

5-Day Devotional: Dancing in the Rubble

Day 1: The Liberating Ax

Reading: Matthew 3:1-12

Devotional: John's message sounds harsh, but within it lies profound grace. When he speaks of the ax at the root of trees, he's not threatening destruction—he's promising liberation. Consider what dead wood you've been carrying: empty rituals, institutional loyalty that supersedes kingdom work, or systems that no longer serve love. God's "cutting away" isn't punishment; it's pruning for new growth. Like a skilled gardener, God sees what you could become without the burden of what no longer bears fruit. Today, ask yourself: What structures in my life need to fall so something beautiful can emerge? The falling isn't the end—it's the clearing where new life begins.

Day 2: Vulnerability as Strength

Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Devotional: Isaiah paints an impossible picture: predators and prey dwelling together peacefully. This isn't about eliminating our nature, but transforming our relationships. The wolf doesn't stop being a wolf; it discovers a new way of being with the lamb. God entered our world through the ultimate vulnerability—an unwed teenage mother in a stable. This teaches us that strength isn't found in power or institutional might, but in embracing our authentic, vulnerable selves. Your struggles, your seasons of being overlooked, your experience of vulnerability—these aren't weaknesses. They're exactly what qualifies you to build bridges in your community. What vulnerability might God be inviting you to embrace today?

Day 3: Truth-Telling with Joy

Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Devotional: Jeremiah was called to "pluck up and pull down" before he could "build and plant." Truth-telling isn't pessimism—it's preparation for transformation. When we honestly name what isn't working—in our churches, communities, and personal lives—we're not being negative. We're clearing ground for God's new thing. The prophet's work involves both demolition and construction, and both are acts of hope. Today, practice joyful truth-telling: acknowledge one thing in your life that isn't working, but do it with the confidence that naming it is the first step toward transformation. God isn't asking you to fix everything; God is inviting you to see clearly so you can participate in what's emerging.

Day 4: Relationship Over Institution

Reading: Acts 2:42-47

Devotional: The early church thrived not through impressive buildings or large budgets, but through authentic relationships. They ate together, shared possessions, and met in homes. Their radical love transformed the world. We often confuse maintaining institutions with doing kingdom work, but Jesus spent little time in temples and much time with people—eating, walking, talking, living. Church isn't a place you go; it's a way of being together. Every conversation you facilitate, every bridge you build, every connection you tend—that IS church. Today, measure your spiritual vitality not by programs attended but by relationships deepened. Who might God be calling you to reach out to, not to invite to church, but to simply be church with?

Day 5: Seeds of Something Emerging

Reading: Mark 4:26-32

Devotional: Jesus compared God's kingdom to seeds—small, hidden, seemingly insignificant, yet containing everything needed for transformation. You are not the remnant of something past; you are the seed of something emerging. Your size doesn't limit your impact; it positions you perfectly for the intimate, transformational work God is doing. Small communities can move quickly, adapt easily, and build deep connections that large institutions cannot. Stop measuring yourself by worldly standards of success. Instead, ask: Are we growing in love? Are we building bridges? Are we agents of vulnerable transformation? The peaceable kingdom emerges not through might or power, but through small communities choosing relationship over division. You are exactly the right size for God's work. Now dance.

As you complete this devotional journey, remember: God is doing a new thing. The structures falling around you aren't signs of failure but invitations to freedom. Step into the clearing with joy.