



*This Journal Belongs To:*

I'm honored that you have joined me for our 21 days of prayer and fasting as we begin this new year together. It all started with prayer! That moment when 120 believers gathered together after they heard the compelling words of Jesus to be witnesses to the ends of the world, the first thing they did was pray. The story of Renovation Church was birthed through prayer walks around Topsail High School of what could be. From the very beginning, prayer has been at the core of who we are as a church family. We are a church that believes in the power of prayer, which is why every year we collectively take time as a faith community to pray and fast together, in community with each other!

I believe what God has for us to accomplish in reaching every, man, woman, and child will only be accomplished if we prioritize prayer. I can't wait to see what God has for us as we DEVOTE ourselves to Him in 2024. I fully believe that for us to accomplish the mission and vision of reaching every man, woman, and child, it is going to require us being fully devoted followers of Jesus!

Don't miss this collective season of prayer and fasting for the things God wants to accomplish in and through our lives as we serve Jesus faithfully in 2024! I believe there's no better time than now to have a fresh start, and I'd love to invite you to participate in 21 days of prayer and fasting at any time. You can find out more about prayer and fasting by visiting [www.renochurch.org/21days](http://www.renochurch.org/21days).

May God bless our new year as we remain DEVOTED to Jesus!

Pastor Jonathan Cockrell

# MESSAGE NOTES



# DEVOTED TO GOD

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## DAY ONE



### DEVOTION TO GOD

*Deuteronomy 6: 4-9; Psalm 16:7-9*

When the Israelites, God's chosen people, were in the wilderness, God showed them what it would look like to be a people set apart for Him. Moses was given over 600 laws to set in place, guardrails for His people to live a life devoted to Him. These laws were summed up by two commands—Love God with everything you are and love others. However, as we all know, this is harder than it appears. Devotion to God takes just that: devotion, a dedication to live a moment-by-moment, hour-by-hour, day-by-day confession of faith, dying to self while putting the things of God first and foremost.

The good news? He hasn't left us with just a list of rules to get it right. Instead, in His amazing grace and mercy, He sent us Jesus, not only as an example to be followed but as a Savior to be adored. Dwelling on the gospel, remembering Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, our hearts can't help but be devoted to this Heavenly Father and Jesus the Son. Who else has given all so that we might be reconciled to our Creator? Who else deserves our whole heart, mind, and strength?

Your devotion to Him is in direct proportion to your understanding of this gospel. As you pray today, dwell on the wonder of Jesus' miraculous birth, the implausible awe of His sinless life, the audacity and pain of His death, and the joy and amazement of His resurrection. He did this FOR YOU. What you do is a result of the overflow of gratitude for this good news, this gospel.



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## DAY TWO



### THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

*Mark 12:28 - 39: Luke 14:7-14*

Throughout the gospels we see Jesus being questioned by the religious elite repeatedly. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes were suspicious of this man who claimed to be the Messiah, and they constantly tried to trap Him and condemn Him. In Mark 12, Jesus endured questioning from these various groups. One of the scribes seems to be watching the debate, and impressed with the way Jesus answered them, he inserts himself in the conversation and asks, “What’s the most important commandment?” Jesus, the very fulfillment of these commandments the scribe referred to, quoted the Shema, a Jewish confession of faith—one spoken for generations both morning and night. The Shema, which means to “hear” or to “listen,” was spoken to ground God’s chosen people in the importance of devotion to God and God alone. It begins with the reminder that the Lord is One. There is no other god other than Yahweh. Therefore, the response of His creation should be to love God with all they are—their entire heart, their entire being, their entire ability first and foremost. Second only to the first command is to love others. The scribe agreed with Jesus and effectively shut down further questions and debates.

It’s easy to read these encounters with Jesus and be appalled at the audacity of the scribes to question the Messiah, yet it may be worth our time to ask how we might be questioning the validity of Jesus’ authority today. For example, if Jesus proclaimed the greatest command is to love God and love others, where does that leave all our selfish motives? How often do we place our wants and desires above the needs of others? How many times do we serve others with an expectation of recognition or honor? Are we sacrificing an eternal exaltation to receive immediate praise?



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## DAY THREE

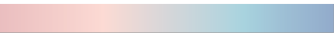


### THE RICH YOUNG RULER

*Mark 10:17 - 22*

The external posture of the rich young ruler was exactly as it should have been. He ran up and knelt before Jesus, recognizing Him as someone who could offer salvation. Yet while the rich young ruler was correctly positioned physically, his heart's position told a different story. We are reminded that physical posture alone is not sufficient for true devotion. The rich young ruler knew the right and common answers when it came to the law. Yet, he lacked a complete understanding. He took the laws at surface level, as a list of do's and don'ts rather than recognizing their deeper meaning. Something was blocking the way to his understanding. There was something that stole his affections. The rich young ruler's love was directed elsewhere. The external display of reverence masked an internal struggle which was a divided heart, one that was torn between the world and his devotion to God.

As Christ's followers, we are called to examine our hearts. It's impossible to serve God and something else - anything else. Anything we think we need, outside of Christ, is simply an idol that is getting in the way of our devotion to Him, and like the rich young ruler, our response will be to walk away grieved. The good news? The opposite is true as well. A life wholly devoted to God is one that comes with complete joy. A joy that can not be given by anything else, nor can it be taken from us through anything else. A life wholly devoted to God transcends the fleeting pleasures this world provides. A life wholly devoted to God not only fills our hearts with joy but also spills over, impacting those around us.



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## DAY FOUR



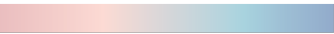
### HEART

*Proverbs 4:23; Ezekiel 36:26-27*

What comes to mind when you think of “heart”? Is it your emotions? Your will? Your desires or motivations? Or do you only think of your heart in the physical sense? Why does one word create so much confusion? In the commandment to love God, the heart is listed first in order, implying that it is of top priority. It may be best to think of the heart as our will, that which guides and directs us in the decisions we make, whether to continue in sin or to choose obedience.

When God renovates our hearts, (our will and our emotions) our desires and motivations begin to be dominated by His heart, His will, His emotions, His desires, and motivation. As Dallas Willard tells us in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, “Single-minded and joyous devotion to God and His will, to what God wants for us - and to service to Him and others because of Him - is what the will transformed into Christlikeness looks like.” No longer are we merely interested in our desires. No longer are we ruled by emotions such as anger, jealousy, pride, or greed. Instead, our stony hearts are made soft. Our perspectives change from self-centeredness to an eternal one.

How does this heart change take place? This is a miracle in and of itself! The book of Jeremiah also warns us that the heart is deceitful above all else and is outside of our understanding. Yet the One who made us knows our hearts intimately. The One Who created us knows our lack and can replace it with abundance. His forgiveness and redemption are sure.



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## DAY FIVE



### DWELL AND DO

*Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8-9; Ephesians 6:10-18*

A profound shift occurs when we dwell on God's Word and on the truth of who He is and all He has done for us. As we begin to meditate on this truth, our entire lives, bit by bit, begin to be changed. We remove false notions, we distinguish between the common and the uncommon, and we discern what thoughts have become polluted and tainted by the world. We shift our gaze to what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. These attributes become the standard for us instead of the alternate.

Loving God with all our mind and soul involves more than passive acknowledgment of who He is; it requires an intentional and active engagement with His Word and character. The mind is a battlefield where thoughts of doubt, fear, and negativity can take root, hindering our spiritual growth. When left unchecked, our mind can serve as a runaway train, succumbing to every fear and anxious thought. But when we dwell on God's truth, we arm ourselves against these attacks, allowing His Word to shape our perspectives and decisions.

The practice of dwelling implies more than a fleeting thought—it suggests a continuous, intentional focus. Just as a home is a place of comfort and security, God desires our minds to be a dwelling place for His truth. As we immerse ourselves in Scripture, prayer, and meditation, we create a space where God's truth takes root and flourishes. The practice of dwelling leads to doing. We begin to put into practice what we have learned. As we fill our minds with truth, truth is the natural outcome of our actions.

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## DAY SIX



### STRENGTH

*Exodus 40; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

In the second century, a heresy developed that claimed all matter was bad and only the soul or the spirit was of significance. But a life devoted to God includes loving Him with all our strength, and our strength relates directly to our physical bodies. Loving God with all our strength involves an active and intentional engagement of our physical bodies for His glory. It's an invitation to live our lives in a way that reflects our commitment to Him. Our strength is a gift from God, and using it to honor Him is an expression of gratitude.

Devotion to God with all our strength begins with acknowledging that every ability, skill, and resource we possess is ultimately His. Our physical strength and creative talents are all gifts from the Creator. Recognizing this truth transforms the way we approach our daily lives, inspiring us to steward our strengths for His Kingdom, aligning them with His plans and purposes. Our very bodies are His tabernacle, the place the Holy Spirit indwells.

Loving God with all our strength puts hands and feet to our devotion. Our talents and skills are instruments of strength that God has entrusted to us. Whether it's through music, art, leadership, hospitality, or any other skill, using these abilities for His glory is an act of devotion. When we employ our talents in ways that reflect His character and share His love, we fulfill the command to love God with all our strength.





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## DAY SEVEN



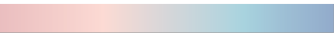
### SUFFERING SERVANT

*Hebrews 12:1-4; Acts 1:8; 7:54-60; Romans 8:18*

In our full devotion to God, we are not promised a trial- and tribulation-free life. The road is often marked by challenges and hardships. However, we are encouraged by the lives of those who have gone before us, suffering for the sake of Christ. We look to heroes of faith such as Stephen, the first martyr, the apostle Paul, the apostle Peter who was also martyred, and even those who to this day have endured persecution, even to the point of death. How did they do this? By fixing their eyes on Jesus, the perfecter of faith, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him. Suffering, while a difficult aspect of our devotion to God, is intricately woven into the fabric of our faith. In his book *J-Curve: Dying and Rising with Jesus in Everyday Life*, author Paul Miller reminds us of Jesus' call to discipleship: "Don't just believe this gospel but enter into this life of suffering love I'm modeling for you."

If we don't trade the instant gratification of what we can see and feel for what lies ahead, there is an unimaginable glory that awaits us, a glory that is for all eternity. In our devotion to God, we find peace and solace in knowing that our suffering is not in vain but, rather, a precursor to the unparalleled joy that awaits us in His presence.

Take comfort in knowing that the suffering we encounter in our devotion to God is not wasted, even as we wait for the eternal reward that is ahead. Our suffering in the here and now refines us, shapes us, and deepens our dependence on Him. As we run the race with endurance, we discover that our faith is strengthened in trials. Suffering becomes a testimony of God's sustaining grace and our unwavering commitment to follow Him.



Remember that in His grace and mercy, no matter what we face, we have been saved from the worst thing that could ever happen to us.

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# MESSAGE NOTES



**DEVOTED  
TO  
OTHERS**

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## DAY EIGHT



### LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

*1 John 4:7-8; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

We love because God first loved us. Our capacity to love others is an overflow of the love we have first experienced from God. The good news is that there is no limit to this love. His love is inconceivable, and try as we might, we can't put a value on it. As we live a life devoted to Him, loving Him with all our heart, soul, and strength, our capacity to love others grows—often beyond our understanding. When we recognize the mercy and grace that have been bestowed upon us, our natural reaction is to bestow mercy and grace to others.

To assess the purity of our motives in loving others, it's a good practice to examine the source of our love. Are we loving others out of a genuine desire to reflect God's love, or are there hidden agendas seeking personal gain or validation? Pure motives are rooted in selfless love, seeking the well-being of others without expecting anything in return.

One practical measure is to align our actions with the characteristics of love outlined in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is patient and kind; it does not envy or boast, and it is not self-seeking. Reflecting on these attributes can serve as a litmus test for the authenticity of our motives. If our actions exhibit impatience, unkindness, envy, or selfishness, we may need to reevaluate the source of our love.

Ultimately, loving others is a continuous journey of growth and refinement. As we abide in God's love, allowing it to permeate every aspect of our lives, our love for others becomes a natural outpouring of the abundant love we have received from Him. May our love reflect His grace, drawing others closer to the source of all love—our Heavenly Father.

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## DAY NINE



### HOSPITALITY

*Genesis 18:1-8; Leviticus 19:9-10; 33-34; Hebrews 13:1-2*

Just the mention of the word “hospitality” stirs up different responses within people. For some, it may be delight, and for others, it may cause anxiety and dread. However, hospitality at its core is a biblical mandate directly tied to loving others. In the Old Testament, laws were set in place to ensure hospitality was met. The Israelites were commanded to care for the resident alien who was living among them. In Genesis, Abraham extended hospitality to three strangers, rushing to get them bread and water and providing rest for them, and Hebrews uses his story to remind us to show hospitality to strangers in this way because we may be entertaining angels without being aware.

Our devotion to God is mirrored in the way we open our hearts and spaces to those around us. Just as God graciously welcomes us into His presence, we are called to reflect this hospitality in the way we interact with others. As a matter of fact, many of the parables of Jesus highlight the significance of showing kindness to strangers, reinforcing the idea of welcoming others. By practicing hospitality, we create sacred spaces where love, compassion, and fellowship can flourish, echoing the unconditional love God showers upon us.

Hospitality is a tangible expression of the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. When we extend hospitality, we not only offer physical nourishment but also provide a safe place for those who are weary. In cultivating a spirit of hospitality, we align ourselves with the heart of God, fostering an environment where His love is evident and His grace is experienced through our actions. Hospitality is not merely a social nicety but a sacred practice intricately linked to our devotion to the One who first welcomed us.





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## DAY TEN



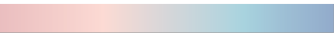
### ACCOUNTABILITY

*Genesis 3:1-6; Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15*

The most loving thing a person can offer to another is accountability. The most loving thing Adam could have done for Eve (and all humanity) would have been to step in between Eve and the serpent to remind her of God's truth and promise. Instead, Adam stood by and watched. Accountability means we bear one another's burdens. When one of us hurts, we all hurt. When one of us rejoices, we all rejoice. Accountability is not about judgment or condemnation but about encouraging, correcting, and spurring one another toward deeper commitment and obedience to God's Word.

The early Church was familiar with accountability. Accountability went hand-in-hand with fellowship. The early Church treated one another as family, and just as a family member would and should warn another family member of any impending doom that may lie ahead, we have a responsibility to our fellow church body members to encourage and exhort them to remain steadfast. The most loving thing we can do is to support one another in this way.

Accountability is a natural outflow of the unity of believers, where the health and well-being of one of its members affect the entire body. Exhortation (the emphatic urging of someone to participate in something) is a benefit for Christ followers. Exhortation can pull us out of the mundane and closer to God. It causes us to recognize areas of our spiritual walks that we may overlook. As you grow in the grace of Jesus, the excitement of your maturity becomes a benefit to those around you. Likewise, others who are growing in their faith become an encouragement to you.



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## DAY ELEVEN



### ONE ANOTHER

*Genesis 2:18-25; Isaiah 53:3*

Devotion to God is a constant dying to ourselves for the sake of one another. There are over 50 “one another” commands in the Bible. The majority of “one anothers” are positive; love one another, admonish one another, and be devoted to one another are just a few examples. Perhaps it’s because the Christian’s spiritual walk is not meant to be singular. We were created to enjoy one another, help one another, and share one another’s burdens and moments of celebration. Our hearts crave the “one another”; in fact, before God created Eve, Adam felt this craving. Unfortunately, the craving for companionship has been tainted by sin. What God determined to be good in the creation of Adam’s wife has become inwardly focused, and we sinfully view others as a commodity for our pleasure. This wasn’t the example Jesus set for us.

Using Jesus as the model for the way we serve and love one another, we see instances when Jesus was exhausted (John 4:6) yet gave up His time to interact with others. He was betrayed by one in His inner circle, yet knowing what was about to happen, He washed his feet. He knew His friendship would be denied by Peter when the going got tough, yet He prayed for the best outcome for His friend (Luke 22:31-32).

Can we say the same? Or do we seek escape when we are stressed, tired, overwhelmed, and overworked? When someone intends to do us harm either in word or deed, do we lovingly serve them, or do we look for ways to retaliate and convince ourselves they have gotten what’s coming to them when they fall on hard times? When others speak harshly of us, either in truth or lies, do we gossip or tarnish their reputations in our circle of friends, or do we pray for them that they will come to know God and see Him more clearly?

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## DAY TWELVE



### TIME

*Ephesians 5:15-21*

Devotion to God is not confined to the quiet moments of prayer and reflection; it is put into action when we serve others. James 2:17 beautifully captures this truth, stating that faith without works is dead. Our devotion to God is displayed when our faith is translated into action, especially in the way we serve our community.

Service to others becomes a tangible expression of our love for God. Mark 10:45 reminds us of the goal of Jesus' ministry: to serve and not to be served. His entire mission was an example of humility for the sake of others. When we actively serve those around us, we mirror the heart of Christ. Whether it's helping a neighbor, volunteering, or supporting someone in need, our devotion to God takes on flesh when we serve. And it costs something, our time.

Serving sacrificially will mean we show up regardless of our already busy schedules, regardless of appreciation or accolades. The apostle Paul encourages us in Galatians 5:13, saying, "Serve one another humbly in love." Our service, when done in humility and love, becomes a powerful testament to our devotion to God. The sacrificial allocation of our time is a precious offering in our devotion to God. Time is a commodity often scarce in our fast-paced lives, and how we spend it reveals the true priorities of our hearts. Sacrificing time for others speaks volumes about our commitment to living out the gospel. It may involve investing quality moments in meaningful conversations, mentoring someone in their faith journey, or simply being present for those who need our attention.

As we serve and sacrifice, we echo the love of our Savior, Who selflessly gave Himself for us. In this, our devotion takes on a lived reality, impacting the world around us for the glory of God.



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## DAY THIRTEEN



### TALENTS

*1 Corinthians 12:4-31*

Each of us is given natural gifts and abilities, and when we surrender our lives to Christ, the Holy Spirit gives us gifts to be used to serve Him. Our devotion to God is entangled with the way we utilize and invest the unique talents and abilities He has bestowed upon each of us. These gifts are not random but are purposefully given according to God's grace and wisdom to contribute to His kingdom and bring glory to His name.

Devotion to God requires us to be faithful stewards of these gifts. It involves recognizing, developing, and using our talents in a manner that aligns with His plan and purpose. Our gifts may vary, but the call to faithful stewardship remains constant.

First and foremost, God's desire is for us to use our gifts to serve others and build up the body of Christ, His Church. 1 Peter 4:10 reminds us, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." Whether our gifts are in leadership, teaching, mercy, encouragement, hospitality, or any other area, they are meant to be the avenue through which we show God's love and grace to the world.

Identifying our gifts and discerning how to use them may require introspection, prayer, and seeking guidance from other believers. As we devote ourselves to God, it becomes a spiritual discipline to continuously explore and utilize the gifts He has entrusted to us.

Our devotion to God is not merely a sentiment expressed through words; it is a lived commitment revealed through the intentional use of our God-given gifts. God desires to see the multiplication of His gifts in our lives for the advancement of His kingdom.





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## DAY FOURTEEN



### TREASURES

*Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 13:24-52*

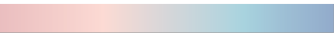
We are told to store up treasures in heaven where they can't be destroyed, but is that easier said than done? The Kingdom of Heaven can be a bit of a mystery. How do we devote ourselves to something we can't see? How do we know the investment of our treasures is adding up to anything at all? Fortunately, in Matthew 13 Jesus gives us a glimpse into the mystery of the kingdom of Heaven. Matthew tells us the kingdom of heaven is like good seed sown with bad seed, the smallest of seeds, a little yeast mixed into a large amount of flour, and a treasure to be sacrificed for.

Our treasures are a reflection of our hearts and a tangible expression of our devotion to God. Our treasures are minuscule and seemingly insignificant, but like the smallest of seeds, when God uses our treasures, they are multiplied and become boundless.

Generosity becomes a powerful demonstration of our devotion to God. 1 Timothy 6:18-19 encourages believers to "do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

It's essential to evaluate the motives behind our generosity. Are we giving to receive recognition or to fulfill a sense of duty, or are we giving out of genuine love for God and others? Pure motives in generosity flow from a heart devoted to God, seeking to emulate the sacrificial love of Jesus on the cross.

As we intentionally use our resources to love and serve others, we participate in the divine narrative of redemption. These things cannot be taken from us; they are imprinted in eternity.



Confess the times you believed the here and now to be of utmost importance. Ask Him to change the way you view your time here on earth.

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# MESSAGE NOTES



**DEVOTED  
TO  
GROW**





## DAY FIFTEEN



### SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

*1 Timothy 4:7-8*

Spiritual disciplines are the fuel that feeds the fire of our faith. Prayer, worship, scripture study, meditation and memorization, and all the other habits that assist in your spiritual formation are essential to developing your heart, soul, and strength in devotion to God. Relationships simply are not matured and refined without attention, and your relationship with God is no different. As you spend time in His Word, reflecting on His truth, you begin to form a better view and understanding of who He is and who you are in relation to Him.

We don't spend our time and attention in the spiritual disciplines merely to achieve legalistic righteousness. Our hearts are not transformed by merely checking off a to-do item on a list. Our hearts, our souls, which were created to love and adore God, thirst for Him and the renewal only He can provide. Only Jesus can truly satisfy our desires. No amount of "soul care" apart from devotion to our Sustainer will fulfill us. This is where loving God with all our strength comes into play. Spiritual disciplines take strength and willpower, a giving up of something for what is better. It means we need to reframe our time, our perspective, and sometimes even our personal comfort to grow in Christlikeness.



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## DAY SIXTEEN



### PRAYER

*Colossians 4:2-6*

Our devotion to God is expressed in the way in which we communicate with Him. It is not merely in the words we say, although our words should reflect our understanding of His holiness, but perhaps it is also in the way our hearts are attuned to Him. Prayer, a conversation with God, is a two-way expression, a back and forth. In his book *Answering God*, Eugene Peterson reminds us that our prayers are in response to Him: "What is essential in prayer is not that we learn to express ourselves, but that we learn to answer God." God first spoke to us, and it is only because of His undying affection that we can respond to Him.

Prayer positions our hearts properly before Him. Prayer reminds us that we are not the gods we have made ourselves out to be. We are created beings, and we will not be at peace until we submit to His will.

Our prayers are not merely a laundry list of our wants and our desires. Although we are free to approach His Throne with our desires, as we grow in our devotion to God, we approach Him first with worship and praise, honoring Him the best way we know how. We praise Him for all He has done and promised to do. We remember His many attributes, His sovereignty, His compassion, His omniscience. We declare His goodness and look for all the ways He has been merciful and gracious to us, and even in this we confess our many failings and ask for His forgiveness, knowing that He is faithful to forgive again and again. As we continue in prayer, we thank God for all He has done, is doing, and will do, being full of assurance that He is always working on our behalf and for our good.



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## DAY SEVENTEEN



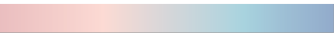
### SCRIPTURE

*Colossians 3:16-17*

Imagine serving a God Who didn't reveal Himself through Scripture. Imagine blindly following an entity that was chiefly unknown to us, a complete and utter mystery. And yet, when we ignore mining the Bible for all its worth, treasuring the Word of God, that is exactly what we are doing. Time spent in the Word of God is an investment with an immeasurable payoff. God's Word does not return void (Isaiah 55:11); it reveals an understanding of the world that we are unable to find elsewhere.

Throughout all of scripture, we are surprised and delighted when we find the paradox of His plan, when what we sense to be real is rattled by truth. God did not leave us alone! His plan is good! His promises are true! And yet, how can we know His promises without studying the revealed Word He has given us? A life devoted to God includes taking advantage of knowing Him more through the Bible.

Devote yourself to it and its commands. Labor over the confusing parts, struggle through the antiquity, ask of it whatever you need to—it's able to stand up to your questions and ignorance. Don't put it aside for something easier to comprehend or live by. Ask any person who has spent time devoted to studying scripture and they will gush on about the treasure found within its pages—the joy in the narrative, the peace in its poetry, the gentleness of its conviction, and the love of its gospels.



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## DAY EIGHTEEN



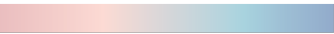
### PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

*2 Timothy 2: 8-13*

A spiritual discipline that is often overlooked is the simple process of preaching the gospel to yourself. The benefit of this practice comes in the way of a rich devotion to God. When we meditate on the various ways our sin has been atoned for, our perspective shifts and we grow in gratitude. Once we define the gospel as the best thing that has ever happened to us or could happen to us, the hundreds of daily annoyances and irritations become opportunities to see possibilities of redemption.

Practically, preaching the gospel to yourself begins with remembering the sin that has caused the need for the gospel message. Your own sin and the sin of others have caused so much grief unfixable by our efforts. We needed something more. Jesus, fully man and fully God, was born through a miraculous birth. While He was tempted in every way, He did not sin. Try as much as we can, we are unable to keep from sinning for even just an hour, yet this man, feeling human pain and suffering, experiencing hurt and rejection, did not succumb to temptation. Then, having done nothing wrong, Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned. Willingly, He went to the cross in our place. Amazingly, three days after they laid His lifeless body in the tomb, He rose again. He appeared to and ate with others, proving His bodily resurrection. And then He ascended into heaven where He intercedes on our behalf to God the Father.

Preaching the gospel to yourself corrects your posture and position. It reminds you that the things you have done are not the end of the story but an opportunity for grace and mercy to redeem those things and bring glory to your Heavenly Father. It reminds us that while we are not sufficient in ourselves, there is one with all sufficiency who sees, hears, and responds.



Today as you pray, think through each aspect of the gospel and how the gospel covers all your disappointments and your failings. Thank Him for its completeness. Thank Him for His redemption and reconciliation. Use Psalm 143:1-6 to remind you that His gospel, the work of the Cross, has excused you of any judgement you deserve.

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## DAY NINETEEN



### WORSHIP

#### *Revelation 4*

Often in Western Christianity, worship becomes something reserved for a corporate setting on Sundays. In the Bible, the word “worship” and the word “serve” are used interchangeably. We serve God when we worship Him, and we worship God when we serve Him. In the Old Testament, worship was done through the sacrifices of His people, and this was done both corporately and individually. In joy, in sorrow, in celebration, and through hardship, worship should be our response. Worship is the overflow and outpouring of our understanding of Who God is and all He has done for us. It is a response to Him; that in and of itself is a mystery and miracle. Who are we that we should even be able to worship? And yet God, in His love for His creation, welcomes us to do so.

Worship is eternal. Worship is constant. We are always worshipping something. However, more times than not and in a million different ways, our worship is misdirected. It is spent on the created, rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). True worship denies the self and focuses on what has been done on our behalf.

Corporate worship, worship that we participate in weekly with our church body, should focus on the holy adoration of God only. It’s not based on our likes or dislikes, our preferences in styles, or our talent. Instead, we come to church expectant, prepared ahead of time for the worship, not merely as if it is a social hour but as if it were a chance to celebrate and exalt our Creator and Redeemer, a sacred time. It’s not an “opening act” for what is to come in our gathering; instead, it should be viewed as the stage that is set for our devotion to and adoration of how the Holy Spirit will enlighten us through all the other elements of our gathering, such as prayer, the message, and giving.

[illegible]



## DAY TWENTY



### SABBATH

*Isaiah 58:13-14; Mark 2:23-28*

Sabbath, like most other spiritual disciplines, has been misused and abused, all the way back to the time of Jesus. The Sabbath is a time of worship and delight unfortunately viewed by many as cumbersome and burdensome. But this is not the case! Jesus reminds us that Sabbath is for man and not man for the Sabbath.

We as the created were designed to live under God's sovereignty, and the Sabbath reminds us of that fact. When we fail to Sabbath, we begin to mistakenly believe that we do not need rest. We begin to believe that if we stop and rest, everything will crumble. In reality, we make ourselves gods of our surroundings. The Sabbath prioritizes our devotion to Him. It reminds us that nothing escapes His sovereignty.

Sabbath teaches us a different way. It teaches us to trust. It reminds us that everything we have, all our talents and abilities, is given to us by God Who is all-knowing and all-present. His plans have never failed, and they aren't going to start failing now. There is something sweet and freeing in giving over our time to Him in a rhythm of Sabbath and realizing that we are indeed able to trust Him when He asks us to keep the Sabbath holy to Him. The Sabbath is a celebration of all God has done and will do. It is a culmination of our work and worship of His goodness that allows us to rest and rejuvenate.

Our devotion to God includes submission to His rule and reign, and Sabbath is the perfect ordained practice to remember this fact. It is a break from the normal routine which challenges our false notion that submission to the world's demands are necessary.



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# MESSAGE NOTES



# DEVOTED TO WORSHIP

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## DAY TWENTY-ONE



### FULLY DEVOTED

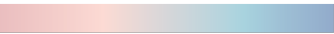
*Psalm 66; Jude 3, 24*

Joy is the outcome of devotion to God. It is not based on a fleeting feeling or emotion but, rather, on a deep understanding of the gospel. Joy multiplies and flourishes within the day-by-day, moment-by-moment devotion of loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength and in the way we love others as we have been loved.

Joy doesn't waver when we don't get our way, when we have been hurt by others, or by the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It doesn't diminish in one season or another. On the contrary, it grows and strengthens especially as we walk through the difficult seasons. It's during those times of difficulty when we feel as if our joy is tested, that it would serve us well to press into our devotion, to assess where we might be lacking and, by God's grace, submit our willfulness to Him once again.

Joy is the worship of God. It abounds through our spiritual disciplines as we grow in Christlikeness through our devotion to those disciplines.

Be aware, however, there is a very real threat to joy. Faith is a battleground, assaulted by both internal and external forces. Take heart; joy is promised. Joy is the victor of the battle. The battle we fight is just one of many in the war for our souls, but our Savior is victorious, and nothing can remove Him from the Throne. This simple fact wells up the joy we experience into the overflow of worship.



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