us from intimate fellowship with God. We grieve God’s Spirit and quench our fellowship with Him by disobedience, conflict with others, busyness, friendship with the world, and other sins. But often this feeling of abandonment or estrangement from God has nothing to do with sin. It is a test of faith—one we all must face: Will you continue to love, trust, obey, and worship God, even when you have no sense of His presence or visible evidence of His work in your life?

The most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience rather than seeking God. They look for a feeling, and if it happens, they conclude that they have worshiped. Wrong! In fact, God often removes our feelings so we won’t depend on them. Seeking a feeling, even the feeling of closeness to Christ is not worship. How do you praise God when you don’t understand what’s happening in your life and God is silent?

Tell God exactly how you feel.

Pour out your heart to God. Unload every emotion that you’re feeling. God can handle your doubt, anger, fear, grief, confusion, and questions.

Focus on who God is—his unchanging nature.

Regardless of circumstances and how you feel, hang on to God’s unchanging character. Remind yourself what you know to be eternally true about God: He is good, He loves me, He is with me, He knows what I’m going through, He cares, and He has a good plan for my life.

Remember what God has already done for you.

If God never did anything else for you, he would still deserve your continual praise for the rest of your life because of what Jesus did for you on the cross. God’s Son died for you! This is the greatest reason for worship.

CLOSER DEVOTIONAL

KEEP UP WITH DAILY BIBLE READING ALL YEAR LONG!

SCAN TO
READ THE
CLOSER
DEVOTIONAL



Question to Consider:

How can I stay focused on God's presence, especially when He feels distant?

Thought to Take Away:

The difference between an immature and a mature Christian is that an immature Christian relies on experiences and emotions, whereas a mature Christian relies on faith.

It is often during times of difficulties and depression, often tests from God, that God's children show their maturity and are refined for His service.

When faced with such temptations and testing, believers should be perfectly honest with God in the expression of their dilemma, focus on the character (attributes) of God and the fact that God continues to abide with us through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and also remember all that Jesus Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary.

MAKE A LIST OF THE WAYS GOD HAS MADE HIS PRESENCE KNOWN SO THAT WHEN YOU ARE FEELING DISTANT, YOU CAN MEDITATE ON HIS GOODNESS.

Prayer:

God, I don't have any answers. All I know is that you have been far more good to me than I have ever been to myself. And while I confess that I sometimes doubt your existence, I choose to trust in you rather than myself. Teach me how to love you when I do not feel you and to trust you when I do not see you. May my relationship with you grow so that I can walk in faith holding your hand even when I do not feel it and the direction you are leading me does not make sense. Help my unbelief!

DAY 15

FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY

Passage to Read:

Gen. 37-38 • Ps. 7 • Luke 15

Point to Ponder:

I was formed for God's family.

Verse to Remember:

"His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ." Ephesians 1:5a (NLT)

You were formed for God's family.

God wants a family, and He created you to be a part of it. This is God's second purpose for your life, which He planned before you were born. The entire Bible is the story of God building a family who will love him, honor Him, and reign with Him forever. It says, *"His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave Him great pleasure."*

Because God is love, He treasures relationships. His very nature is relational, and he identifies himself in family terms: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Trinity is God's relationship to Himself. It's the perfect pattern for relational harmony, and we should study its implications.

The invitation to be part of God's family is universal, but there is one condition: faith in Jesus. The Bible says, "You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus." When we place our faith in Christ, God becomes our Father, we become His children, other believers become our brothers and sisters, and the church becomes our spiritual family.

Benefits of Being in God's Family

The moment you were spiritually born into God's family, you were given some astounding birthday gifts: the family name, the family likeness, family privileges, family intimate access, and the family inheritance! The Bible says, "Since you are His child, everything He has belongs to you."

Baptism: Identifying with God's Family

Healthy families have family pride; members are not ashamed to be recognized as a part of the family. Sadly, I have met many believers who have never publicly identified themselves with their spiritual family as Jesus commanded—by being baptized. Baptism is not an optional ritual, to be delayed or postponed. It signifies your inclusion in God's family. It publicly announces to the world, "I am not ashamed to be a part of God's family." Have you been baptized? Jesus commanded this beautiful act for all in his family. He told us to "go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Baptism is pregnant with meaning. Your baptism declares your faith, shares Christ's burial and resurrection, symbolizes your death to your old life, and announces your new life in Christ. It is also a celebration of your inclusion in God's family. Your baptism is a physical picture of a spiritual truth.

Life's Greatest Privilege

The Bible says, "Jesus and the people he makes holy all belong to the same family. That is why he isn't ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters." Let that amazing truth sink in. You are a part of God's family, and because Jesus makes you holy, God is proud of you!

BAPTISM

AN OUTWARD SIGN OF AN INWARD CHANGE!

SCAN TO
SIGN UP FOR
BAPTISM



Question to Consider:

How can I start treating other believers like members of my own family?

Thought to Take Away:

In addition to pleasing God through worshipping God with and by one's entire life, God would have each of His children to fully realize and take pride in being included in His spiritual family. The realization comes through familiarity with His Word, and the most immediate way of showing pride of the fact is by participating in water baptism. As a child of God and an integral and permanent part of His family, a Christian has a rich inheritance in glory (heaven). He therefore should live in accordance with this reality.

**REFLECT ON THE MANY BENEFITS TO BEING A PART
OF THE FAMILY OF GOD**

Prayer:

Lord help me to realize that I am fully accepted and loved as your child. You have adopted me and made me your own. There is nothing I can do that will cause You to love me less, and there is nothing that I can do that will cause You to love me more.

Teach me to love the members of the body of Christ like You love me and to find joy in being submitted to the Church – and headship – of Jesus Christ.

God I want to let the world know I belong to You. Help me to declare Your love in word and deed. Amen.

DAY 16

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Passage to Read:

Gen. 39-41 • Luke 16

Point to Ponder:

Life is all about love

Verse to Remember:

“The entire law is summed up in a single command, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”
Galatians 5:14 (NIV)

Life is all about love.

Because God is love, the most important lesson He wants you to learn on earth is how to love. It is in loving that we are most like Him, so love is the foundation of every command He has given us: “The whole Law can be summed up in this one command: ‘Love others as you love yourself.’” Learning to love unselfishly is not an easy task. It runs counter to our self-centered nature. That’s why we’re given a lifetime to learn it. Of course, God wants us to love everyone, but He is particularly concerned that we learn to love others in His family. As we’ve already seen, this is the second purpose for your life.

In heaven we will enjoy God’s family forever, but first we have some tough work to do here on earth to prepare ourselves for an eternity of loving. God wants you to be in regular, close fellowship with other believers so you can develop the skill of loving. Love cannot be learned in isolation. You have to be around people—irritating, imperfect, frustrating people.

The Best Use of Life Is Love

Love should be your top priority, primary objective, and greatest ambition. Love is not a good part of your life; it’s the most important part. The Bible says, “Let love be your greatest aim.” It’s not enough to say, “One of the things I want in life is to be loving,” as if it’s in your top ten list. Relationships must have priority in your life above everything else. Why? Life without love is really worthless. Busyness is a great enemy of relationships. We become preoccupied with making a living, doing our work, paying bills, and accomplishing goals as if these tasks are the point of life. They are not. The point of life is learning to love—God and people. Life minus love equals zero.

We will be evaluated on our love.

One of the ways God measures spiritual maturity is by the quality of your relationships. In heaven God won’t say, “Tell me about your career, your bank account, and your hobbies.” Instead he will review how you treated other people, particularly those in need.

The Best Expression of Love Is Time

Time is your most precious gift because you only have a set amount of it. You can make more money, but you can’t make more time. When you give someone your time, you are giving them a portion of your life that you’ll never get back. Your time is your life. That is why the greatest gift you can give someone is your time. It is not enough just to say relationships are important; we must prove it by investing time in them. Words alone are worthless. Relationships take time and effort, and the best way to spell love is “T-I-M-E.”

The Best Time to Love Is Now

Sometimes procrastination is a legitimate response to a trivial task. But because love is what matters most, it takes top priority.

The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. The best time to love is now.

BIBLE STUDY

JUMP INTO THE WORD TOGETHER!

WOMEN 1ST & 3RD WED @ 7P

MEN 2ND & 4TH WED @ 7P

SCAN FOR
WOMENS
BIBLE STUDY



SCAN FOR
MENS BIBLE
STUDY



Question to Consider:

Honestly, are relationships my first priority? How can I ensure that they are?

Thought to Take Away:

Unselfish love is the cornerstone, the centerpiece, and the pinnacle of the Christian life. It may only be evidenced in relationships, and it is the most critical measurement of a believer, which must take priority between those in God's family.

Providing unselfish love toward another believer (or anyone for that matter) is the only way one can truly give of himself. The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. The best time to love is now. The one quality that best expresses the essence of God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is (unselfish) Love. To be a true child of God is to be a child of Love!

WHO DO YOU NEED TO START SPENDING MORE TIME WITH? WHAT DO YOU NEED TO CUT OUT OF YOUR SCHEDULE TO MAKE THAT POSSIBLE? WHAT SACRIFICES DO YOU NEED TO MAKE?

Prayer:

God, today is the first day of the rest of my life. Help me to build it around loving others. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 17

A PLACE TO BELONG

Passage to Read:

Gen. 42-43 • Ps. 5 • Luke 17

Point to Ponder:

I am called to belong, not just believe

Verse to Remember:

“In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”
Romans 12:5 (NIV)

You are called to belong, not just believe.

Even in the perfect, sinless environment of Eden, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone.”¹ We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family, and none of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves. The Bible knows nothing of solitary saints or spiritual hermits isolated from other believers and deprived of fellowship.

Your Local Fellowship

Except for a few important instances referring to all believers throughout history, almost every time the word church is used in the Bible it refers to a local, visible congregation. The New Testament assumes membership in a local congregation. The only Christians not members of a local fellowship were those under church discipline who had been removed from the fellowship because of gross public sin

Why You Need a Church Family

A church family identifies you as a genuine believer. I can’t claim to be following Christ if I’m not committed to any specific group of disciples. Jesus said, “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

A church family moves you out of self-centered isolation.

The local church is the classroom for learning how to get along in God’s family. It is a lab for practicing unselfish, sympathetic love. Biblical fellowship is being as committed to each other as we are to Jesus Christ. God expects us to give our lives for each other.

A church family helps you develop spiritual muscle.

You will never grow to maturity just by attending worship services and being a passive spectator. Only participation in the full life of a local church builds spiritual muscle.

When you were born again, you automatically became a part of God’s universal family, but you also need to become a member of a local expression of God’s family. The difference between being a church attender and a church member is commitment. Attenders are spectators from the sidelines; members get involved in the ministry. Attenders are consumers; members are contributors. Attenders want the benefits of a church.

Why is it important to join a local church family? Because it proves you are committed to your spiritual brothers and sisters in reality, not just in theory. God wants you to love real people, not ideal people. You can spend a lifetime searching for the perfect church, but you will never find it. You are called to love imperfect sinners, just as God does.

You become a Christian by committing yourself to Christ, but you become a church member by committing yourself to a specific group of believers. The first decision brings salvation; the second brings fellowship.

DISCIPLESHIP

BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS THROUGH INTENTIONAL STUDY

SCAN TO JOIN A
DISCIPLESHIP
GROUP



Question to Consider:

Does my level of involvement in my local church demonstrate that I love and am committed to God's family?

Thought to Take Away:

The local church is the ideal location and surrounding for a believer to fulfill his purpose of expressing unselfish love toward other imperfect and often frustrating sinners. It is God's will that every believer participate in and genuinely commit to a local church. Only in a local church may one properly grow spiritually and fulfill the Gospel mission. Only by being a member (not an attender) of a local church can a Christian fully please God and achieve God's purpose for his life.

TODAY I AM COMMITTING TO BEING A MEMBER NOT A SPECTATOR. I WILL CHOOSE TO LOVE REAL PEOPLE, NOT IDEAL PEOPLE!

Prayer:

God I know that I need to be in community but I admit it is easier to live in isolation, especially when others disappoint me. Help me to remain committed to community. Grant me grace and wisdom to love my small group members faithfully.

I thank you for the many ministries and fellowship that have blessed and encouraged me; may I live out my gratitude through the sacrifices I make for the church. Because ultimately the church is Christ's, not mine or theirs. And it is in His name, and for His glory, that I ask all these things. Amen.

DAY 18

EXPERIENCING LIFE TOGETHER

Passage to Read:

Gen. 44-46 • Luke 18

Point to Ponder:

I need others in my life

Verse to Remember:

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2 (NLT)

Life is meant to be shared.

God intends for us to experience life together. The Bible calls this shared experience fellowship. Today, however, the word has lost most of its biblical meaning. “Fellowship” now usually refers to casual conversation, socializing, food, and fun. It is experiencing life together. It includes unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the other “one another” commands found in the New Testament.

When it comes to fellowship, size matters: Smaller is better. You can worship with a crowd, but you can’t fellowship with one. Once a group becomes larger than about ten people, someone stops participating—usually the quietest person—and a few people will dominate the group. Jesus ministered in the context of a small group of disciples. He could have chosen more, but He knew twelve is about the maximum size you can have in a small group if everyone is to participate.

Unfortunately, even being in a small group does not guarantee you will experience real community. What is the difference between real and fake fellowship?

In real fellowship people experience authenticity.

Authentic fellowship is not superficial, surface-level chit-chat. It is genuine, heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level, sharing. It is only as we become open about our lives that we experience real fellowship.

In real fellowship people experience mutuality.

Mutuality is the art of giving and receiving. It’s depending on each other. Mutuality is the heart of fellowship: building reciprocal relationships, sharing responsibilities, and helping each other. All of us are more consistent in our faith when others walk with us and encourage us. You are not responsible for everyone in the Body of Christ, but you are responsible to them. God expects you to do whatever you can to help them.

In real fellowship people experience sympathy.

Sympathy is not giving advice or offering quick, cosmetic help; sympathy is entering in and sharing the pain of others. Sympathy meets two fundamental human needs: the need to be understood and the need to have your feelings validated.

In real fellowship people experience mercy.

Fellowship is a place of grace, where mistakes aren’t rubbed in but rubbed out. Fellowship happens when mercy wins over justice. We all need mercy, because we all stumble and fall and require help getting back on track. You can’t have fellowship without forgiveness.

There are many other benefits you will experience in being a part of a small group committed to real fellowship. It is an essential part of your Christian life that you cannot overlook.

PRAYER

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER!

SCAN TO SHARE YOUR
PRAYER REQUEST OR
PRAISE REPORT



Question to Consider:

What one step can I take today to connect with another believer at a more genuine, heart-to-heart level?

Thought to Take Away:

There are different levels of fellowship, and each is appropriate at different times. The simplest levels of fellowship are the fellowship of sharing and the fellowship of studying God's Word together. A deeper level is the fellowship of serving, as when we minister together on mission trips or mercy projects. The deepest, most intense level is the fellowship of suffering, where we enter into each other's pain and grief and carry each other's burdens.

Fellowship, a quality of small-group interaction, is necessary for the proper spiritual growth of every believer. Only in a close-knit group where true, mutual, sympathetic and merciful sharing can take place can a Christian achieve spiritual maturity.

**FORGIVENESS MUST BE IMMEDIATE.
TRUST MUST BE REBUILT OVER TIME.
WHO DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE AND WHO DO YOU
NEED TO TRUST?**

Prayer:

God, you know that at one level I deeply desire genuine fellowship, yet at other levels I'm much more content with superficial "social-ship." Help me uncover the hurts, wrongs and fears I have not forgiven and entrusted to You, so that I may be freed to be authentic, sympathetic and mutual with all the believers within my sphere of influence. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 19

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Passage to Read:

Gen. 47-48 • Ps. 10 • Luke 19

Point to Ponder:

Community requires commitment.

Verse to Remember:

“We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave His life for us. That means we must give our lives for other believers.” — I John 3:16 (GWT)

Community requires commitment.

Only the Holy Spirit can create real fellowship between believers, but He cultivates it with the choices and commitments we make. Paul points out this dual responsibility when he says, “You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way.” It takes both God’s power and our effort to produce a loving Christian community.

Unfortunately, many people grow up in families with unhealthy relationships, so they lack the relational skills needed for real fellowship. They must be taught how to get along with and relate to others in God’s family.

Cultivating community takes honesty.

You will have to care enough to lovingly speak the truth, even when you would rather gloss over a problem or ignore an issue. While it is much easier to remain silent when others around us are harming themselves or others with a sinful pattern, it is not the loving thing to do. Most people have no one in their lives who loves them enough to tell them the truth (even when it’s painful), so they continue in self-destructive ways.

Cultivating community takes humility.

Self-importance, smugness, and stubborn pride destroy fellowship faster than anything else. Pride builds walls between people; humility builds bridges. Humility is the oil that smooths and soothes relationships. Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

Cultivating community takes courtesy.

Courtesy is respecting our differences, being considerate of each other’s feelings, and being patient with people who irritate us. In every church and in every small group, there is always at least one “difficult” person, usually more than one. These people may have special emotional needs, deep insecurities, irritating mannerisms, or poor social skills. God put these people in our midst for both their benefit and ours.

Cultivating community takes confidentiality.

Only in the safe environment of warm acceptance and trusted confidentiality will people open up and share their deepest hurts, needs, and mistakes. Confidentiality does not mean keeping silent while your brother or sister sins. It means that what is shared in your group needs to stay in your group, and the group needs to deal with it, not gossip to others about it.

Cultivating community takes frequency.

You *must* have frequent, regular contact with your group in order to build genuine fellowship. Relationships take time. *“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another.”*

JOIN A SMALL GROUP

LIFE IS DONE BEST IN COMMUNITY!

JOIN A SMALL
GROUP
TODAY!



Question to Consider:

How can I help cultivate today the characteristics of real community in my small group and my church?

Thought to Take Away:

True community/fellowship is the result of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of believers in conjunction with their choices and commitments. This takes courage to abandon the fear of rejection and adopt the principals of Authenticity, Mutuality, Sympathy, Mercy, Honesty, Humility, Courtesy, Confidentiality, and Frequency. There is no other way more gratifying and that will produce eternal rewards.

IF YOU ARE IN A SMALL GROUP, MAKE A GROUP COVENANT THAT INCLUDES THE NINE CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLICAL FELLOWSHIP:

- 1) We will share our true feelings (*authenticity*)
- 2) encourage each other (*mutuality*)
- 3) support each other (*sympathy*)
- 4) forgive each other (*mercy*)
- 5) speak the truth in love (*honesty*)
- 6) admit our weaknesses (*humility*)
- 7) respect our differences (*courtesy*)
- 8) not gossip (*confidentiality*)
- 9) make group a priority (*frequency*).

Prayer:

God, my spirit longs to be a part of authentic, biblical fellowship — even as my flesh rebels against the constraints and demands of such community. I thank you for my marriage, church, and small group, as well as all the fellowships I've enjoyed over the decades. I acknowledge that you have been at work through all of them, even if I have not always honored them with my whole heart. Yet Lord, I want more. Teach me the significance that comes from losing myself in You, that there I may find my life by letting go of it. For I know that only there can I find true relationship, forgiveness, and love. I ask all this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 20

RESTORING BROKEN FELLOWSHIP

Passage to Read:

Gen. 49-50 • Ps. 8 • Luke 20

Point to Ponder:

Relationships are always worth restoring.

Verse to Remember:

“Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.” — Romans 12:18 (TEV)

Relationships are always worth restoring.

Because life is all about learning how to love, God wants us to value relationships and make the effort to maintain them instead of discarding them whenever there is a rift, a hurt, or a conflict. In fact, the Bible tells us that God has given us the ministry of restoring relationships.

Since Christ wants his family to be known for our love for each other, broken fellowship is a disgraceful testimony to unbelievers. If you want God’s blessing on your life and you want to be known as a child of God, you must learn to be a peacemaker.

How to Restore a Relationship

As believers, God has *“called us to settle our relationships with each other.”* Here are seven biblical steps to restoring fellowship:

Talk to God before talking to the person. Discuss the problem with God. If you will pray about the conflict first instead of gossiping to a friend, you will often discover that either God changes your heart or He changes the other person without your help. All your relationships would go smoother if you would just pray more about them.

Always take the initiative. It doesn’t matter whether you are the offender or the offended: God expects you to make the first move. Don’t wait for the other party. Go to them first. Restoring broken fellowship is so important, Jesus commanded that it even take priority over group worship.

Sympathize with their feelings. Use your ears more than your mouth. Before attempting to solve any disagreement you must first listen to people’s feelings. Focus on their feelings, not the facts. Begin with sympathy, not solutions.

Confess your part of the conflict. If you are serious about restoring a relationship, you should begin with admitting your own mistakes or sin. Since we all have blind spots, you may need to ask a third party to help you evaluate your own actions before meeting with the person with whom you have a conflict.

Attack the problem, not the person. You cannot fix the problem if you’re consumed with fixing the blame. You must choose between the two. You will never get your point across by being cross, so choose your words wisely. A soft answer is always better than a sarcastic one.

Cooperate as much as possible. “Peace always has a price tag. Sometimes it costs our pride; it often costs our self-centeredness.

Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything. Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem.

COUNSELING

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WALK ALONE!

SCAN TO
CONNECT TO A
COUNSELOR



Question to Consider:

Who do I need to restore a broken relationship with today?

Thought to Take Away:

God expects His children to demonstrate unselfish love toward each other. Only in this way can the world see that Christianity is truly different. Unselfish love will always foster the peacemaking process—the genuine effort to restore fellowship between God’s children when it has been damaged. To be a peacemaker requires the courage to face issues that cause conflict and in the appropriate way (led by the Holy Spirit) to employ all available biblical reconciliation steps—prayer, action, sympathy, self-confession, problem-focus, compromise, and reconciliation-focus. Only by becoming a peacemaker can a Christian fully enjoy God’s blessings and earn eternal rewards.

**WHO DO YOU NEED TO CONTACT AS A RESULT OF THIS CHAPTER?
WITH WHOM DO YOU NEED TO RESTORE FELLOWSHIP?
DON'T DELAY ANOTHER SECOND.
PAUSE RIGHT NOW AND TALK TO GOD ABOUT THAT PERSON.
NOW PICK UP THE PHONE AND BEGIN THE PROCESS.**

Prayer:

God, I don't have any answers. All I know is that You have been far more good to me than I have ever been to myself. And while I confess that I sometimes doubt Your existence, I choose to trust in You rather than myself. Teach me how to love You when I do not feel You and to trust You when I do not see You. May my relationship with You grow so that I can walk in faith holding Your hand even when I do not feel it and the direction You are leading me does not make sense. Help my unbelief!

DAY 21

PROTECTING YOUR CHURCH

Passage to Read:

Point to Ponder:

Verse to Remember:

Ex. 1-2 • Ps. 88 • Luke 21

It is my responsibility to protect the unity of my church.

“Let us consider the things which make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together.” — Romans 14:9 (Ph)

It is your job to protect the unity of your church.

Unity in the church is so important that the New Testament gives more attention to it than to either heaven or hell. God deeply desires that we experience oneness and harmony with each other. Unity is the soul of fellowship. Destroy it, and you rip the heart out of Christ's Body. Our supreme model for unity is the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are completely unified as one.

The Bible says, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” How are we to do this?

Focus on what we have in common, not our differences. As believers we share one Lord, one body, one purpose, one Father, one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism, and one love. We share the same salvation, the same life, and the same future— factors far more important than any differences we could enumerate. These are the issues, not our personal differences, that we should concentrate on.

Be realistic in your expectations. Once you discover what God intends real fellowship to be, it is easy to become discouraged by the gap between the ideal and the real in your church. Yet we must passionately love the church in spite of its imperfections. Longing for the ideal while criticizing the real is evidence of immaturity. On the other hand, settling for the real without striving for the ideal is complacency. Maturity is living with the tension.

Choose to encourage rather than criticize. It is always easier to stand on the sidelines and take shots at those who are serving than it is to get involved and make a contribution. God warns us over and over not to criticize, compare, or judge each other.

Refuse to listen to gossip. Gossip is passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution. You know spreading gossip is wrong, but you should not listen to it, either, if you want to protect your church. Listening to gossip is like accepting stolen property, and it makes you just as guilty of the crime.

Practice God's method for conflict resolution. During conflict, it is tempting to complain to a third party rather than courageously speak the truth in love to the person you're upset with. This makes the matter worse. Instead, you should go directly to the person involved. Private confrontation is always the first step, and you should take it as soon as possible.

Support your pastor and leaders. There are no perfect leaders, but God gives leaders the responsibility and the authority to maintain the unity of the church. During interpersonal conflicts that is a thankless job. Pastors often have the unpleasant task of serving as mediator between hurt, conflicting, or immature members. Pastors and elders need our prayers, encouragement, appreciation, and love.

I challenge you to accept your responsibility to protect and promote the unity of your church. Put your full effort into it, and God will be pleased. God blesses churches that are unified.

NEXT STEPS

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHERE TO USE YOUR GIFTS IN SERVING?

SCAN TO
JOIN THE
DREAM
TEAM



Question to Consider:

What am I personally doing to protect unity in my church family right now?

Thought to Take Away:

Maintaining unity among all members within a local church is the direct responsibility of every member of the local church. No one is excused from this. It is assigned a high priority by God in His list of responsibilities for His children.

To effectively address conflict within a local church it is necessary that Christians emphasize those items that are common instead of different between them, understand what is real while striving for the ideal, accepting and admitting to their own frailties (sinning nature), focus on encouragement rather than criticism, flee from all gossip, follow God's method of conflict resolution and support their church leaders.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING PERSONALLY TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH FAMILY MORE WARM AND LOVING?

Prayer:

God, you know both my love for the church, and the ways my flesh falls short of Your love for the church. Teach me to esteem my fellow believers, and respond to their weaknesses with encouragement rather than criticism. Help me to build up my leaders in prayer and service, that their jobs may not be a burden, but a joy. Thank you for my church and for all the ways we model your body. May we together continue to grow more like you. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

DAY 22

CREATED TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST

Passage to Read:

Ex. 3-5 • Luke 22

Point to Ponder:

I was created to become like Christ.

Verse to Remember:

“As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.” — 2 Corinthians 3:18b (NLT)

You were created to become like Christ.

From the very beginning, God’s plan has been to make you like his Son, Jesus. This is your destiny and the third purpose of your life. God announced this intention at Creation: *“Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image and likeness.’”*

In all of creation, only human beings, are made “in God’s image.” This is a great privilege and gives us dignity. We don’t know *all* this phrase covers, but we do know some of the aspects it includes: Like God, we are *spiritual beings*—our spirits are immortal and will outlast our earthly bodies; we are intellectual— we can think, reason, and solve problems; like God, we are relational—we can give and receive real love; and we have a moral consciousness—we can discern right from wrong, which makes us accountable to God.

God’s Spirit Working in You

It is the Holy Spirit’s job to produce Christlike character in you. This process of changing us to be more like Jesus is called sanctification, and it is the third purpose of your life on earth.

You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus on your own strength. New Year’s resolutions, willpower, and best intentions are not enough. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives.

We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work. Through-out the Bible we see an important truth illustrated over and over: The Holy Spirit releases his power the moment you take a step of faith.

God uses his Word, people, and circumstances to mold us. All three are indispensable for character development. God’s Word provides the *truth* we need to grow, God’s people provide the support we need to grow, and circumstances provide the environment we need to practice Christlikeness. If you study and apply God’s Word, connect regularly with other believers, and learn to trust God in difficult circumstances, I guarantee you will become more like Jesus.

Becoming like Christ is a long, slow process of growth.

Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic; it is a gradual, progressive development that will take the rest of your life. You are a work in progress.

God is far more interested in what you are than in what you do. Much confusion in the Christian life comes from ignoring the simple truth that God is far more interested in building your character than He is anything else. We worry when God seems silent on specific issues such as “What career should I choose?” The truth is, there are many different careers that could be in God’s will for your life. What God cares about most is that whatever you do, you do in a Christlike manner.

PRAYER

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER!

SCAN TO SHARE YOUR
PRAYER REQUEST OR
PRAISE REPORT



Question to Consider:

In what area of my life do I need to ask for the Spirit's power to be like Christ today?

Thought to Take Away:

The only way to fulfill God's overall purpose for one's life is to become like Jesus Christ, which is only possible by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit working in and through the believer. From a practical standpoint, this lifelong process called sanctification includes consumption of Bible doctrine, support from other believers and facing life's circumstances daily.

The process is not easy, but then Christianity in this world was never meant to be easy for its adherents. Yet, as it develops one's character, it is the most rewarding action in a Christian's life, with far-reaching, eternal results.

**MAKE A LIST OF THE AREAS IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU
NEED TO BE MORE LIKE CHRIST TODAY?**

Prayer:

God, my mind is totally sold on the idea of becoming like You — as not just my highest calling, but also my only hope of happiness on earth and heaven hereafter. Yet, my heart and flesh fail to give up the illusion of control, and I resist the character-building trials You may allow me to undergo.

Father, help me to know You better — through worship, praise, and thanksgiving; as well as through ministry, service, and sacrifice. Partly that I may escape some trials by learning those lessons earlier, but more importantly that I may glorify You in the midst of trials. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 23

HOW WE GROW

Passage to Read:

Ex. 6-8 • Luke 23

Point to Ponder:

It is never too late to start growing.

Verse to Remember:

“Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God — what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect..” — Romans 12:2b (TEV)

God wants you to grow up.

Your heavenly Father's goal is for you to mature and develop the characteristics of Jesus Christ. Sadly, millions of Christians grow older but never grow up. They are stuck in perpetual spiritual infancy, remaining in diapers and booties. The reason is that they never intended to grow.

Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment. You must want to grow, decide to grow, make an effort to grow, and persist in growing. Discipleship—the process of becoming like Christ—always begins with a decision.

When the first disciples chose to follow Jesus, they didn't understand all the implications of their decision. They simply responded to Jesus' invitation. That's all you need to get started: *Decide* to become a disciple. Every choice has eternal consequences, so you had better choose wisely.

God's part and your part. Christlikeness is the result of making Christlike choices and depending on His Spirit to help you fulfill those choices. Once you decide to get serious about becoming like Christ, you must begin to act in new ways. You will need to let go of some old routines, develop some new habits, and intentionally change the way you think.

Changing your autopilot. To change your life, you must change the way you think. Behind everything you do is a thought. Every behavior is motivated by a belief, and every action is prompted by an attitude. God revealed this thousands of years before psychologists understood it: “Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.

To be like Christ you must develop the mind of Christ. The New Testament calls this mental shift repentance, which in Greek literally means “to change your mind.” You repent whenever you change the way you think by adopting how God thinks—about yourself, sin, God, other people, life, your future, and everything else. You take on Christ's outlook and perspective.

We are commanded to “think the same way that Christ Jesus thought.” There are two parts to doing this. The first half of this mental shift is to stop thinking immature thoughts, which are self-centered and self-seeking.

Babies by nature are completely selfish. They think only of themselves and their own needs. They are incapable of giving; they can only receive. That is immature thinking. Unfortunately, many people never grow beyond that kind of thinking.

The second half of thinking like Jesus is to start thinking maturely, which focuses on others, not yourself. Thinking of others is the heart of Christlikeness and the best evidence of spiritual growth. This kind of thinking is unnatural, counter-cultural, rare, and difficult. Fortunately we have help: “God has given us His Spirit. That's why we don't think the same way that the people of this world think.

BIBLE STUDY

JUMP INTO THE WORD TOGETHER!

WOMEN 1ST & 3RD WED @ 7P

MEN 2ND & 4TH WED @ 7P

SCAN FOR
WOMENS
BIBLE STUDY



SCAN FOR
MENS BIBLE
STUDY



Question to Consider:

What is one area where I need to stop thinking my way and start thinking God's way?

Thought to Take Away:

After salvation the "first order of business" is sanctification, which is another way of saying becoming a mature Christian in Jesus Christ. To properly grow spiritually a believer must decide to do so. If the believer chooses to do so, the indwelling Holy Spirit will then assist the believer in reaching ever higher spiritual goals.

To become like Christ is a collaboration between the believer and the Holy Spirit. One of the important actions in this process is to stop thinking immaturely (about self) and to start thinking maturely (about others).

**ASK GOD TO PLACE SOMEONE ON YOUR HEART.
TAKE A MOMENT TO JUST THINK ABOUT THEM, THEIR
FEELINGS, STRUGGLES AND CONCERNS.
NOW MAKE A LIST OF THE WAYS THAT YOU CAN
ENCOURAGE THEM. NOW GO DO IT!**

Prayer:

God, I am convicted yet again of how much my stubborn heart insists on interpreting everything through the light of my own comfort, convenience, vanity, and pride. Father I repent of those selfish mind-patterns that steer me down the paths of self-righteousness and self-pity, and ask that You would give me the mind of Christ. Reset my auto-pilot to point more truly toward You, that I might know the freedom that comes from being Your slave — rather than my own. I ask all this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 24

TRANSFORMED BY TRUTH

Passage to Read:

Ex. 9-11 • Luke 24

Point to Ponder:

The truth transforms me.

Verse to Remember:

“If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” — John 8:31b–32 (KJV)

The truth transforms us.

Spiritual growth is the process of replacing lies with truth. Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.” 1 Sanctification requires revelation. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us like the Son of God. To become like Jesus, we must fill our lives with his Word. The Bible says, “Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.”

The Bible is far more than a doctrinal guidebook. God’s Word generates life, creates faith, produces change, frightens the Devil, causes miracles, heals hurts, builds character, transforms circumstances, imparts joy, overcomes adversity, defeats temptation, infuses hope, releases power, cleanses our minds, brings things into being, and guarantees our future forever!

Abiding in God’s Word

There are more Bibles in print today than ever before, but a Bible on the shelf is worthless. Millions of believers are plagued with spiritual anorexia, starving to death from spiritual malnutrition. To be a healthy disciple of Jesus, feeding on God’s Word must be your first priority.

I must accept its authority. The Bible must become the authoritative standard for my life: the compass I rely on for direction, the counsel I listen to for making wise decisions, and the benchmark I use for evaluating everything. The Bible must always have the first and last word in my life. Many of our troubles occur because we base our choices on unreliable authorities: culture (“everyone is doing it”), tradition (“we’ve always done it”), reason (“it seemed logical”), or emotion (“it just felt right”). All four of these are flawed by the Fall. What we need is a perfect standard that will never lead us in the wrong direction.

I must assimilate its truth. It is not enough just to believe the Bible; I must fill my mind with it so that the Holy Spirit can transform me with the truth. There are five ways to do this: You can receive it, read it, research it, remember it, and reflect on it.

I must apply its principles. Receiving, reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting on the Word are all useless if we fail to put them into practice. We fool ourselves when we assume that just because we have heard or read or studied a truth, we have internalized it. Without implementation, all our Bible studies are worthless.

Another reason we avoid personal application is that it can be difficult or even painful. It’s human nature to resist change, so applying God’s Word is hard work. This is why it is so important to discuss your personal applications with other people.

Develop the habit of writing down exactly what you intend to do. This action step should be personal (involving you), practical (something you can do), and provable (with a deadline to do it). Every application will involve either your relationship to God, your relationship to others, or your personal character.

ON MISSION

READY TO EXPERIENCE GOD IN A GLOBAL SETTING?

SCAN TO SIGN
UP FOR A
MISSION TRIP



Question to Consider:

What has God already told me in his Word that I haven't started doing yet?

Thought to Take Away:

Nothing can take the place of consistent consumption of God's Word for spiritual growth. It is absolutely pivotal in the process of sanctification, in becoming increasingly like Christ. Regular and persistent Bible reading, study, research and meditation must be followed by the believer if he would be transformed into the image (character) of Christ.

**WHAT HAS GOD ALREADY TOLD YOU TO DO IN HIS
WORD THAT YOU HAVEN'T STARTED DOING YET?
WRITE DOWN A FEW ACTION STATEMENTS THAT WILL
HELP YOU ACT ON WHAT YOU KNOW.**

Prayer:

God, I sometimes fear I'll treat truth like some families treat fine china: something too valuable to use, but rather collected to be admired in a glass case. Help me to hunger and thirst for righteousness, truth, and Your presence in my life so that I may both submit to and glorify Your Word. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 25

TRANSFORMED BY TROUBLE

Passage to Read:

Ex. 12-13 • Ps. 21 • Acts 1

Point to Ponder:

There is a purpose behind every problem.

Verse to Remember:

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” — Romans 8:28 (NIV)

God has a purpose behind every problem.

He uses circumstances to develop our character. In fact, he depends more on circumstances to make us like Jesus than He depends on our reading the Bible. The reason is obvious: You face circumstances twenty-four hours a day.

Jesus warned us that we would have problems in the world. No one is immune to pain or insulated from suffering, and no one gets to skate through life problem-free. Life is a series of problems. Every time you solve one, another is waiting to take its place. Not all of them are big, but all are significant in God's growth process for you.

God uses problems to draw you closer to Himself. It is during suffering that we learn to pray our most authentic, heartfelt, honest-to-God prayers. When we're in pain, we don't have the energy for superficial prayers.

Building Christlike Character

We are like jewels, shaped with the hammer and chisel of adversity. If a jeweler's hammer isn't strong enough to chip off our rough edges, God will use a sledgehammer. If we're really stubborn, he uses a jackhammer. He will use whatever it takes.

Every problem is a character-building opportunity, and the more difficult it is, the greater the potential for building spiritual muscle and moral fiber.

Responding to Problems as Jesus Would

Problems don't automatically produce what God intends. Many people become bitter, rather than better, and never grow up. You have to respond the way Jesus would.

Remember that God's plan is good. God knows what is best for you and has your best interests at heart. Whenever God says no to your request for relief, remember, “God is doing what is best for us, training us to live God's holy best.” It is vital that you stay focused on God's plan, not your pain or problem.

Refuse to give up. Be patient and persistent. Character building is a slow process. Whenever we try to avoid or escape the difficulties in life, we short-circuit the process, delay our growth, and actually end up with a worse kind of pain—the worthless type that accompanies denial and avoidance. When you grasp the eternal consequences of your character development, you'll pray fewer “*Comfort me*” prayers (“Help me feel good”) and more “*Conform me*” prayers (“Use this to make me more like you”).

You know you are maturing when you begin to see the hand of God in the random, baffling, and seemingly pointless circumstances of life.

PURSUIT

THERE IS RECOVERY AND REDEMPTION IN CHRIST!

SCAN TO SIGN UP
FOR THIS 12-STEP
RECOVERY
PROGRAM



Question to Consider:

What problem in my life has caused the greatest growth in me?

Thought to Take Away:

Every circumstance a Christian faces in life, good or bad, has been designed by God for his benefit, so believers should face them “in Christ” and rejoice in and thank God for them.

**WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE YOU FACING RIGHT NOW? DON'T ASK, “WHY ME?”
INSTEAD MAKE A LIST OF WHAT GOD WANTS YOU TO LEARN.**

Prayer:

God, I honestly don't know whether I have a harder time trusting You with great tragedies or petty annoyances. It seems so much of my time and energy is consumed with trying to protect myself (or my ego) from harm, or justifying my unwillingness to take up my cross and follow You. Father, save me from myself. Even if it hurts. I ask this in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who suffered so much for me. Amen.

DAY 26

GROWING THROUGH TEMPTATION

Passage to Read:

Ex. 14-16 • Acts 2

Point to Ponder:

Every temptation is an opportunity to do good.

Verse to Remember:

“God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.” — James 1:12 (NLT)

Every temptation is an opportunity to do good.

On the path to spiritual maturity, even temptation becomes a stepping-stone rather than a stumbling block when you realize that it is just as much an occasion to do the right thing as it is to do the wrong thing. Temptation simply provides the choice. While temptation is Satan’s primary weapon to destroy you, God wants to use it to develop you. Every time you choose to do good instead of sin, you are growing in the character of Christ.

To understand this, you must first identify the character qualities of Jesus. One of the most concise descriptions of his character is the fruit of the Spirit: *“When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”* To have the fruit of the Spirit is to be like Christ.

This next sentence is one of the most important spiritual truths you will ever learn: God develops the fruit of the Spirit in your life by allowing you to experience circumstances in which you’re tempted to express the exact opposite quality! Character development always involves a choice, and temptation provides that opportunity.

How Temptation Works

It helps to know that Satan is entirely predictable. He has used the same strategy and old tricks since Creation.

- In step one, Satan identifies a desire inside of you. It may be a sinful desire, like the desire to get revenge or to control others, or it may be a legitimate, normal desire, like the desire to be loved and valued or to feel pleasure.
- Step two is doubt. Satan tries to get you to doubt what God has said about the sin: Is it really wrong? Did God really say not to do it? Doesn’t God want me to be happy?
- Step three is deception. Satan is incapable of telling the truth and is called “the Father of lies.” Anything he tells you will be untrue or just half-true.
- Step four is disobedience. You finally act on the thought you’ve been toying with in your mind. What began as an idea gets birthed into behavior.

Overcoming Temptation

Understanding how temptation works is in itself helpful, but there are specific steps you need to take to overcome it.

Refuse to be intimidated. Many Christians are frightened and demoralized by tempting thoughts, feeling guilty that they aren’t “beyond” temptation. You will never outgrow temptation.

Recognize your pattern of temptation and be prepared for it. There are certain situations that make you more vulnerable to temptation than others.

Request God’s help. God wants you to ask Him for assistance in overcoming temptation. He says, *“Call on me in times of trouble. I will rescue you, and you will honor Me.”*

Temptations keep us dependent upon God. Just as the roots grow stronger when wind blows against a tree, so every time you stand up to a temptation you become more like Jesus.

NEXT STEPS

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHERE TO USE YOUR GIFTS IN SERVING?

SCAN TO
JOIN THE
DREAM
TEAM



Question to Consider:

What Christlike character quality can I develop by defeating the most common temptation I face?

Thought to Take Away:

Temptations are opportunities for Christians to make correct choices and thereby grow spiritually. The believer should never become discouraged when they fail to make the correct choice. God doesn't give-up on the believer; the believer can ultimately fail life's temptations by giving up on God, even though this will have no affect on their ultimate destination of heaven.

After each temptation, successfully defeated or not, the believer must become reinforced in their intent to defeat the next one by the power of the Holy Spirit working through them. The believer can expect nothing less than warfare with Satan throughout life, but they may be certain of the final and glorious outcome of eternity with God.

**CHOOSE A TEMPTATION YOU ARE FACING.
WHICH FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS GOD WORKING ON:
LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS,
FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, OR SELF- CONTROL?**

Prayer:

God, teach me to take responsibility for my own responses, rather than blaming others for provoking or tempting me. Help me to realize that my real problems come from my lack of faith in You, and inability to appropriate your grace. May I rejoice in my trials and persecution as opportunities to know you better, and bring you glory. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 27

DEFEATING TEMPTATION

Passage to Read:

Ex. 17-20 • Acts 3

Point to Ponder:

There is always a way out.

Verse to Remember:

“God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.” — I Corinthians 10:13b (NLT)

There is always a way out.

You may sometimes feel that a temptation is too overpowering for you to bear, but that’s a lie from Satan. God has promised never to allow more on you than He puts within you to handle it. He will not permit any temptation that you could not overcome. However, you must do your part too by practicing four biblical keys to defeating temptation.

Refocus your attention on something else. It may surprise you that nowhere in the Bible are we told to “resist temptation.” We are told to “resist the devil,”¹ but that is very different, as I’ll explain later. Instead, we are advised to refocus our attention because resisting a thought doesn’t work. It only intensifies our focus on the wrong thing and strengthens its allure. Let me explain:

Every time you try to block a thought out of your mind, you drive it deeper into your memory. By resisting it, you actually reinforce it. This is especially true with temptation. You don’t defeat temptation by fighting the feeling of it. The more you fight a feeling, the more it consumes and controls you. You strengthen it every time you think it.

Since temptation always begins with a thought, the quickest way to neutralize its allure is to turn your attention to something else. Don’t fight the thought, just change the channel of your mind and get interested in another idea. This is the first step in defeating temptation.

Reveal your struggle to a godly friend or support group.

You don’t have to broadcast it to the whole world, but you need at least one person you can honestly share your struggles with. God’s plan for your growth and freedom includes other Christians. Authentic, honest fellowship is the antidote to your lonely struggle against those sins that won’t budge.

Hiding your hurt only intensifies it. Problems grow in the dark and become bigger and bigger, but when exposed to the light of truth, they shrink. You are only as sick as your secrets. So take off your mask, stop pretending you’re perfect, and walk into freedom.

Resist the Devil. After we have humbled ourselves and submitted to God, we are then told to defy the Devil. How can we resist the Devil? Paul tells us, “*Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*” The first step is to accept God’s salvation. Second, you must use the Word of God as your weapon against Satan. Scripture is absolutely essential to defeating temptation. If you don’t have any Bible verses memorized, you’ve got no bullets in your gun!

Realize your vulnerability. God warns us never to get cocky and overconfident; that is the recipe for disaster. Given the right circumstances, any of us are capable of any sin. We must never let down our guard and think we’re beyond temptation. Don’t carelessly place yourself in tempting situations. Avoid them. Remember that it is easier to stay out of temptation than to get out of it.

COUNSELING

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WALK ALONE!

SCAN TO
CONNECT TO A
COUNSELOR



Question to Consider:

Who could I ask to be a spiritual partner to help me defeat a persistent temptation by praying for me?

Thought to Take Away:

The Christian is in partnership with God in defeating temptation in life. By not thinking too highly of oneself and submitting to the power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is then able to make proper decisions in defying Satan while (1) not dwelling on evil thoughts but turning to good ones, (2) soliciting the help of other believers in the struggle, (3) resisting the devil with the “helmet of salvation” and the Word of God, and (4) continuing in a humble state-of-mind (always recognizing his vulnerability).

**MAKE A LIST OF THE PEOPLE YOU CAN TURN TO
WHEN YOU ARE TEMPTED**

Prayer:

God, I pray for greater victories over besetting sins. I am grateful for the many wonderful people you have placed in my life who demonstrate the value of both holiness and grace in how they live. Help me to have the courage and determination to reach out to them for the grace I need in my times of weakness. I pray this in the precious name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY 28

IT TAKES TIME

Passage to Read:

Ex. 21-22 • Ps. 12 • Acts 4

Point to Ponder:

There are no shortcuts to maturity.

Verse to Remember:

“God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure He will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again.” — Philippians 1:6 (NCV)

There are no shortcuts to maturity.

It takes years for us to grow to adulthood, and it takes a full season for fruit to mature and ripen. The same is true for the fruit of the Spirit. The development of Christlike character cannot be rushed. Spiritual growth, like physical growth, takes time. While we worry about how fast we grow, God is concerned about how strong we grow. God views our lives from and for eternity, so He is never in a hurry.

Why Does It Take So Long?

Although God could instantly transform us, He has chosen to develop us slowly. Jesus is deliberate in developing His disciples. Just as God allowed the Israelites to take over the Promised Land “little by little” so they wouldn’t be overwhelmed, He prefers to work in incremental steps in our lives.

We are slow learners. We often have to relearn a lesson forty or fifty times to really get it. We have a lot to unlearn. Many people go to a counselor with a personal or relational problem that took years to develop and say, “I need you to fix me. I’ve got an hour.” They naïvely expect a quick solution to a long-standing, deep-rooted difficulty.

Growth is often painful and scary. There is no growth without change; there is no change without fear or loss; and there is no loss without pain. Every change involves a loss of some kind: You must let go of old ways in order to experience the new. We fear these losses, even if our old ways were self-defeating, because, like a worn out pair of shoes, they were at least comfortable and familiar.

Habits take time to develop. Remember that your character is the sum total of your habits. You can’t claim to be kind unless you are habitually kind—you show kindness without even thinking about it. There is only one way to develop the habits of Christlike character: You must practice them— and that takes time!

Don’t Get in a Hurry

As you grow to spiritual maturity, there are several ways to cooperate with God in the process.

Believe God is working in your life even when you don’t feel it. Spiritual growth is sometimes tedious work, one small step at a time. Expect gradual improvement.

Keep a notebook or journal of lessons learned. This is not a diary of events, but a record of what you are learning.

Be patient with God and with yourself. One of life’s frustrations is that God’s timetable is rarely the same as ours. We are often in a hurry when God isn’t.

Don’t get discouraged. Remember how far you’ve come, not just how far you have to go. You are not where you want to be, but neither are you where you used to be.

CLOSER DEVOTIONAL

LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD'S WORD

SCAN TO READ
THE CLOSER
DEVOTIONAL



Question to Consider:

In what area of my spiritual growth do I need to be more patient and persistent?

Thought to Take Away:

Spiritual growth is a lifetime commitment and process. The Christian must be patient with himself and with God in the endeavor. With proper faith in God and the exercise of proper choices in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, the Christian will continually be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Faith
focus
will
Christ



Feelings are to be the Christian's preparation of character, which they need to return to their eternal home. The Christian must always remember that God is not so much concerned with swiftness but in strength and stability in the sanctification process.

**WHAT AREAS OF YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH DO YOU
NEED TO BE MORE PATIENT AND PERSISTENT?**

Prayer:

God, I thank you that you are a master craftsman who delights in producing genuine works of art; not a cheap opportunist who does the minimum. It is sometimes hard to be the clay: getting thrown, carved, and fired. Yet I'm amazed at what You've made out of a pile of mud like me. Grant me the grace to pursue a life of obedience so that I may partake of the richness that only comes from vine-ripened fruit. I ask this in the name of the Vine Himself, Jesus Christ. Amen!

DAY 29

ACCEPTING YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Passage to Read:

Ex. 23-24 • Ps. 14 • Acts 5

Point to Ponder:

Service is not optional.

Verse to Remember:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” — Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

You were put on earth to make a contribution.

You weren’t created just to consume resources—to eat, breathe, and take up space. God designed you to make a difference with your life. While many best-selling books offer advice on how to “get” the most out of life, that’s not the reason God made you. You were created to add to life on earth, not just take from it. God wants you to give something back. This is God’s fourth purpose for your life, and it is called your “ministry,” or service.

You were created to serve God. The Bible says, “[God] has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.” These “good deeds” are your service. Whenever you serve others in any way, you are actually serving God and fulfilling one of your purposes.

You were saved to serve God. God redeemed you so you could do his “holy work.” You’re not saved by service, but you are saved for service. In God’s kingdom, you have a place, a purpose, a role, and a function to fulfill. This gives your life great significance and value.

You are called to serve God. Growing up, you may have thought that being “called” by God was something only missionaries, pastors, nuns, and other “full-time” church workers experienced, but the Bible says every Christian is called to service.⁹ Your call to salvation included your call to service. They are the same. Regardless of your job or career, you are called to full-time Christian service.

You are commanded to serve God. For Christians, service is not optional, something to be tacked onto our schedules if we can spare the time. It is the heart of the Christian life. Jesus came “to serve” and “to give”—and those two verbs should define your life on earth, too.

Serving is the opposite of our natural inclination. Most of the time we’re more interested in “serve us” than service. We say, “I’m looking for a church that meets my needs and blesses me,” not “I’m looking for a place to serve and be a blessing.” We expect others to serve us, not vice versa.

Preparing for Eternity

At the end of your life on earth you will stand before God, and he is going to evaluate how well you served others with your life. The Bible says, “Each of us will have to give a personal account to God.” Think about the implications of that. One day God will compare how much time and energy we spent on ourselves compared with what we invested in serving others.

Service and Significance

You are going to give your life for something. What will it be— a career, a sport, a hobby, fame, wealth? None of these will have lasting significance. Service is the pathway to real significance. It is through ministry that we discover the meaning of our lives.

God wants to use you to make a difference in his world. He wants to work through you. What matters is not the *duration* of your life, but the *donation* of it.

PRAYER

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER!

SCAN TO SHARE YOUR
PRAYER REQUEST OR
PRAISE REPORT



Question to Consider:

What is holding me back from accepting God's call to serve him?

Thought to Take Away:

All events (creation, salvation, calling and authority) in a Christian's life were intended for him to serve God through his distinct and unique God-given ministry to believers and mission to the lost in the world. It is the only way a Christian can fully mature spiritually, to experience and enjoy life to its fullest, and to accrue eternal awards.

**MAKE A LIST OF THE THINGS THAT ARE KEEPING YOU
FROM ACCEPTING GOD'S CALL TO SERVE HIM.**

NOW REMOVE EVERY OBSTACLE.

Prayer:

God, I do believe that my true happiness comes in giving my life away, not trying to save it. Help me to meditate on your Word, and your Name, so that I might understand how to truly live a life of sustainable service. Not powered by guilt or shame, but by Love. I ask this in the Name of Jesus, by whom all things are possible, Amen.

DAY 30

SHAPED FOR SERVING GOD

Passage to Read:

Ex. 25-27 • Acts 6

Point to Ponder:

I was shaped for serving God.

Verse to Remember:

“God works through different men in different ways, but it is the same God who achieves his purposes through them all.” — I Corinthians 12:6 (Ph)

You were shaped to serve God.

God formed every creature on this planet with a special area of expertise. Some animals run, some hop, some swim, some burrow, and some fly. Each has a particular role to play, based on the way they were shaped by God. The same is true with humans. Each of us was uniquely designed, or “shaped,” to do certain things.

God never wastes anything. He would not give you abilities, interests, talents, gifts, personality, and life experiences unless he intended to use them for his glory. By identifying and understanding these factors you can discover God’s will for your life.

How God Shapes You for Your Ministry

Whenever God gives us an assignment, he always equips us with what we need to accomplish it. This custom combination of capabilities is called your **SHAPE**:

- Spiritual gifts
- Heart
- Abilities
- Personality
- Experience

SHAPE: Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts

God gives every believer spiritual gifts to be used in ministry. These are special God-empowered abilities for serving him that are given only to believers. Neither do you get to choose which gifts you’d like to have; God determines that. Because God loves variety and he wants us to be special, no single gift is given to everyone. Your spiritual gifts were not given for your own benefit but for the benefit of others, just as other people were given gifts for your benefit.

SHAPE: Listening to Your Heart

The Bible uses the term heart to describe the bundle of desires, hopes, interests, ambitions, dreams, and affections you have. Your heart represents the source of all your motivations—what you love to do and what you care about most.

Another word for heart is passion. There are certain subjects you feel passionate about and others you couldn’t care less about. Some experiences turn you on and capture your attention while others turn you off or bore you to tears. These reveal the nature of your heart.

How do you know when you are serving God from your heart? The first telltale sign is *enthusiasm*. When you are doing what you love to do, no one has to motivate you or challenge you or check up on you. You do it for the sheer enjoyment.

The second characteristic of serving God from your heart is effectiveness. Whenever you do what God wired you to love to do, you get good at it.

Figure out what you love to do—what God gave you a heart to do—and then do it for his glory

COUNSELING

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WALK ALONE!

SCAN TO
CONNECT TO
COUNSELING



Question to Consider:

In what way can I see myself passionately serving others and loving it?

Thought to Take Away:

God specifically designed each believer for a unique ministry (to believers) and mission (to the lost) that only that person can accomplish. In order for the believer to achieve God's will in his life, he first must identify it. This can be done by examining five factors that make up the believer's life, two of which (spiritual gifts and heart) are examined in this chapter.

**WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS?
TAKE A SPIRITUAL GIFTS SURVEY AND CONFIRM
THESE GIFTS BY ASKING A FRIEND.
LIST YOUR TOP 5 SPIRITUAL GIFTS BELOW**

Prayer:

God, I thank you for all the ways you've gifted me. You know the passions and dreams of my heart better than I do. You also know the times I've used them for selfish gain, as well as the times I've hid them under a bushel. Father, teach me to offer myself as a living sacrifice to you, that as your servant I may be truly free. I ask this in Jesus name, and for Your glory, Amen.

DAY 31

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SHAPE

Passage to Read:

Ex. 28-29 • Acts 7

Point to Ponder:

Nobody else can be me.

Verse to Remember:

“God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God’s many kinds of blessings.” — I Peter 4:10 (LB)

Only you can be you.

God designed each of us so there would be no duplication in the world. No one has the exact same mix of factors that make you unique. That means no one else on earth will ever be able to play the role God planned for you.

SHAPE: Applying Your Abilities

Your abilities are the natural talents you were born with.

All of our abilities come from God. Even abilities used to sin are God-given; they are just being misused or abused. Since your natural abilities are from God, they are just as important and as “spiritual” as your spiritual gifts. The only difference is that you were given them at birth.

Every ability can be used for God’s glory. God has a place in His church where your specialties can shine and you can make a difference. It’s up to you to find that place.

What I’m able to do, God wants me to do. You are the only person on earth who can use your abilities. No one else can play your role, because they don’t have the unique shape that God has given you. The Bible says that God equips you *“with all you need for doing his will.”* To discover God’s will for your life, you should seriously examine what you are good at doing and what you’re not good at.

SHAPE: Using Your Personality

We don’t realize how truly unique each of us is. When God made you, He broke the mold. There never has been, and never will be, anybody exactly like you. It feels good to do what God made you to do. When you minister in a manner consistent with the personality God gave you, you experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness.

SHAPE: Employing Your Experiences

You have been shaped by your experiences in life, most of which were beyond your control. In determining your shape for serving God, you should examine at least six kinds of experiences:

- *Family* experiences: What did you learn growing up in your family?
- *Educational* experiences: What were your favorite subjects in school?
- *Vocational* experiences: What jobs have you been most effective in and enjoyed most?
- *Spiritual* experiences: What have been your most meaningful times with God?
- *Ministry* experiences: How have you served God in the past?
- *Painful* experiences: What problems, hurts, thorns, and trials have you learned from?

It is this last category, painful experiences, that God uses the most to prepare you for ministry. God never wastes a hurt! In fact, your greatest ministry will most likely come out of your greatest hurt.

You will be most effective when you use your spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of your heart’s desire, and in a way that best expresses your personality and experiences.

NEXT STEPS

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHERE TO USE YOUR GIFTS IN SERVING?

SCAN TO
JOIN THE
DREAM
TEAM



Question to Consider:

What God-given ability or personal experience can I offer to my church?

Thought to Take Away:

Using one's S-H-A-P-E is the secret of both fruitfulness and fulfillment in ministry. A believer will be most effective when they use their spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of their heart's desire, and in a way that best expresses their personality and experiences. The better the fit, the more successful the believer will be.

**MAKE A LIST OF YOUR NATURAL ABILITIES (TALENTS
YOU WERE BORN WITH)
HOW THEY CAN BE USED TO BLESS THE CHURCH?**

Prayer:

Father, I confess that I am quick to either denigrate my SHAPE because it is not as good as others or idolize my SHAPE by using it for my own glory.

Please remind me that my ultimate purpose is to glorify a loving God. I admit that sometimes this is a hard truth to swallow — part of me would rather focus on glorifying my personality and attributes.

The good news, however, is that if I submit all these things to You, you will make me more like Christ-- more of the person you intended me to be. So be it! Amen and Amen.

DAY 32

USING WHAT GOD GAVE YOU

Passage to Read:

Ex. 30-32 • Acts 8

Point to Ponder:

God deserves my best.

Verse to Remember:

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” — II Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

God deserves your best.

He shaped you for a purpose, and He expects you to make the most of what you have been given. When you attempt to serve God in ways you're not shaped to serve, it feels like forcing a square peg into a round hole. It's frustrating and produces limited results. It also wastes your time, your talent, and your energy.

Discover Your Shape

Don't let another day go by. Start finding out and clarifying what God intends for you to be and do. Begin by assessing your gifts and abilities. Take a long, honest look at what you are good at and what you're not good at. Make a list. Ask other people for their candid opinion. Spiritual gifts and natural abilities are always confirmed by others.

The best way to discover your gifts and abilities is to experiment with different areas of service. Many books get the discovery process backwards. They say, “Discover your spiritual gift and then you'll know what ministry you're supposed to have.” It actually works the exact opposite way. Just start serving, experimenting with different ministries, and then you'll discover your gifts.

Consider your heart and your personality. Ask yourself questions: What do I really enjoy doing most? When do I feel the most fully alive? What am I doing when I lose track of time? Do I like routine or variety? Do I prefer serving with a team or by myself? Am I more introverted or extroverted?

Examine your experiences and extract the lessons you have learned. Review your life and think about how it has shaped you. Forgotten experiences are worthless; that's a good reason to keep a spiritual journal. We rarely see God's good purpose in pain or failure or embarrassment while it is happening.

Accept and Enjoy Your Shape

Since God knows what's best for you, you should gratefully accept the way He has fashioned you. Part of accepting your shape is recognizing your limitations. Nobody is good at everything, and no one is called to be everything. You will find that people who do not understand your shape for ministry will criticize you and try to get you to conform to what they think you should be doing. Ignore them.

Keep Developing your Shape

Jesus' parable of the talents illustrates that God expects us to make the most of what He gives us. If you don't exercise your muscles, they weaken and atrophy. In the same way, if you don't utilize the abilities and skills God has given you, you will lose them. Whatever gifts you have been given can be enlarged and developed through practice.

In heaven we are going to serve God forever. Right now, we can prepare for that eternal service by practicing on earth. We're getting ready for eternal responsibilities and rewards.

CLOSER DEVOTIONAL

LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD'S WORD

SCAN TO READ
THE CLOSER
DEVOTIONAL



Question to Consider:

How can I make the best use of what God has given me?

Thought to Take Away:

It is important for a Christian to conform to his S-H-A-P-E in order to be fulfilled and fruitful in His service to God. Because every believer has a different “shape,” every Christian performs a different aspect of God’s overall ministry.

The Christian must learn what makes him uniquely qualified for his ministry to God through self-evaluation, learning from others and through service. It is then his responsibility to be content with the way God has made and equipped him for service, making certain that he doesn’t compare himself to others or conform himself to the expectations of others.

EXTRACTING THE LESSONS FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES TAKES TIME. TAKE AN ENTIRE WEEKEND FOR A LIFE REVIEW RETREAT, WHERE YOU PAUSE TO SEE HOW GOD HAS WORKED IN THE VARIOUS DEFINING MOMENTS OF YOUR LIFE AND CONSIDER HOW HE WANTS TO USE THOSE LESSONS TO HELP OTHERS.

Prayer:

Father, I thank you that you have not only blessed me with spiritual gifts but with parents, pastors, and other leaders who have invested in me and modeled how to serve. Lord, I've been blessed with far more than I have the ability to use wisely on my own. Grant me the wisdom to know your will, and the courage to do it. Grant me also friends and co-laborers to help me along the way. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 33

HOW REAL SERVANTS ACT

Passage to Read:

Ex. 33-34 • Ps. 16 • Acts 9

Point to Ponder:

I serve God by serving others.

Verse to Remember:

“If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of My followers, you will surely be rewarded.”
— Matthew 10:42 (NLT)

We serve God by serving others.

The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige, and position. In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept. Jesus, however, measured greatness in terms of service, not status. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve, not how many people serve you.

Thousands of books have been written on leadership, but few on servanthood. Everyone wants to lead; no one wants to be a servant. Even Christians want to be “servant-leaders,” not just plain servants. But to be like Jesus is to be a servant. That’s what he called himself.

While knowing your shape is important for serving God, having the heart of a servant is even more important. Without a servant’s heart, you will be tempted to misuse your shape for personal gain. You will also be tempted to use it as an excuse to exempt yourself from meeting some needs. Your shape reveals your ministry, but your servant’s heart will reveal your maturity.

Real servants make themselves available to serve. Servants don’t fill up their time with other pursuits that could limit their availability. They want to be ready to jump into service when called on. If you only serve when it’s convenient for you, you’re not a real servant. Real servants do what’s needed, even when it’s inconvenient.

Real servants pay attention to needs. Servants are always on the lookout for ways to help others. We miss many occasions for serving because we lack sensitivity and spontaneity. Great opportunities to serve never last long.

Real servants do their best with what they have. Servants don’t make excuses, procrastinate, or wait for better circumstances. God expects you to do what you can, with what you have, wherever you are. Less-than-perfect service is always better than the best intention.

Real servants do every task with equal dedication. Whatever they do, servants “do it with all their heart.” The size of the task is irrelevant. The only issue is, does it need to be done? Small tasks often show a big heart. Great opportunities often disguise themselves in small tasks.

Real servants are faithful to their ministry. Servants finish their tasks, fulfill their responsibilities, keep their promises, and complete their commitments. They don’t leave a job half undone, and they don’t quit when they get discouraged.

Real servants maintain a low profile. Servants don’t promote or call attention to themselves. Instead of acting to impress and dressing for success, they “put on the apron of humility, to serve one another.” If recognized for their service, they humbly accept it but don’t allow notoriety to distract them from their work.

Even the smallest service is noticed by God and will be rewarded.

NEXT STEPS

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHERE TO USE YOUR GIFTS IN SERVING?

SCAN TO
JOIN THE
DREAM
TEAM



Question to Consider:

Which of the six characteristics of real servants offers the greatest challenge to me?

Thought to Take Away:

A believer's priority in life should be to please God by serving others, an activity that depends not so much on one's S-H-A-P-E but on one's servant heart (character) coupled with God-given opportunities (no matter their size) that will never fail to come.

Real servants make themselves available to every need, they are vigilant to the needs around them, they do their best with what they have, they are dedicated no matter the size of the task, they are faithful in keeping their word and commitments, and they require no attention from man in the process.

WHICH OF THE SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL SERVANTS OFFERS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE TO YOU AND WHY?

Prayer:

Father God, you know my heart. You know that part of me genuinely longs to serve You, and fulfill Your purposes for me and those I love and serve. Yet You also know that much of my heart still seeks to serve itself, and use the gifts You've given me for my own selfish gratification. Father, have mercy on me. Save me from myself. Help me to die to my desire to ignore the needs of others in favor of what makes me look or feel good. Help me to find true satisfaction in living for You. Only then will I find true happiness. I ask all this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 34

THINKING LIKE A SERVANT

Passage to Read:

Ex. 35-36 • Acts 10

Point to Ponder:

To be a servant I must think like a servant.

Verse to Remember:

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

Service starts in your mind.

To be a servant requires a mental shift, a change in your attitudes. God is always more interested in why we do something than in what we do. Attitudes count more than achievements. Real servants serve God with a mindset of five attitudes.

Servants think more about others than about themselves. Servants focus on others, not themselves. This is true humility: not thinking less of ourselves but thinking of ourselves less. They are self-forgetful. Paul said, “Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.” This is what it means to “lose your life”— forgetting yourself in service to others. When we stop focusing on our own needs, we become aware of the needs around us.

Servants think like stewards, not owners. Servants remember that God owns it all. Servanthood and stewardship go together, since God expects us to be trustworthy in both. To become a real servant you are going to have to settle the issue of money in your life. Living for ministry and living for money are mutually exclusive goals. Money has the greatest potential to replace God in your life. More people are sidetracked from serving by materialism than by anything else.

Servants base their identity in Christ. Because they remember they are loved and accepted by grace, servants don’t have to prove their worth. They willingly accept jobs that insecure people would consider “beneath” them. If you’re going to be a servant, you must settle your identity in Christ. Only secure people can serve. Insecure people are always worrying about how they appear to others. The more insecure you are, the more you will want people to serve you, and the more you will need their approval. When you base your worth and identity on your relationship to Christ, you are freed from the expectations of others, and that allows you to really serve them best.

Servants think about their work, not what others are doing. They don’t compare, criticize, or compete with other servants or ministries. They’re too busy doing the work God has given them. Competition between God’s servants is illogical for many reasons: We’re all on the same team; our goal is to make God look good, not ourselves; we’ve been given different assignments; and we’re all uniquely shaped.

Servants think of ministry as an opportunity, not an obligation. They enjoy helping people, meeting needs, and doing ministry. They “*serve the Lord with gladness.*” Why do they serve with gladness? Because they love the Lord, they’re grateful for his grace, they know serving is the highest use of life, and they know God has promised a reward.

Imagine what could happen if just 10 percent of all Christians in the world got serious about their role as real servants. Imagine all the good that could be done. Are you willing to be one of those people?

BIBLE STUDY

JUMP INTO THE WORD TOGETHER!

WOMEN 1ST & 3RD WED @ 7P

MEN 2ND & 4TH WED @ 7P

SCAN FOR
WOMENS
BIBLE STUDY



SCAN FOR
MENS BIBLE
STUDY



Question to Consider:

Am I usually more concerned about being served or finding ways to serve others?

Thought to Take Away:

To be a real servant requires right thinking. To “think right” is to humbly and continuously think (1) more about others than about oneself, (2) like a steward and not an owner, (3) about one’s own work and not the work of others, (4) as a secure and approved child of God “in Christ,” and (5) that every service to God is an opportunity and not a legalistic obligation.

THINKING LIKE A SERVANT MEANS YOU ARE NOT AN
OWNER BUT A STEWARD.
MAKE A LIST OF THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU
STEWARD.
HOW CAN YOU GIVE GOD EVEN GREATER GLORY WITH
THESE THINGS?

Prayer:

Father, help me to be a servant. Grant me a pure heart, that I may see You. Remind me that the only satisfaction to the longings of my heart is to die to myself for the sake of others. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 35

GOD'S POWER IN YOUR WEAKNESS

Passage to Read:

Ex. 37-38 • Ps. 19 • Acts 11

Point to Ponder:

God works best when I admit my weakness.

Verse to Remember:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” — II Corinthians 12:9a (NIV)

God loves to use weak people.

Everyone has weaknesses. In fact, you have a bundle of flaws and imperfections: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. You may also have uncontrollable circumstances that weaken you, such as financial or relational limitations. The more important issue is what you do with these. Usually we deny our weaknesses, defend them, excuse them, hide them, and resent them. This prevents God from using them the way he desires.

God has never been impressed with strength or self-sufficiency. In fact, he is drawn to people who are weak and admit it. Jesus regarded this recognition of our need as being “poor in spirit.” It’s the number one attitude he blesses.

When you think of the limitation in your life, you may be tempted to conclude, “God could never use me.” But God is never limited by our limitations.

Admit your weaknesses. Own up to your imperfections. Stop pretending to have it all together, and be honest about yourself. If you want God to use you, you must know who God is and know who you are. Many Christians, especially leaders, forget the second truth: We’re only human! If it takes a crisis to get you to admit this, God won’t hesitate to allow it, because He loves you.

Be content with your weaknesses. We want to be freed from our weaknesses, not be content with them! But contentment is an expression of faith in the goodness of God. It says, “God, I believe you love me and know what’s best for me.”

Paul gives us several reasons to be content with our inborn weaknesses. First, they cause us to depend on God. Our weaknesses also prevent arrogance. They keep us humble. Our weaknesses also encourage fellowship between believers. Most of all, our weaknesses increase our capacity for sympathy and ministry.

Honestly share your weaknesses. Ministry begins with vulnerability. The more you let down your guard, take off your mask, and share your struggles, the more God will be able to use you in serving others. Paul modeled vulnerability in all his letters. He openly shared

- His failures: “When I want to do good, I don’t, and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.”
- His feelings: “I have told you all my feelings.”
- His frustrations: “We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it.”
- His fears: “When I came to you, I was weak and fearful and trembling.”

Glory in your weaknesses. Paul said, “I am going to boast only about how weak I am and how great God is to use such weakness for His glory.” Instead of posing as self-confident and invincible, see yourself as a trophy of grace. Sometimes, however, God turns a strength into a weakness in order to use us even more.

PURSUIT

THERE IS RECOVERY AND REDEMPTION IN CHRIST!

SCAN TO SIGN UP
FOR THIS 12-STEP
RECOVERY
PROGRAM



Question to Consider:

Am I limiting God's power in my life by trying to hide my weaknesses? What do I need to be honest about in order to help others?

Thought to Take Away:

Only when a believer is willing to sacrifice (false) self-esteem and risk the loss of popularity by admitting to himself and others that they are weak and imperfect are they then able to be properly dependent upon God.

To arrive at this position of self-recognition and submission, a believer must admit to, accept, unveil and delight in God's design for their life, which includes their weaknesses (limitations). This process will then take the spotlight off of them and transfer its focus upon God, the real and genuine power in the Christian's life.

MAKE A LIST OF SOME OF
YOUR PERSONAL WEAKNESSES.
HOW CAN GOD BE GLORIFIED IN THESE WEAKNESSES?

Prayer:

Lord, I am frequently appalled by my selfishness, self-righteousness, slothfulness, and pride — and I probably don't even know the half of it! Yet, you know my weaknesses even better than I do, but you still love me and believe in me. Not because of any intrinsic competence of my own, but because I am Your child. And because I am Your child, I can dare to dream big dreams — as long as they are Your dreams. Father help me to surrender my dreams to You so that I become more dependent on Your wisdom and power. Help me to focus on being obedient and humble. Help me to faithfully do my part, and let You do Yours. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 36

MADE FOR A MISSION

Passage to Read:

Ex. 39-40 • Ps. 15 • Acts 12

Point to Ponder:

I was made for a mission.

Verse to Remember:

Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
— Matthew 28:19–20 (NIV)

You were made for a mission.

God is at work in the world, and He wants you to join Him. This assignment is called your mission. Your ministry is your service to believers, and your mission is your service to unbelievers. Our English word *mission* comes from the Latin word for “sending.” Being a Christian includes being sent into the world as a representative of Jesus Christ. The mission Jesus had while on earth is now our mission because we are the Body of Christ. What is that mission? Introducing people to God!

The Importance of Your Mission

Fulfilling your life mission on earth is an essential part of living for God’s glory. The Bible gives several reasons why your mission is so important.

Your mission is a continuation of Jesus’ mission on earth. As His followers, we are to continue what Jesus started. Jesus calls us not only to *come* to Him, but to *go for* Him. In the Great Commission Jesus said, “*Go to the people of all nations and make them My disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you.*” This is your commission from Jesus, and it is not optional.

Your mission is a wonderful privilege. Although it is a big responsibility, it is also an incredible honor to be used by God. Your mission involves two great privileges: working with God and representing Him.

Telling others how they can have eternal life is the greatest thing you can do for them. We have the greatest news in the world, and sharing it is the greatest kindness you can show to anyone.

Your mission has eternal significance. It will impact the eternal destiny of other people, so it’s more important than any job, achievement, or goal you will reach during your life on earth. The consequences of your mission will last forever; the consequences of your job will not. Nothing else you do will ever matter as much as helping people establish an eternal relationship with God.

Your mission gives your life meaning. The truth is, only the kingdom of God is going to last. Everything else will eventually vanish. If you fail to fulfill your God-given mission on earth, you will have wasted the life God gave you.

God’s timetable for history’s conclusion is connected to the completion of our commission. When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission in the world. He said in essence, “The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I’ve given you. Focus on that!”

What It Costs to Fulfill Your Mission

To fulfill your mission will require that you abandon your agenda and accept God’s agenda for your life.

If you want to be used by God, you must care about what God cares about; what he cares about most is the redemption of the people He made. He wants his lost children found! Nothing matters more to God.

NEXT STEPS

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WHERE TO USE YOUR GIFTS IN SERVING?

SCAN TO
JOIN THE
DREAM
TEAM



Question to Consider:

What fears have kept me from fulfilling the mission God made me to accomplish? What keeps me from telling others the Good News?

Thought to Take Away:

Besides ministering to other believers, a Christian must fulfill his mission in life. His mission is shared by all believers, which is to reach out to the lost in this world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing is dearer to the heart of God than bringing those of His creation back to Him through Christ.

Nothing is a greater privilege or brings more fulfillment for the believer than to bring the lost to Christ. And nothing will accrue greater or more rewards for the believer in all eternity than completing his mission by bringing lost souls to the saving knowledge of and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHO ARE SOME OF THE PEOPLE GOD HAS PLACED IN YOUR LIFE WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM? MAKE A LIST AND BEGIN TO PRAY FOR THEM AND LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION WITH THEM

Prayer:

Father, I confess that I have too often disregarded your mandate(s) for the sake of my own comfort and convenience. Teach me what it means to die to my own agenda, and have a genuine heart for the needs of others – most especially their need for salvation. May everything I do be for Your glory, and the good of others. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 37

SHARING YOUR LIFE MESSAGE

Passage to Read:

Lev. 1-3 • Acts 13

Point to Ponder:

God wants to say something to the world through me.

Verse to Remember:

“Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect.” — 1 Peter 3:15b-16 (TEV)

God has given you a Life Message to share.

When you became a believer, you also became God’s messenger. God wants to speak to the world through you. You may feel you don’t have anything to share, but that’s the Devil trying to keep you silent. You have a storehouse of experiences that God wants to use to bring others into his family.

Your Life Message has four parts to it:

1. Your testimony: the story of how you began a relationship with Jesus
2. Your life lessons: the most important lessons God has taught you
3. Your godly passions: the issues God shaped you to care about most
4. The *Good News*: the message of salvation

Your Life Message includes your testimony. Your testimony is the story of how Christ has made a difference in your life. This is the essence of witnessing—simply sharing your personal experiences regarding the Lord. Sharing your testimony is an essential part of your mission on earth because it is unique.

The best way to “be ready” is to write out your testimony and then memorize the main points. Divide it into four parts:

1. What my life was like before I met Jesus
2. How I realized I needed Jesus
3. How I committed my life to Jesus
4. The difference Jesus has made in my life

Of course, you have many other testimonies besides your salvation story. You should make a list of all the problems, circumstances, and crises that God has brought you through. Then be sensitive and use the story that your unbelieving friend will relate to best.

Your Life Message includes your life lessons. The second part of your life message is the truths that God has taught you from experiences with him. These are lessons and insights you have learned about God, relationships, problems, temptations, and other aspects of life.

Your Life Message includes sharing your godly passions.

God is a passionate God. He passionately loves some things and passionately hates other things. As you grow closer to him, he will give you a passion for something he cares about deeply so you can be a spokesman for him in the world. It may be a passion about a problem, a purpose, a principle, or a group of people.

Your Life Message includes the Good News. What is the Good News? “The Good News shows how God makes people right with himself—that it begins and ends with faith.” The Good News is that when we trust God’s grace to save us through what Jesus did, our sins are forgiven, we get a purpose for living, and we are promised a future home in heaven.

The eternal salvation of a single soul is more important than anything else you will ever achieve in life. Only people are going to last forever.

DISCIPLESHIP

BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS THROUGH INTENTIONAL STUDY

SCAN TO
GET CONNECTED
TO DISCIPLESHIP



Question to Consider:

As I reflect on my personal story, who does God want me to share it with?

Thought to Take Away:

Every believer has the privilege, the opportunity and the responsibility of sharing his personal life message with others on earth, which is composed of his testimony (salvation experience), his life lessons (personal insights from experiences with God), his godly passions (personal God-given concerns in life), and the sharing of the gospel message with unbelievers.

Although all four components are important, nothing supercedes the believer's efforts to bring the lost to Jesus Christ by means of sharing the salvation message, which is faith alone in Christ alone.

**TAKE A MOMENT TO WRITE YOUR TESTIMONY:
BEFORE I MET CHRIST, MY LIFE WAS....**

NOW THAT I KNOW CHRIST, MY LIFE IS....

Prayer:

God, I thank you for the amazing things you've done in my life. Forgive me for losing sight of all that you've done for me. I marvel at the great depth of your grace that continues to satisfy the great depths of my sin. May my life continue to be a testimony of your wondrous love to all those around me. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 38

BECOMING A WORLD-CLASS CHRISTIAN

Passage to Read:

Lev. 4-6 • Acts 14

Point to Ponder:

The Great Commission is my commission.

Verse to Remember:

“Send us around the world with the news of your saving purpose and your eternal plan for all mankind.”
— Psalm 62:7 (LB)

The Great Commission is your commission.

You have a choice to make. You will be either a world-class Christian or a worldly Christian. Worldly Christians look to God primarily for personal fulfillment. They are saved, but self-centered. Their prayers focus on their own needs, blessings, and happiness. They want to use God for their purposes instead of being used for his purposes. In contrast, world-class Christians know they were saved to serve and made for a mission. World-class Christians are the only fully alive people on the planet. Which type of Christian do you want to be?

It has never been easier in history to fulfill your commission to go to the whole world. The great barriers are no longer distance, cost, or transportation. The only barrier is the way we think.

How to Think Like a World-Class Christian

Shift from self-centered thinking to other-centered thinking. The only way we can make this paradigm switch is by a moment-by-moment dependence on God. Begin asking the Holy Spirit to help you to think of the spiritual need of unbelievers whenever you talk to them. Your goal is to figure out where others are in their spiritual journey and then do whatever will bring them a step closer to knowing Christ.

Shift from local thinking to global thinking. The first way to start thinking globally is to begin praying for specific countries. World-class Christians pray for the world. What should you pray for? The Bible tells us to pray for opportunities to witness, for courage to speak up, for those who will believe, for the rapid spread of the message, and for more workers. You should also pray for missionaries and everyone else involved in the global harvest.

Another way to develop global thinking is to read and watch the news with “Great Commission eyes.” Wherever there is change or conflict, you can be sure that God will use it to bring people to him.

The best way to switch to global thinking is to just get up and go on a short-term mission project to another country! There’s simply no substitute for hands-on, real life experience in another culture. I urge you to save and do whatever it takes to participate in a short-term mission trip overseas as soon as possible. It will enlarge your heart, expand your vision, stretch your faith, deepen your compassion, and fill you with a kind of joy you have never experienced. It could be the turning point in your life.

Shift from “here and now” thinking to eternal thinking. To make the most of your time on earth, you must maintain an eternal perspective. This will keep you from majoring on minor issues and help you distinguish between what’s urgent and what’s ultimate.

You’ve probably heard the expression “You can’t take it with you”—but the Bible says you can send it on ahead by investing in people who are going there!

Shift from thinking of excuses to thinking of creative ways to fulfill your commission. Many Christians have missed God’s plan for their lives because they have never even asked God if he wanted them to serve as a missionary somewhere. Whether out of fear or ignorance, they have automatically closed their minds to the possibility of serving as a resident missionary in a cross-cultural location.

If you want to be like Jesus, you must have a heart for the whole world. You can’t be satisfied with just your family and friends coming to Christ.

ON MISSION

READY TO EXPERIENCE GOD IN A GLOBAL SETTING?

SCAN TO SIGN
UP FOR A
MISSION TRIP



Question to Consider:

What steps can I take to prepare to go on a short-term missions experience this year?

Thought to Take Away:

Every believer has a choice of either existing as a worldly Christian (thinking only of self) or as a world-class Christian (thinking of others). It all depends on their thought processes.

If they will shift from self-centered to other-centered, from local to global, from temporal to eternal, and from excuse-laden to creative thinking about their place and mission on earth; they will mature into a world-class Christian. This is every believer's personal call from God.

**SHIFT FROM THINKING OF EXCUSES TO THINKING OF
CREATIVE WAYS TO FULFILL YOUR COMMISSION.
MAKE A LIST OF THE WAYS YOU WILL COMMIT TO
MAKING A DIFFERENCE GLOBALLY.**

Prayer:

Father, glorify Your name in all the earth. Watch over all those who serve, especially in lands where the Good News is feared and hated. Guard their hearts and their families from fear, dissension, and confidence in the flesh. May they — may we — never lose sight of the fact that we are ultimately the fruits of Your mission to us. I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 39

Passage to Read:

Point to Ponder:

Verse to Remember:

BALANCING YOUR LIFE

Lev. 7-9 • Acts 15

Blessed are the balanced.

“Live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life, but as those who do.” — Ephesians 5:15 (Ph)

Blessed are the balanced; they shall outlast everyone.

One of the events in the summer Olympics is the pentathlon. The pentathlete's goal is to succeed in all five areas, not just one or two. Your life is a pentathlon of five purposes, which you must keep in balance. These purposes were practiced by the first Christians in Acts 2, explained by Paul in Ephesians 4, and modeled by Jesus in John 17, but they are summarized in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission of Jesus. These two statements sum up what this book is all about—God's five purposes for your life:

1. **“Love God with all your heart”:** You were planned for God's pleasure, so your purpose is to love God through *worship*.
2. **“Love your neighbor as yourself”:** You were shaped for serving, so your purpose is to show love for others through *ministry*.
3. **“Go and make disciples”:** You were made for a mission, so your purpose is to share God's message through *evangelism*.
4. **“baptize them into . . .”:** You were formed for God's family, so your purpose is to identify with his church through *fellowship*.
5. **“teach them to do all things . . .”:** You were created to become like Christ, so your purpose is to grow to maturity through *discipleship*.

A great commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will make you a great Christian.

Keeping these five purposes in balance is not easy. We all tend to overemphasize the purposes we feel most passionate about and neglect the others. But you can keep your life balanced and on track by joining a small group for accountability, by regularly evaluating your spiritual health, by recording your progress in a personal journal, and by passing on what you learn to others.

Talk it through with a spiritual partner or small group. The best way to internalize the principles in this book is to discuss them with others in a small-group setting. I also encourage you to do personal Bible study.

Give yourself a regular spiritual check-up. The best way to balance the five purposes in your life is to evaluate yourself periodically.

Write down your progress in a journal. The best way to reinforce your progress in fulfilling God's purposes for your life is to keep a spiritual journal. This is not a diary of events, but a record of the life lessons you don't want to forget.

Pass on what you know to others. If you want to keep growing, the best way to learn more is to pass on what you have already learned. Now that you understand the purpose of life, it is your responsibility to carry the message to others. God is calling you to be his messenger.

It's All for God's Glory

The reason we pass on what we learn is for the glory of God and the growth of his kingdom. God wants us to introduce people to Christ, bring them into his fellowship, help them grow to maturity and discover their place of service, and then send them out to reach others, too. This is what purpose-driven living is all about.

CLOSER DEVOTIONAL

LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD'S WORD

SCAN TO READ
THE CLOSER
DEVOTIONAL



Question to Consider:

Which of the four activities will I begin in order to stay on track and balance God's five purposes for my life?

Thought to Take Away:

The ideal objective for every Christian is to live a balanced spiritual life, one in balance with his five purposes in life—please God through worship, love others through fellowship, become like Christ through discipleship, serve others through ministry, and witness to the lost through mission.

This can best be achieved by participating in small groups of believers for the purposes of reinforcement and accountability, by regularly evaluating one's spiritual health, by recording one's spiritual progress in a personal journal, and by passing on to others one's spiritual and life lessons.

WHICH OF THE FIVE PURPOSES ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH THE MOST AND WHY?

WHICH OF THE FOUR ACTIVITIES WILL YOU BEGIN IN ORDER TO BETTER BALANCE THE PURPOSES YOU NEED THE MOST HELP WITH IN YOUR LIFE?

Prayer:

God, I don't want to just be checking the boxes, or striving to live up to the legalistic letter of the law. On the other hand, neither do I want to just drift on the sea of my emotions and biases. Father, I want to be radically centered on you, living out the whole gospel with my whole heart, experiencing and fulfilling all of your purposes for me. Remind me of my commitments to you, and help me to take full advantage of all the resources you have given to help me live up to them. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 40

LIVING WITH PURPOSE

Passage to Read:

Lev. 10-12 • Acts 16

Point to Ponder:

Living with purpose is the only way to really live..

Verse to Remember:

“David... served the purpose of God in his own generation.” — Acts 13:36 (NASB)

Living on purpose is the only way to really live. Everything else is just existing.

Most people struggle with three basic issues in life. The first is identity: “Who am I?” The second is importance: “Do I matter?” The third is impact: “What is my place in life?” The answers to all three questions are found in God’s five purposes for you. There are many “good” things you can do with your life, but God’s purposes are the five essentials you must do. Unfortunately, it’s easy to get distracted and forget what is most important. To prevent this, you should develop a purpose statement for your life and then review it regularly.

What Is a Life Purpose Statement?

It’s a statement that summarizes God’s purposes for your life. In your own words you affirm your commitment to God’s five purposes for your life. It’s a statement that points the direction of your life. Writing down your purposes on paper will force you to think specifically about the path of your life. A life purpose statement not only spells out what you intend to do with your time, life, and money, but also implies what you aren’t going to do.

It’s a statement that defines “success” for you. It states what you believe is important, not what the world says is important. It clarifies your values.

It’s a statement that clarifies your roles. You will have different roles at different stages in life, but your purposes will never change.

It’s a statement that expresses your shape. It reflects the unique ways God made you to serve him.

Take your time writing out your life purpose statement. Don’t try to complete it in a single setting, and don’t aim for perfection in your first draft; just write down your thoughts as fast as they come to you. It is always easier to edit than to create. Here are five questions you should consider as you prepare your statement:

Life’s Five Greatest Questions

What will be the center of my life? This is the question of *worship*. Who are you going to live for? What are you going to build your life around? How do you know when God is at the center of your life? When God’s at the center, you worship. When he’s not, you worry.

What will be the character of my life? This is the question of *discipleship*. What kind of person will you be? God is far more interested in what you are than what you do.

What will be the contribution of my life? This is the question of *service*. What will be your ministry in the Body of Christ?

What will be the communication of my life? This is the question of your *mission* to unbelievers. Your mission statement is a part of your life purpose statement. It should include your commitment to share your testimony and the Good News with others.

What will be the community of my life? This is the question of *fellowship*. How will you demonstrate your commitment to other believers and connection to the family of God?

As you consider your answers to these questions, include any Scriptures that speak to you about each of these purposes. It may take you weeks or months to craft your life purpose statement just the way you want it. In addition to writing a detailed life purpose statement, it is also helpful to have a shorter statement or slogan that summarizes the five purposes for your life in a way that’s memorable and inspires you.

BAPTISM

AN OUTWARD SIGN OF AN INWARD CHANGE!

SCAN TO
SIGN UP FOR
BAPTISM



God Wants to Use You

Imagine what it is going to be like one day, with all of us standing before the throne of God presenting our lives in deep gratitude and praise to Christ. Together we will say, "Worthy, Oh Master! Yes, our God! Take the glory! the honor! the power! You created it all; It was created because you wanted it!" We will praise Him for his plan and live for His purposes forever!

Question to Consider:

When will I take the time to write down my answers to life's five greatest questions? When will I put my purpose on paper?

Thought to Take Away:

Only by understanding and fulfilling God's five purposes can the believer be blessed. To assist the believer in "staying on track" and not forgetting the purposes, it is helpful for the believer to write out a detailed purpose statement, which describes each goal as it applies to the believer's personal life.

Each day the believer should review the statement and live his life accordingly. By doing so, he will be achieving results that will have eternal value.

**CREATE YOUR PURPOSE STATEMENT BY WRITING OUT
THE ANSWERS TO THE FIVE PURPOSES**

Prayer:

God, I thank you that you have called me for a purpose — for many purposes, actually. I thank you for the different ways you've revealed that to me in the past, as well as the ways I know you'll make it clearer to me in the years ahead. Father, help me to live live radically centered on you and your truth, that I may accomplish your purposes for my generation, and bring you glory for generations to come. I ask all these things in name of Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord, who fulfilled your purpose for Him (and us) on the cross.

AS A PART OF THIS JOURNEY, YOU HAVE
FREE ACCESS TO PASTOR CONWAY'S
MASTERCLASS: "KNOWING YOUR
WHY/FINDING YOUR PURPOSE"

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS COURSE AT YOUR
OWN PACE. ADDITIONAL 'KNOW YOUR WHY'
RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE AT YOUR CAMPUS
AND ONLINE AT:
VISITONECC.COM/40-DAYS-OF-PURPOSE.

KNOW YOUR WHY - PART 1

75% OF PEOPLE ARE
LOOKING FOR MEANING
IN LIFE



Participate in this session for wisdom on how to
know what God has specifically called you to do.
Part of your purpose is what we are all called to:

- Make disciples
- Love one another

This course is about finding your unique calling.

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT GOD
WANTS TO DO, YOU HAVE TO
LOOK AT WHAT GOD HAS DONE.



KNOW YOUR WHY - PART 2

HOW DO YOU KNOW
FOR SURE WHAT
GOD HAS CALLED
YOU TO DO?

When God saved you He could've taken you up to heaven but He did not. Why did he leave you on earth? Because He has a clear, intentional plan for your life that is customized to you.





visitonecc.com/40-days-of-purpose

Adapted from Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life

