



# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



LOVE GOD



LOVE PEOPLE



WAKE UP PEOPLE



ENCOUNTER HIM



KNOW CHRIST



REFLECT HIM

IN  
SPIRITUS  
SANCTUS



## ***Setting the Stage:***

There is a conflict running throughout Paul's letter to the Galatians. That is the conflict between legalism and license. Christopher J.H. Wright defines these two terms this way; legalism—"keep all the rules," license—"reject any rules." Legalism would be living by the law, while license would be living by the flesh.

Does that not sound like the same debate that continues today? There are Christians who are legalistic and prescribe a particular set of rules one must keep to remain in good standing with God. On the other hand, others claim that freedom in Christ means no restrictions whatsoever. Moreover, both camps would hold fast to the claim that they are the truly spiritual ones.

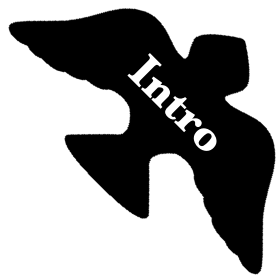
In Galatians, Paul provides the balancing ground for both extremes. Christopher J.H. Wright summarizes it, "If we should not be governed by either the law or the flesh, then what should govern how we live? Answer: the Spirit. Paul puts this at the beginning, middle, and end of his next section in [chapter 5] verses 16, 18, and 25: 'Walk by the Spirit...led by the Spirit...live by the Spirit...keep in step with the Spirit.' That is the heart and soul of Christian living."

The fruit of the Spirit addresses the extremes of both legalism and license. As we embark on this 9-week study to better understand the fruit of the Spirit, may we invite and allow God to do the work of putting to death our tendencies toward legalism and license. May we walk, be led by, live by, and keep in step with the Spirit.

If you haven't yet, take some time and read Galatians, it will only take around 30 minutes. Set aside a little time and read it in one sitting.

***"If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"***  
—Galatians 2:17–21 (NIV 1984)

## *Using this Devotional*



A friend of mine, Rod Godley, told me that when he notices that he is lacking in the fruit of the Spirit, he doesn't ask, "How can I become more patient?" Nor does he pray for patience. Instead, he asks God to show him where he is not walking in step with the Holy Spirit.

As you work through this devotional, recognize that "...these are the qualities that God himself will produce in [your] everyday, ordinary human life because the life of God himself is at work within [you]. The life of God (by his Spirit) will bear fruit in the tree of [your] life...so that [you] become more and more like Christ—which is God's desire for all his children." (Christopher J.H. Wright).

Many people have contributed to make this devotional possible. At the top of each day, you will find the name of the author of that day's devotion and the Scripture on which they wrote.

Before beginning, take some time to ask God to show you how to better walk by His Spirit, then read the Scripture, and then read the devotion. You may also find it beneficial to journal through what God has shown you as you read and commit to follow as His Spirit leads you.

Christopher J.H. Wright records, "...John Stott...prayed every morning that God the Holy Spirit would cause the fruit of the Spirit to ripen in his own life." You may find his prayer encouraging, following is what he'd pray:

*Heavenly Father*, I pray that this day I may live in your presence and please you more and more.

*Lord Jesus*, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow you.

*Holy Spirit*, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in my life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control.

***But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.***

**—Galatians 5:16–18 (ESV)**



***Week 1: Monday***  
***Brailey Hoagland***  
***1 John 2:7-11***



This past summer, I was asked to take care of my cousin's dog while he was gone. I had to go by myself to their house, next door, at night to walk him. I realized that I do not like being in the dark by myself. The nights that another person went over with me made me feel comfortable and protected. Being alone in the darkness made me feel insecure. That insecure feeling made me want to run to my house where lights were on, and people were home.

When I think of hate, I think of darkness. Just like it's easier to be in the dark with others, hate seems more acceptable when you're in a crowd. For example, when my friends are doing something that I know I shouldn't be doing, like talking about someone behind their back, it's uncomfortable to stand alone and do what is right. However, Jesus doesn't call us to be comfortable in the darkness. He calls us to be the light in the darkness. Jesus wants us to be more like him. In uncomfortable situations, Jesus stood out in the darkness and did what was right.

In this Scripture, it says that so many people are just stumbling around in the dark because there is no light in them. The only way for them to see clearly is to experience the light and want it. They can experience that light through us. It may be easier for us to be with other people in the dark, but if we want our brother or sister to know Jesus, we need to get out of the dark. Jesus is the light of the world, and there is no hate in him, only love. As His followers, there should be no hate in us, only love. We all need to stop being comfortable in hate and darkness and start being his light and love.

*“When Christians love each other, in practical, sacrificial, costly, barrier-dissolving ways, then the love of God (or rather, the God who is love) can be seen. The world should be able to look at Christians and how they live together and love together and see something of the reality of God being demonstrated. The invisible God makes himself visible in the love that Christians have for one another.” —Christopher J.H.*



***Week 1: Tuesday***  
***Loran “Coach” Dace***  
***Leviticus 19:9-18***

The old dog was nasty, fighting anything and everything until the owner brought home a little pussy cat! Every time the dog would attack, the kitten balled up leaned in and ultimately loved the fight out of the dog. Jesus said, *“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for the other.”* (John 13:35). Regarding the following “Do not,” rather than fight, can we not “pussy cat” them out of the lives of others who practice them?

Do not harvest to your land’s limits

Do not reharvest your fields

Do not steal

Do not lie

Do not deceive

Do not profane GOD’S name

Do not defraud

Do not hold back wages

Do not mistreat the deaf or blind

Do not play favorites over the poor

Do not slander

Do not endanger your neighbors

Do not hate a “brother”

Do not seek revenge or hold grudges

Do not crossbreed animals

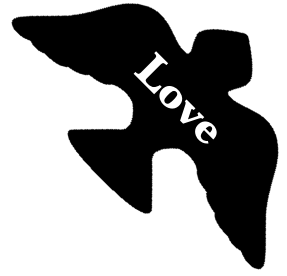
Do not plant different grain in the same field

Do not wear cloth made with two different materials

*Are we serious about our “faith?” then let us love our opposition, regardless, and thus fulfill his commission to us - “By this shall all men know if, if, if you have love one for the other.”*

Will you fight like a dog, or love like a pussy cat?

***Week 1: Wednesday***  
***Dawn Nickle***  
***Galatians 5:1-15***



“For everything we know about God’s Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That’s an act of true freedom.” Galatians 5:14 (The Message)

God said this phrase more than once, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” it has to be important. I think he knew this would be difficult for most.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Do we do this?

Now, **stop** and honestly answer that. Don’t just read it and dismiss it.

**Stop**, and honestly answer it.

I wrestle with this statement often.

Confession time...I like clear outlines of rules and struggle with gray areas. I am a people pleaser, and I hate to let people down. The majority of the time, I am a rule follower. I don’t like myself some days. I tend to forgive others but not myself. I know the things I have done. I know how disobedient and disrespectful I can be by my actions. Maybe I was not showing compassion or mercy when it was called for or knew I was going down the wrong path but went anyway. The fact is I should have known better but fall often, it seems.

God set the perfect example of love with His Son, Jesus. He forgives all our sins, as long as we accept Him. When he sees us, God sees His perfect Son. I am thankful God made a way through Jesus. He gave us the right to choose and to choose Him. He gave us Jesus to be the example. To learn to love as He loves.

I personally think love is more than a feeling. I say that because feelings wear off and can change. To me, it is a *choice*. A choice I make daily to love the people in my life, whether I feel like it or not, and in doing this, I know I have to love myself and forgive myself. I may never forget the things I have done, and I am still ashamed of my mistakes. To see clearly and to love, sometimes you have to know the hardships and the pain or shame that goes with stuff.

Christ gave us the freedom to forgive and to choose him and to forgive ourselves and others for falling short.

So that we may love people the way that he does.

Freedom is being able to choose.



***Week 1: Thursday***  
***Kevin Wildman***  
***Matthew 5:21-26***

Many times when looking at this passage, even as I began this devotion, I have talked about the obligation to settle disputes. A responsibility not just when you're offended (Matthew 18:15-20), but also when you think someone is resentful toward you.

While I think the point is valid, I think Jesus might be communicating something deeper.

I cannot read verse 22 and not recall the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. I cannot read about the various name-calling and not remember all the times I have used harsh words, often with those whom I love the most.

There are two times when we are together for worship that sacrifice is involved. The first is at the table when we remember His sacrifice, the other is during offering when we present our sacrifice. In the Old Testament, the sin sacrifice would have been part of the sacrifice brought by the worshipper.

At the table, we remember, proclaim, and celebrate the sacrifice of Christ that brings reconciliation. It stops me in my tracks when I contemplate on what reconciliation cost God.

N.T. Wright says it well, "The point is that you must live, day to day, in such a way that when you come to worship there is no anger between you and your neighbour, your sister, your brother."

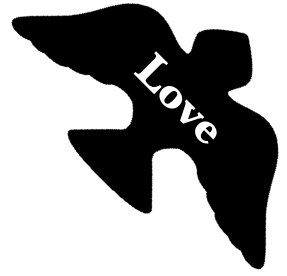
The point is that it doesn't matter who initiates reconciliation, it has to happen. We deceive ourselves if we think we can love someone while being unwilling to do all in our power to resolve all anger between us (Romans 12:9-21).

If I am honest, much reconciliation that has been needed between me and others required an apology on my part. Oh, how it is hard to approach someone and say, "I think you might be mad at me, and you deserve to be. I was a jerk. I am sorry for what I did/said." Maybe, what is needed for anger to be resolved between you and others is for you to humble yourself and apologize.

If we are to Reflect Him, we must be willing to do everything in our power to reconcile with others. What might reconciliation cost you?



***Week 1: Friday***  
***Amanda Graham***  
***Romans 13:10***



If you back up to verse 9, The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” you may think, easily I would never do these things. I would never intentionally harm someone.

Throughout the bible, we are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves. With the parable of the Good Samaritan, we are given Jesus’ insight into who our neighbors are. We are to consider our fellow man, *any* man, as a neighbor!

In John 13:34-35, Jesus says to love one another. As I have loved you. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

As I have loved you, have you taken the time to really think about how Jesus loves you? That unconditional love that endures forever. More plainly put, he loves you on your good, bad, *and* ugly days, no matter what. Can you love your neighbor with that kind of love? Can you love the next person that passes by the same? Can you love the stranger standing on the street corner, holding a sign with that kind of love? Can you love the people that are different from you with the same love? So, going back to verse 9, again, much easier to say I’m not going to murder or steal, right?

I often tell my children that love doesn’t have to be a physical hug or a verbal, intimate “I love you,” but when showing the love of God, be kind, help out where needed, smile, do the right thing.

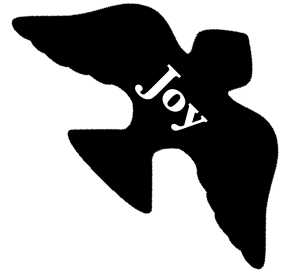
We may not be able to show or extend direct love to everyone we are around or even pass by, but if we are intentional about not doing harm, we are most certainly on the right path. James 2:8 says If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.

We are called, as God’s people, to be and show His light. The Holy Spirit places in us these tools (Fruit of the Spirit) to follow in His greatness to bring honor and glory to Him. Let’s keep them on our hearts, minds, and prayers as we dive into each of them. I’m looking forward to taking the time to study each fruit individually and focus on them week by week!

*“I suspect that if someone had asked the apostle Paul or the apostle John about his spiritual life, his first question would have been, ‘Am I growing in love for God and people?’” —John Ortberg*



***Week 2: Monday***  
***Jason Davis***  
***Psalm 3***



This devotion might take you awhile... When reading a section of scripture, *always* seek the context of a particular passage. I would invite you to familiarize yourself with the account of David and Absalom in 2 Samuel 13-19. If you read this specific Psalm without knowing any of the backstory, it still has great application resting in the promise that God is our shelter even in the toughest of times. However, if you read this Psalm in light of the relationship between David and his son, Absalom, a whole new level of understanding and application is uncovered.

David wrote this Psalm in the specific time frame of 2 Samuel 15-17 when he fled from Absalom, whose intention was to kill his father and usurp the throne of Israel. David finds himself in a dark place in life, and quite honestly, it is because of his own actions. After David sins with Bathsheba, God gives David a specific warning that David's decisions would one day come back to bite him in the rear. Absalom becomes an extremely calloused person (likely at the hand of David not dealing with his family issues) and begins a rebellion to take the throne by force and even starts to win the hearts of the men of Israel. As the conspiracy gains strength, David is warned, and he flees, hiding from one he so dearly loves. At one point, the priests bring the ark to flee with David, and he sends them back, reminding them that if he has favor in the eyes of the Lord, it will be the Lord that brings him back to worship. Eventually, Absalom is killed by the fighting men of Israel, and David mourns the loss of his son.

Why remind ourselves when reading through this Psalm? In the midst of our life turmoil, whatever craziness we are walking through, albeit something that is happening to us or a product of our own design, God is faithful. He is our refuge. Again and again, in scripture, God reminds us that if we seek Him, He will be our God, and we will be His people. As Paul says in Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, then who can be against us."

Joy can still be found in the midst of our chaos because of the promises found in Jesus, our Immanuel.

***"And yet, by bringing all their suffering into the presence of God, [the psalmists] were able to turn back to hope, praise, and even joy, because of their unshakable faith that God was sovereign and would never abandon them. That kind of joy can cope with the pain, because it is the fruit of faith in the living God." —Christopher J.H. Wright***



***Week 2: Tuesday  
Brycen Hernandez  
2 Corinthians 7:2-16***

We see that in verses 5-7, that comfort is part of God's character. 2 Corinthians 7:6 says that God comforts the downcast. We also see that though Paul has had some difficulties in Macedonia, he has been comforted by God through Titus. At the same time, Titus has been comforted by the church of Corinth. We then learn that the church cares and longs for Paul. Which in turn brings Paul even greater joy. From this we know that we can live with joy because God will provide us with comfort in our times of need.

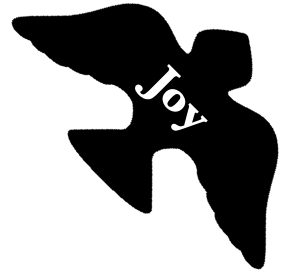
As we read a little further, we find that through Paul's letter, the Corinthians were made sorry, as God had intended, so that the Church of Corinth would repent. Paul goes on to say that it was the Corinthians' repentance that has brought him joy. Just like with Paul, in many circumstances, joy results when we learn of the good that has happened for those we care about. For example, the day that my brother gave his life over to Jesus, I received great joy.

As Paul continues in his letter, we learn that Paul is even more joyful when he learns that Titus was so happy because his spirit has been refreshed by the church of Corinth. Paul writes, including that the church's repentance has brought him great joy and encouragement. Often times, just like with Paul and the church, joy comes to us when we learn of how well the ones we care about are doing, especially when we know that we have played a part in their development.

Often times, many people are going through difficulties. With many of these circumstances, someone may need something as simple as some comfort. Is there anyone who you know that may be going through some difficulties? If so, spend some time with the Lord and ask that He would show you how you can provide some comfort to that person, you may bring some joy to that person or to someone close. Is there someone in your life who you have had the opportunity to be an encouragement to. If not, spend some time with the Lord and ask that He would show you how and who you can be an encouragement to?

***“Joy is at the heart of God’s plan for human beings. The reason for this is worth pondering awhile: Joy is at the heart of God himself. We will never understand the significance of joy in human life until we understand its importance to God. I suspect that most of us seriously underestimate God’s capacity for joy.” —John Ortberg***

**Week 2: Wednesday**  
**Cindy Ponder**  
**Philippians 4:4-7**



χαρά (Greek) chara pronounced khar-ah, meaning: cheerfulness, calm delight, gladness multiplied greatly, to be exceedingly full of joy.

Joy is found in all areas of our lives. It comes at surprising times when we sometimes least expect it. Sometimes we even take it for granted.

We can even easily give joy away to others. Whether teaching children joyful songs and lessons or reaching out to the elderly with a card or visit joy is easy to share. It's even as simple as wishing a complete stranger, "God bless you have a good day."

Robert Strand writes, "Sorrow, hurt, and grief are natural reactions to thought times and testing. But from the book of James (1:2-18), we make an exciting discovery. In the worst of times, we can still say, with the help of the Spirit at work in our lives developing joy in all kinds of circumstances that it really 'is well with my soul.'"

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*

—John 15:1–11 (ESV)



**Week 2: Thursday**  
**Jim York**  
**James 1:2-4**

When I was asked to write this devotion, it caused me to reflect on my reaction toward some trials in my life. Then I asked myself...did I count it all as joy? My mother passed away at only 46 years old. My younger brother was in a motorcycle accident, and I had to decide to take him off life support. My daughter-in-law lost her triplets she carried for over 6 months. The day Kathy and I got married, I received a call from my best man, he was diagnosed with a rare cancer and didn't know what to do. We have all asked God, why? I realized that the hardest things in life can be the best things. All of our sufferings are meaningful, and we never go through it alone. "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5).

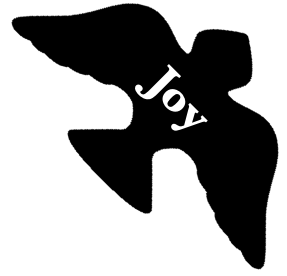
He is with you in the hard days as well as the wonderful days. People have asked, "why is God punishing me?" The truth is, He is *not*. These trials are opportunities to grow your faith. God knows when you need Him the most.

So, how do we count it all as Joy? Joy is not because of our circumstances, it's in spite of our circumstances and our response to them. So when trials come, use your faith to live out what you believe. We need knowledge and wisdom from God to do that. Knowledge is knowing the truth and wisdom is knowing what to do with it. "And Jesus grew in wisdom." (Luke 2:52) We, too, should be growing in wisdom. We also need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and give Him control. He will bring you spiritual maturity and into a relationship with Him. This is one way we can count it all as Joy.

James is a book of wisdom that challenges us to live like Christ. James reminds us in chapter 4:14, "You are a mist that appears for a little while then vanishes." Life is short, make the time you have worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Life is hard, but we can count it all as joy.

***Father in Heaven, we are aware that trials may come our way. So, help us, Lord, to endure suffering as a result of growing our faith. Help us understand that time on this Earth is temporary. Father, we count it all as joy when we think of the glory that is yet to come. In Jesus' name, Amen.***

***Week 2: Friday***  
***BJ Keeling***  
***1 Peter 4:12-19***



Before tackling these verses, I needed to answer a question for myself and maybe for you too. What is the difference between joy and happiness? Here is my interpretation, and remember, it is my interpretation. Happiness is based on outside worldly forces. So, if I am happy, it is because of something that has happened. Likewise, if I am unhappy, something has caused me to be that way. Joy, on the other hand, is an attitude of my heart. It comes from within. This is why I can be joyful in my heart, even if the circumstances I am in cause me to be unhappy. I believe that joy is a gift from God. It isn't rooted in worldly circumstances but rather in our relationship with Christ. Let's see how these thoughts relate to the verses in 1 Peter 4:12-19.

In these verses, we find Peter talking about suffering. While there are many causes of suffering, he is specifically speaking about the suffering that comes from being a Christian. He is speaking of being persecuted and insulted for following Christ. Look at verses 12-14. He is talking about how painful it can be to suffer; how unhappy we can be to be in the circumstances that we are facing. He also says, though, that it shouldn't come as a shock to us that we are suffering. We are followers of Christ. He suffered. If we follow Him, we should expect to suffer as well.

Peter also says we should rejoice in the suffering. We should have joy in our hearts when we suffer. I know that may not make any sense, but that is where the difference between happiness and joy comes in. Peter is saying that we should realize that in our suffering, we are imitating Christ. Furthermore, being a follower of Christ should fill us with joy, even during unhappy circumstances. We should have joy because the suffering actually reveals that we are doing what we are called to do. We are reflecting Christ.

*“There is so much to give thanks for, so much to give us joy. I wonder if, as Christians, we sometimes become so spiritual that we forget to take real pleasure in the ordinary gifts of God and don't allow ourselves to be filled to overflowing with joy.” —Christopher J.H. Wright*





***Week 3: Monday***  
***Jeanetta Allen***  
***Matthew 6:25-34***



“Don’t worry, I’ve got this” – God

I have relied on those words so many times in my life, and they have held true each and every time. God clearly tells us not to worry about anything, and yet we do. We worry about what food to eat, what clothes we are going to wear, which event takes priority, and when our plans don’t go the way we want, we worry about how to fix the problem. We get so busy trying to figure it all out that we forget someone is waiting for us to ask Him for help. God is the great Provider, and there will never be a time when He isn’t there, and yet He is usually the last One we seek help from.

I have learned to let God take control. I didn’t always have that kind of faith. I had trials in the 1990s that tested me when I had a health issue, and when I lost my job at the same time that my husband did. Both were stressful because everything was about to change, and I didn’t know if it would be a good change or a bad one. But then I fell back on what I knew most, and that was Jesus. I knew He was walking with me, I knew He had a solution, and no matter what the result, He would be there for us. I had peace, and I carry that peace with me every day. I don’t know what is coming next, but I know the One who does, and I will cling to his words in Matthew 6:33 – 34. When you find yourself starting to worry, read the words of Jesus, and feel the peace that comes from knowing He is taking care of you.

***“What peace and rest to know that there is a Vinedresser who cares for the branch, to see that it grows stronger, and that its union with the Vine becomes more perfect, who watches over every hinderance and danger, and supplies every need!” —Andrew Murray***



***Week 3: Tuesday  
George & Donna Deel  
Colossians 3:12-17***

Peace is defined as tranquility or quiet, freedom from civil disturbance, freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions. Peace is harmony in relations. Many equate peace with quiet, but quiet moments sometimes allow our emotions to delve into places of unrest and aggressive attitudes.

That means when striving for peace, you put mercy and kindness to the front of your mind. In the quiet resolve of the day, trust God to help guide you to His peace. Give your thoughts, emotions, and meanness to Him and let Him help you in your quiet time to sort your purpose in devoting your time to those things He desires for your life. Let Him guide your purpose back to focusing on where He wants your time spent.

Holding grudges will only let “grudge finding” steal your joy. It makes you feel superior, because you are looking for how you are “one-up” on the one you are focusing on. But are you? Didn’t God create us all with purpose? Could He have possibly given your interactions to you so that you could help shine your light for God in this situation? Are you fulfilling what God wants? God wants you to be gentle minded and to live at peace. Holding grudges only gives the devil a hold in your heart and squeezes that space from God’s space. Whatever you place in your heart and mind, make sure God would be satisfied that you are using your time for that.

Being peaceful in a corrupt world is hard. However, with God, we should not focus on the difficulty of the task, but the reward in overcoming grudges and meanness. With Christ as our Savior, He will guide us to the way that is best for His Kingdom. Are you doing your part for His Kingdom? Trust Him to help to guide you to peace.

***Week 3: Wednesday***  
***Linda Burke***  
***James 4:1-11***



Peace: A state of harmony between people, absence of strife, calm, quiet; peace of mind, freedom from anxiety.

James opens chapter 4, discussing the cause of conflicts and disputes among believers. Most disputes can be traced to our own selfish ambitions and envy. "You want something but can't get it." We all have unmet desires, no matter how much we have, we desire something more. It may be recognition or higher status or more possessions.

James seems to be bothered more by the selfish spirit and bitterness of the quarrels than by the rights and wrongs of various viewpoints. The absence of peace is the main issue in James 4:1-3. Don't trade kindness for rightness; don't overlook love, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness. Even if you are technically right, make sure you are not spiritually wrong, in your attempt to prove it. We can have the right words but the wrong heart. We cannot make our opinions more important than the person we are dealing with. Arguments won't change people. Only Jesus has the power to change people, and it will be harder for them to see Jesus if their view of Him is blocked by our own big opinions. It is easy to agree with what Jesus said, "Live at peace with everyone," but can we obey His words.

To resolve conflicts, we should choose humility. Pride makes us self-centered. Humbling ourselves means recognizing that our worth comes from God alone, "But He giveth more grace." We can access this grace by submitting ourselves to God. When we submit ourselves to God, we may not have everything we want, but we will have everything we need. Living in Christ Jesus gives us the promise of His peace. God's peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a wholeness. It is an inner peace that goes beyond human understanding. This peace flows out to our actions and our relationships with others. It will permeate our homes. This inner peace can be a light to those who don't know Christ.

***"There can be no real prosperity or progress in a nation, a home, or a soul without peace...Peace can reign only where everything is as God would have it, in God's order and in harmony with His will."***—Andrew Murray



***Week 3: Thursday***  
***Jason Davis***  
***Hebrews 12:14***

In this verse, the writer of Hebrews encourages us “live at peace with ALL men,” which echoes the sentiments of Jesus as He poured out his final message to the disciples in John 13-17. There, Jesus reminds His disciples of the trouble the world offers and even (especially in John 15) the hatred that the world has for Jesus and His followers. In the same breath, though, Jesus reminds them that the way that the world will be able to tell that they are His disciples is by their love and assures them that He has overcome the world, full of hatred. He leaves them something that the world may not understand: His peace.

The part of this verse that keeps resonating with me is “make every effort.” Often when we find ourselves quarreling with a particular individual or group of people, blame is cast, and our nose goes up in the air. We become so consumed by the actions of the others that we become completely blind to our own attitude, conduct, and tone. One of the pillars on which Christ came to establish the Kingdom was loving-kindness (chesed, in Hebrew) and reconciliation.

Jesus tells the crowd in Matthew 5:23-24 to “leave the gift at the altar” if you know someone has something against you. He says, “first go and be reconciled to your brother,” because how we interact with people matters. Later on, in Matthew 18:20, Jesus reminds His disciples, “For where two or three come together in My name, there I am with them.” Unfortunately, this passage gets misquoted often to be about having church worship, which it is but not like we think. The worship that is happening is when two parties are squashing the beef between them and finding reconciliation. Stop expecting the other party to come and make things right. That responsibility falls on your shoulders... and mine. Why? Because we are holy, set apart, different from the rest of the world.

***Week 3: Friday***  
***Shannon Hoagland***  
***Daniel 3:8-18***



I love this account. Up until twelve years ago, I only saw the miraculous way God saved these three. I had missed the part where they say, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Did you catch the “Even If”? These three didn’t bargain with God to save them. You know...God, if you do this, I’ll do this, I promise. They simply said, “even if.” Here’s my “Even If” story. Adam and I struggled with infertility for five years before we had Brailey. I had always pictured myself with a house full of children. When Brailey was born, she was very sick, and we almost lost her. It was during that time that God got ahold of my heart. I had put having children above my relationship with God, and that robbed me of peace.

I couldn’t understand an “Even If” because I was only focused on what I wanted and not God’s plan for my life. We again struggled with infertility after having Brailey, and I began to allow my focus to again be on having children and not God. I could feel the peace slipping away, and this was when my prayer life changed. I stopped asking God for children and prayed for peace.

This is where, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, I got to firsthand experience the power of my God. Peace is what I received. God allowed me to see that although I do not have a house full of children, I have a handful of them. We may not know what plan will best serve His greater purpose. However, we do know that He is sovereign and calls us to trust Him. You may never have an “Even If” like the fiery furnace, but we all have “Even Ifs.” It took me ten years to accept that even if we don’t have anymore children, I will trust in His plan. That is when the peace came. Will you trust God, even if...?

***“Believer, when striving to find the way to abide in Christ from moment to moment, remember that the gateway is simple: Abide in Him at this present moment.” —Andrew Murray***



***Week 4: Monday***  
***Chris Webb***  
***Colossians 1:9-12***



I feel that one of my biggest weaknesses is patience. Just like many of you, I am a product of the society that I live in. I get frustrated when the internet is down. When fast food takes more than 5 minutes, I get impatient. I lose my cool when the driver in front of me doesn't go when the light is green. If you ask me to wait on something, I will most likely experience an increase in blood pressure. So, please bear with me as I write this about patience and understand I am speaking more to me than I am to you.

First, notice that Paul states to the church in Colossae, "we have not stopped praying for you." There is value in persistence. God asks us to remain faithful and to pray continuously. Paul is carrying this out. While it is difficult for me to pray for the same thing for long periods of time (when I don't get the answer I want, I either take action or stop praying). However, how do you think the Colossians felt knowing Paul was praying for them continually? How would your kids/parents/friends/bosses/neighbors feel if they knew you were praying for them continually? How would you feel knowing someone was praying for you continually? Stay patient and keep praying.

Secondly, look at what Paul is praying. He prays that the Colossians would receive through his prayers: live a life worthy of the Lord, please Him, bear fruit, grow in knowledge, and be strengthened with all power. These are great qualities to possess. Then he says, "so that you may have great endurance and patience." Did you catch that? It is almost like Paul is saying that endurance and patience outweigh the other qualities. Don't believe me? Think of it this way, when you ask a child to do a chore around the house, such as washing dishes, are the dishes more important or learning responsibility? You have a child wash dishes *so that* they learn responsibility. Paul prays that the Colossians would bear fruit, grow in knowledge, and be strengthened *so that* they may have great endurance and patience. Is patience that important? Paul seemed to think so. It would be worth my time, and yours, to work on this!

***"We need so much patience to put up with all the people God has brought together in the church. If only they were all like us! But then we have to remember the patience they need to put up with us in return." —Christopher J.H.***



***Week 4: Tuesday***  
***Gary Johnson***  
***Exodus 32***

At that moment, when God personally gives Moses the law, the Ten Commandments. At this holy moment. At this peak of God working through the nation, they are in the middle of a rebellion against God.

God is ready to wipe them off the face of the earth because of their disobedience. At a time they should have been in awe of Him, they instead are rejecting Him. They are going against everything He set them apart to do. They have become the image of what He does not want. They said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." They were worshipping an idol that Aaron crafted out of gold they had given and are now calling it god. *And God is not having anything to do with it.* They have sinned by breaking the very first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." (ESV) Now they have made a graven image of a calf, to whom they ascribe their deliverance from slavery.

We wonder why God didn't kill them all. Why did he hold back his anger? Why did He show them patience? Why??????

Moses asks God to remember Abraham, Isaac, Israel, and the promise God made to them. "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever." Exodus 32:13. God is patient because of a promise He made.

Moses reminds God that without the nation of Israel, there would be no lineage for the Messiah. No one to become the people through whom he would bring the Messiah.

We should be very thankful for such a patient God.

How many times have we disobeyed at the worst possible moment?

How many times have our sins come about because of our actions?

How many times has God been restrained from destroying us?

How blessed we are to have a patient God. How grateful we should be that He teaches us to be patient.



***Week 4: Wednesday***  
***Isaac Gayler***  
***James 5:7-11***



What is it that you're not patient about? What can you do to be more patient? We as a society struggle with patience because we all want things right away and we all have things at the tips of our fingers. I struggle with patience in many ways. For example, when I'm bored, I ask my parents if I can go do something for fun. Sometimes they say no and I get upset. But I know I'll get to do something fun eventually. So if we learn to have more patience, then the things we want or need will come. We could learn to be more patient by not being so hurried all of the time.

A thousand things test our patience. You buy something that requires assembly, and the instructions are in French. You have a huge project due, but your coworker is chatting in the break room. You spend weeks potty training your 4-year-old with no results. Then your neighbor informs you that her child mastered the task at 2 years old.

James 5:7-11 talks about Patience in Suffering and how brothers and sisters need to wait for the Lord's return. He gives us some examples of patience. One example that he gave them was, "Consider the farmers who eagerly wait for the precious harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient." Job is an example of a man who patiently endured many trials. We must wait patiently, for our God will return one day again.

Do you have patience in love? We have to remember to be patient with the things we can. For example, I always see my parents showing patience in love by working on a project together. Another example would be my brothers and I hanging out together.

It's tough to be patient all of the time because we will be tested with things that we cannot control. In conclusion, patience is a fruit that we all could improve on, so ask God to grow your patience.

***“God the Holy Spirit takes the initiative, through various means, in cooperation with our response, changes us to look like God the Son, in order to serve others, to the glory of God the Father.” —J.K. Jones Jr.***



***Week 4: Thursday***  
***Jay Hodge***  
***1 Samuel 24***

Patience, a skill few of us possess. Yes, contrary to popular belief, I referred to patience as a skill, not a trait.

Developing patience is hard and takes both time and purposeful effort.

In 1 Samuel 24, we find a young King-to-be hiding in a cave from Saul. Saul has been hunting for David to put him to death. David has killed Goliath, won many battles for Israel, and served the king as a musical relief to his mental anguish, but now David finds himself in hiding. In verse 3, we find King Saul entering a cave to relieve himself, unaware that this is the cave where David and his men are hiding.

David's men are excited for David to take an action that would end the running. A few silent steps and a precise thrust of his sword through the back of Saul and all would be different. But David did not take the life of the king. David had been anointed as king of Israel years ago as a young man by Samuel (1 Samuel 16) when God had rejected Saul as king, so wasn't this the opportunity to make God's will a reality?

No. David's relationship with God provided the insight, wisdom, and discernment that enabled him to know the difference between an opportunity and the will of God. If David had taken the throne by taking the life of Saul, his reign over Israel would have been tainted by the blood of a murdered king whom God had anointed. David knew he would be king, but only when God was ready. The exhausting years between David's anointment and reign were years God used to develop him.

Patience is a skill. Like developing the skill of listening, praying, serving, or any other activity that defines our abilities, patience is something we develop. The next time you need direction from God, start with prayer. Pray for wisdom, discernment, insight, and patience. Waiting on the Lord (patience) requires us to trust in someone we can't touch, to do something can't see, in a manner that we don't understand, in a timeframe that we can't predict or mark on our calendar.

Honestly, when you put it into perspective, should it be that difficult to place our faith in the Creator of the Universe? Remember, from our vantage point, we can't always see what God is already holding in His hands.

***Week 4: Friday***  
***BJ Keeling***  
***Psalm 13***



When asked to do a devotion on the Fruit of the Spirit, I was pretty sure I wanted to do one on patience, and yet pretty sure I didn't. You see, I know I lack patience at times, so it kind of scares me to tackle this topic. Still, I also know that I need to work on having more patience, and this could be an excellent reminder to me. So, here goes.

In studying Psalm 13, I noticed that David is showing the impatience that he is having with God. This is the same impatience that we have with God at times. David says, "how long" four times when praying to God. He is repeatedly asking God how long he is going to have to suffer and how long he is going to wait for relief. Aren't we the same way? I know I can be. It could be financial hardships weighing you down, a relationship that just isn't working out, or maybe even bullying that you are facing from someone.

Whatever it is that you are going through, it can be hard to wait for relief from the suffering and anguish. We have hope, though, if we remember to ask God for help and continue to ask Him for help. And there it is. We have to continually, with persistence, ask God for help. We have to be patient and expect God to come through for us. It may not come as timely as we want. It may not be done the way we want. It may not even be the answer we want at all, but He will come through for us if we are patient. In verse 5, David prays, "But I trust in your unfailing love...". We need to learn to trade our impatience in for trust, the kind of trust that comes from a love that never fails.

*"Cultivating the fruit of the Spirit, you see, is not about polishing your own halo, or keeping up a good image. That sort of thing is stupid and false, and everybody (including God) can see through it. It's about making Christ visible and making the gospel attractive." —Christopher J.H. Wright*



***Week 5: Monday***  
***Steve Latham***  
***Leviticus 19:33-34 &***  
***Exodus 22:21-24***



Have you ever met or had to work with someone who seemed unkind? You might have thought of them as selfish, rude, or inconsiderate. Unfortunate as it is, most of us will do all that we can to avoid this type of person.

On the other hand, when someone is kind to us, when they go out of their way to make us comfortable, happy, or to simply feel good, we will do what we can to stay close to that person. When someone is kind to us, we try to become engaged in their lives, we begin to take on common interests, share meals, and fellowship.

When I was younger, my family moved twice in a little over two years. I started a new school as I entered second grade and then again as I entered fourth grade. Being a stranger in a new school, it didn't take very long to figure out who was kind and who was not, who to avoid, and who to hang with. I appreciated those who showed me kindness; some of those kids have been dear friends for nearly 50 years now.

Think of Kindness as a gateway to Love. If we are not kind to others, especially strangers, they may never encounter or experience the Love of our creator. Furthermore, they may never understand the ultimate sacrifice made on their behalf.

*“That quality of self-denying kindness is not only what it means to be Christlike, it is also deeply attractive to others because it bears witness to the One who lives within us and whose Spirit is bearing fruit in our lives.” —Christopher J.H. Wright*



***Week 5: Tuesday***  
***Derrick Jackson***  
***Acts 4:32-37***

Why won't you just be nice? Why did you do that? Are you kidding Me? I'm pretty sure every parent has had to ask those questions more times than we could count. Why, because showing kindness is not something our kids are very good at times to ...and us to as well.

So why is kindness so hard to give at times? The reason we usually don't show kindness is that people wrong us in some form or fashion. The problem with that is that we allow other people's actions to dictate our own. As Christians and followers of Christ, we cannot allow that because that is not the example Jesus set for us. That truth is not just for us personally but for the church as well.

Unfortunately, I cannot count the number of times someone has been hurt by someone in the church or by the church itself because kindness was not being shown. Instead of showing kindness, we show selfishness with all its glory.

Acts 4:32-37 tells us what the church was like back when it was first getting started. They sold possessions and gave to whoever had a need, and as a result, no one was in need because nobody was selfish. They all showed kindness by sharing. It's doesn't say they shared with just their friends but with whoever had a need. Selfishness was nowhere to be found.

I've had the joy and privilege of sharing my possessions with people who needed them. However, there have also been other times when I didn't share for whatever reason, and I still regret it to this day that I didn't show the kindness that I should have.

What would our community look like if the church as a whole operated as the church in Acts?

Can you imagine living in a place where there was no need because everyone shared what they had?

Get rid of selfishness and show kindness, and see what God can do. Our possessions are just gifts that God has blessed us with, but they aren't necessarily just for us. God has blessed you so you could bless someone else. So be a blessing to those around you and give the gift of kindness.

***Week 5: Wednesday***  
***Steven Burke***  
***Ruth 2***



The death of Naomi's husband and son left her and Ruth with no spouse, livelihood, or income. Naomi released Ruth to return to her mother after her decision to return to Judah, but Ruth loved Naomi and displayed kindness through her courage to accompany Naomi to Judah. Ruth was committed to going wherever Naomi went, and be apart of her people. Most importantly, Naomi's God would now be hers.

Naomi and Ruth arrived in Judah when the people then were much like today's, wanting more to please themselves than God.

Ruth's characteristics of being hardworking, loving, kind, faithful, and brave were an example of Christ's love being perceived through us. She practiced benevolence and a loving attitude towards others. Ruth's arrival in Judah was during the barley harvest. Because she and Naomi were widows with no means for providing for themselves, Ruth went into the fields to glean the grain left by the owner. Although this task may not have been her true potential, it was a means to feed Naomi and herself. It was through this test of her character that God saw Ruth's qualities and opened a new door of opportunity for her.

Her consistent reputation for being hardworking, loving, kind, faithful, and brave was seen by God, who opened the door for her to know the field's owner, Boaz. Boaz went far beyond the intent of the gleaners' law (Leviticus 19:9-10) in demonstrating his kindness and generosity. Not only did he let Ruth glean in his field, but he also told his workers to let some of the grain fall in her path. Boaz's abundance provided for Ruth and Naomi's needs.

Ruth may not have known that this was God's guidance, but He was with her in every move she made. The field she gleaned from was from a relative of Naomi and more than a coincidence.

The fruit of the Spirit is the spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit in us and produces these character traits found in the nature of Christ. Ruth's kindness and other characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit were part of God's charge for us to love Him and our neighbors.

***“Remember, when we talk about the fruit of the Spirit, it means that God’s own character is bearing fruit in our character. The life of God is at work in our life.” —Christopher J.H. Wright***



***Week 5: Thursday***  
***Kevin Wildman***  
***Zechariah 7:8-14***

This passage contains some of the most discouraging words in Scripture, “they stopped their ears that they might not hear.” But it doesn’t stop there, “They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts has sent by His Spirit...”

When we read the first few verses of this chapter, we see that, like in other places of Scripture, their fasting and feasting are being condemned. Fasting is frequently seen throughout the Old Testament in direct connection to repentance and petition. While feasting is connected to celebration and praise. Both should be directed toward God, we would call these Spiritual Disciplines.

God tells the people that He has rejected both their repentance, petitions, and praise because they have intentionally disregarded what He called them to. I love the word picture used, “they stopped their ears...” I can’t help but picture a little child with their fingers in their ears, proclaiming, “I can’t hear you!”

But to what was it that God called them? Honest judgments, kindness, and mercy. God called them to be kind, and that was just more than they could handle. James Bryan Smith defines mercy as, “Not receiving what you deserve.” Verse 10 gives, in my opinion, specifics on how this is carried out. While there are distinctions, I want to generalize a moment and acknowledge that dishonest judgment and lacking mercy is unkind, and focus on the kindness of this all.

It’s as if they are told, “If you are to be kind, then do not oppress widows, the fatherless, immigrants, or the poor, and don’t plot evil against each other.”

But this is too much for them, so they choose to disobey and be unkind. This leads me into introspection, in what ways has God’s call to be kind to others been too much for me to handle? When do I plug my ears and make my heart diamond-hard? What prayers, praise, or repentance of mine is rejected as a result?

Take a few moments, maybe longer. Pray and ask God to show you how you are unkind, perhaps even by choice, then sit in silence with the resolve to listen in obedience to what His Spirit reveals.



***Week 5: Friday***  
***Matt Smith***  
***Joshua 2***



On a rainy night in October of 2009, Stefeny, my wife of ten years, passed away very unexpectedly. This was the darkest time of my entire life. It was during this time that my faith in God was reinforced more than it had ever been. Friends, family, my church family, and people I didn't even know had shown me the love of Christ through their acts of kindness. This is why I feel that kindness is one of the greatest of the fruit of the spirit. Kindness is the characteristic that led God to provide salvation for us (Titus 3:4-5).

I was asked to write a devotional on kindness as it relates to Joshua 2. It's the story of two spies sent by Joshua to look over the land, especially Jericho. When they arrived, they met Rahab, a prostitute, and she hid them in her home. She was a citizen of the pagan city that the Israelites were seeking to overtake. When the king sent some men to seize the spies, Rahab said they had already left. In return for her treasonous act of kindness, the spies promised that she and her family would be spared when Jericho was taken over. Essentially, this is the kindness I saw in this Scripture. However, the more I researched it, the more I started to believe it's really showing the kindness of God through his grace.

As I stated earlier, Rahab was a prostitute. She more than likely worshipped a pagan god and lived a very immoral lifestyle up until this time. Yet she showed faith in God when she said to the spies, "I know that the Lord has given you this land . . ." God opened Rahab's heart so that she could see, and she had faith that because Jericho's wickedness and sin had reached its fullness, that soon, their city would lie in a heap of ruins (Genesis 15:13-21).

The spies meeting Rahab wasn't a coincidence. God knew Rahab's heart and knew that she would have faith in Him, and because of this faith, she and her family would be saved.

This story shows that God's love for us is greater than our past. Rahab's faith in God was used to help further His kingdom regardless of whom or what she was before. We find out later that she is in the lineage of Jesus. God opened Rahab's heart so that she could see the invisible.

Do we have that kind of faith?



***Week 6: Monday***  
***Bryson Davis***  
***Genesis 50:15-21***



"With great power comes great responsibility." It's a famous saying that some of us take for granted. Joseph sets an excellent example for us to follow. Let's take a look at what he did.

Joseph's brothers knew he was pharaoh's right-hand man, so they were obviously scared because of what they had done to Joseph. They were so scared they sent messengers ahead of them. When Joseph's brothers came to him, they fell down and apologized. Joseph now has complete power over his brothers, yet he forgave (v.19). He then goes on and acknowledges God's will in the whole situation (v.20) and then adds a little bit of extra (v.21).

Goodness is a broad term, and I think Joseph fills all of the gaps. He first forgives. Joseph forgave because God's Spirit is in him.

In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus reminds us why we should forgive when He tells the parable of the unforgiving servant. One of the servants owes an unpayable debt. The master asks for the money and the servant begs for forgiveness. The master cancels the debt. Later a fellow servant who owed this same servant a considerably smaller amount of money (a few dollars) finds himself in a similar situation. The first servant grabs the second servant, chokes him and tells him to pay off the debt. He asks for forgiveness, doesn't get it, and gets thrown in jail. The master hears about this and gives the first servant to the torturers. Jesus reminds us the same fate awaits us if we don't forgive.

Next, Joseph acknowledges God's will. This requires a huge amount of humility. 1 Peter 3:8 tells us to "have sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." When we acknowledge God's will, we are saying, "use me." Joseph models this, and we should too.

Lastly, Joseph goes above and beyond. In Matthew 5: 38-42, Jesus reminds us we are to "go the extra mile" with our neighbor. When we do this, our neighbors will want to do the same thing for us.

When we do these things, we keep in step with the Spirit, as Paul says in Galatians 5: 22-23. When Joseph did these things, he humbled himself before God, pointing ahead to Jesus, who set the greatest example of these things.



***Week 6: Tuesday***  
***Dave Sims***  
***Ephesians 5:1-21***

Goodness, I am supposed to write on goodness... my goodness, this passage frustrates me. No matter how hard I try, there are always things in this chapter I need to improve on. When I was in high school, our youth group used to challenge and check each other with Ephesians 5:3-4. When the joking got out of line, or the talk moved toward the locker room, someone in the group would simply say “E534,” and we knew it meant “clean it up.” I confess that more often than not, I was on the receiving end of that word of correction. Thirty years later I wish I could tell you it was never a problem anymore, but I don’t want to “bear false witness.”

I think the key to developing goodness is in the first couple of verses of this chapter. Follow God’s example as His children. Have you ever watched a kid imitating their dad? We are supposed to have that same childlike faith and do the things we see our Heavenly Father doing. Next, Paul says, “walk in the way of love as Jesus did.” While the Old Testament law is important and full of good teaching, Jesus boils it all down to just two commandments, “Love God and Love people.” It’s pretty hard to keep those two rules and not end up growing a life full of goodness.

Paul also spends much of this passage warning us to flee that which is bad. Have nothing to do with it. Why is it so easy to be bad? I believe it’s due to our fallen nature. Paul addresses this struggle much deeper in Romans 7:13-25. It is good to be reminded that while sin wants to destroy us, it’s only through Jesus that we can have victory.

Finally, be wise, making the most of every opportunity, be filled with the Spirit, give thanks.

Spend some time reflecting on these questions:

What are your easiest areas to be good?

Who are people that are a good influence on you?

What areas do you most often end up doing wrong?

Who are people that influence you in this way?

Are there life changes you need to make?

If I could live out this whole chapter, for one full day of my life, I would consider my life a success.

***Week 6: Wednesday***  
***Amie Bowling***  
***Psalm 1***



Too often, we get tangled in a web of a mess without realizing it. We don't typically wake up one morning and decide to give up a good thing or become a slave to sin. That entanglement usually creeps in slowly, quietly. If it's your morning routine to go for a run, you probably shouldn't allow yourself to begin walking every other day instead or take Fridays off. When I read Psalm 1, I am reminded that I need to be aware of my surroundings. Where am I at? What am I doing? Not just physically, but spiritually. Three action words jump off the page at me: walk, stand, sit. We must continuously press on, aware and intentional about our actions and choices. Otherwise, your morning run may turn into watching the Morning Show on the couch.

In receiving Christ as Savior, we are blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, our Helper. As a result of that gift, we are expected to bear good fruit, the fruit of His Spirit. When we consider His goodness, it's much more than when your mom used to tell you to "be good." Goodness is the action of choosing right over wrong, it's virtue in action. Goodness is intentional. Drawing near to our Lord, delighting in His Word, and keeping His commandments should be our heart's desire. We should be striving to reflect the goodness of God intentionally in our daily actions and decisions.

Acts 10:38 reminds us that Jesus went around doing good. Actions of goodness reflect the character of Christ. Putting others before ourselves reflects the nature and goodness of God. God is good, and He wants good things for us. When we choose to reflect His goodness in the things that we do and say, we can be certain that He will lead, guide, and direct our path.

Choose to be overflowing with His goodness. Choose to walk in the counsel of our King. Choose to stand on the Rock. And when you sit, choose a seat at the foot of the Cross.

***Lord, you are our Good, Good Father. Forgive our idle hands, our lukewarm hearts. Lord, may we hunger and thirst for your righteousness. Help us to listen carefully and eagerly obey; that we would be your hands and feet, and a reflection of your heart, overflowing with your goodness. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.***



**Week 6: Thursday**  
**Adam Acton**  
**1 Peter 4:9-11**

My best friend growing up and his family are not Christians. My friend's parents have an open door policy to anyone they know. If you entered their house, you would leave filled with laughter and a full stomach. They exhibit what hospitality should look like.

I have to ask myself if I, being a Christian, have the same gift of hospitality. I can tell you that I absolutely do not. Does this mean I should just leave the hospitality stuff to those more naturally gifted? No, the second half of verse 11 clearly states in my mind that "If any need arises." There are certainly going to be needs I am going to have to address outside my wheelhouse. I need to learn how to get better at the gifts I lack.

The church is filled with a diversity of talents, and all are called to use their gifts.

If I strive to use my gifts to serve others and even work to improve the gifts I lack in, when the need arises, I will be better equipped to further God's kingdom.

*"It is a deep mystery, this Cross of Christ. I am afraid there are many Christians who are content to look upon the Cross with Christ on it dying for their sins, who have little heart for fellowship with the Crucified One.*

*They hardly know that He invites them to it. Or they are content to consider the ordinary afflictions of life, of which the world's children often have as many as they do, as their share of Christ's Cross. They have no understanding of what it means to be crucified with Christ, not knowing that bearing the Cross means likeness to Christ in the principles that propelled Him in His path of obedience. The entire surrender of all self-will, the complete denial of the flesh of its every desire and pleasure, the perfect separation from the world in all its ways of thinking and acting, the losing and hating one's life, the giving up of self and its interests for the sake of others—this is the disposition that marks him who has taken up Christ's Cross, who seeks to say, 'I am crucified with Christ; I abide in Christ, the Crucified One.'"*—Andrew

***Week 6: Friday***  
***Chris Webb***  
***Matthew 5:38-42***



One of the great struggles of the Christian walk (at least for me) is the treatment of other people. Matthew records for us that Jesus states, “You have heard it said...” I can only suppose that in Matthew’s day, much like today, there was a misconception on how to treat other people. Back then, the statement and thought were to return bad behavior with bad behavior. We are more sophisticated today and would not treat others that way, would we? “He deserved it because he...” “She had it coming because she...” We really haven’t changed much in 2,000 years, have we?

This passage appears in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus addresses issues such as divorce, generosity, prayer, and judgment of others. The Sermon on the Mount, according to Dr. Robert B. Kruschwitz of Baylor University, “is a startling invitation to see and inhabit an alternative world.” Jesus is calling us to a different standard. I doubt there is any more alternative form of living than what Jesus is asking from us in this passage. Turn the other cheek, walk a second mile, and give someone our shirt and coat stand in contrast to what the rest of the world does. Isn’t that the point? Aren’t we called to live in such a way that others question why we act, speak, and give as we do?

Goodness, according to Webster, is defined as “the quality of being morally good or virtuous.” This is a hard definition for me to understand because our sense of good is relative. Jesus clarifies for us what he considers to be good.

If you have ever given to someone in need, that is great. However, if you have ever given to an enemy in need, it raises eyebrows. It makes others wonder why you would do such a thing. In fact, you might even be asked about it – which opens the door for you to proclaim the name of Jesus.

Human nature does not point us in the direction of goodness that can cause change, but Jesus does. The manner with which we treat others, especially to the level that Jesus directs us, can do more to advance the kingdom of God than we will ever know.





**Week 7: Monday**  
**Dave Keeling**  
**Hebrews 10:19-39**



Looking at this passage through the eye of faithfulness, we see a lot of different things going on. We see God's faithfulness, guidance on what our faithfulness should look like, and we also see encouragement and warning.

Zooming in on verses 19-39, we see that because of Jesus' sacrifice, all faithful followers of Christ can enter "the Most Holy Place." Before Jesus' sacrifice, the only way to enter "the Most Holy Place" was by following a specific set of rules that excluded all but one, "the High Priest," and he could enter only one time per year. This is an example of God's faithfulness to us through Jesus's sacrifice.

Looking at the rest of this chapter, we see encouragement to be faithful servants. Some of the examples are found in verses 22-25, where we are asked to remain faithful in five different ways.

Drawing near to God, and as we read earlier, this is easier now because of Jesus's sacrifice. Mark 15:38 says the curtain was torn from the top to the bottom, and according to this passage, that curtain was Jesus. Jesus (John 14:6) also tells us that the only way to the Father (the most Holy place) is through Himself (the curtain).

Hold on to that which is an example of God's faithfulness through Jesus's sacrifice.

Encouraging (spurring) one another to love and good deeds.

Fellowship and meeting together.

Remain faithful in encouraging one another.

As I look at these examples of faithfulness, I can't help but notice encouragement is listed twice. This tells me that remaining faithful in encouraging one another and holding each other accountable is important. However, as we do with most guidance and direction, we tend to ask, "What if we don't?" This section addresses that notion, and we are given different examples in verse 26-36. However, He makes it *very* clear in verse 38, "But My righteous one will live by faith, and if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." Verse 39, concludes, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."



***Week 7: Tuesday***  
***Kevin Wildman***  
***1 Kings 11:1-8***

I am amazed at the human ability to justify disobedience. So often, we have a silver tongue to validate why it is acceptable for us to disregard God's standards for what we desire. In our passage today, we see the fruit of a lifetime of justifications. Solomon, the son of King David, often called "The Wisest Man to Live" shows that it is possible to be wise, yet unfaithful. Maybe Solomon should have asked God for faithfulness instead of wisdom (see 1 Kings 3).

As I read 1 Kings 11:1-8, I can imagine Solomon mentally working through each choice that he made contrary to God's commands...sadly, I tend to hear it in my voice. "I know God said, don't marry the women of these people, but it was Him who gave me the wisdom to see how these marriages solidify political relationships that will make Israel great. And He does want Israel to be great!" One justification leads to another, and before you know it, Solomon is surrounded by foreign wives.

What Solomon and we fail to see is God's reasoning for His commands. We see them as unfair, unjust, and lacking in happiness...surely God wants me to be happy...right?!

Incredibly, almost always, God explains Himself and why He commands the things He does. Verse 2 is a quote of Exodus 34:16 (see vs 10-16), and the reason is to protect the heart. In fact, this passage of 1 Kings reveals another disobedience that led Solomon astray. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, God gives instructions for how the king of Israel is to reign and live, most of which Solomon disregarded. One of these instructions was, "he shall not acquire many wives" again, the reason is connected to the heart. Yet, we read that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. In all of his wisdom, Solomon failed to be faithful.

We also have an incredible capacity to convince ourselves that "my sin is between God and me." When I read this account, I am reminded that our sin has vast repercussions. How many Israelites were sacrificed to Molech on the "high place" built by Solomon? Could this where King Ahaz sacrificed his son (2 Kings 16:1-4) or King Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33:1-9)? Sin is never just between God and myself.

We need to remember that God's standards, His commands, are given to guard our hearts. Faithfulness protects the heart.

***Week 7: Wednesday***  
***Jeff Horlacher***  
***Daniel 6***



“So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and hurled him into the pit of lions. The king said to Daniel:

“Your God- the one you serve so consistently- will rescue you.” Daniel 6:16-17

Have you ever ran into an obstacle in life or gone through a rough patch? It could be something small, or it could be a significant life change. I know I have had my share. A lot of those events seemed to hit me one year, where one event after another seemed to pop into my life. The one thing that remained constant in all of it, though, was my relationship with God continued to grow. As the stress levels continued to rise, the small conversions I had with God got longer and more frequent.

Daniel was told about a new law saying he was not allowed to pray to anyone other than King Darius for thirty days, or he would be thrown in the lion’s pit. As soon as Daniel heard about the new law, he went up to his room and continued to pray to God three times a day. Daniel didn’t let outside influences or life events change his relationship with God, even though it could have cost him his life.

The part of the chapter that really sticks out to me is the fact that King Darius didn’t have any relationship with God, yet he knew that God would rescue Daniel. Wow, that is a big eye-opener for me. Here is a guy that doesn’t know much about God, but believes that he will save Daniel from the lions.

I know when times get rough, and we hit that big obstacle, it’s easy to stop trusting in God. It’s very easy to think why me, or that you will never recover. When that time comes again, I ask that you think of King Darius. He was a non-believer but still had enough faith to know that Daniel would be saved. God will save you too.

*“I am disappointed that I still love God so little and sin so much. I always had the idea that adults were pretty much the people they wanted to be. Yet the truth is, I am embarrassingly sinful...Sometimes, although I am aware of how far I fall short, it doesn’t even bother me very much. And I am disappointed in my lack of disappointment.” —John Ortberg*



***Week 7: Thursday***  
***Jacob Keeling***  
***Hebrews 11:32-38***

Have there ever been moments in your life that seemed like you couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel?

How did you overcome those times in your life in order to continue your relationship with God?

In Hebrews 11, the author talks about the Hall of Fame of Faith. He names Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Troubled times didn't overlook these guys either. They all, at some point in their lives, looked to find other things to make them feel good, or they were trusting in something else instead of God.

For example, Barak didn't want to do what God told him to do without Deborah. He felt more comfortable, and he trusted in Deborah at the time, more than God (Judges 4). In troubled times throughout life, you find yourself further away from God, even though he hasn't left us for a second.

Ephesians 2:10 talks about us being God's workmanship and staying faithful no matter what. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Hebrews 11, explains the consequences for bad actions. Dark times in our lives, for the moment, may seem like they would be absolutely impossible to overcome the obstacles, but those times also make us closer and stronger in our relationship with God. One of the definitions from Merriam-Webster for the word "faithful" is "steadfast in affection or allegiance." This same reference provides a synonym which is "loyal." Obedience would also be a good synonym as well.

Obedience is something you see in the people listed in the Hall of Fame of Faith in this passage. To wrap up Hebrews 11:38 says, "of whom the world was not worthy- wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth." It is saying the world didn't understand them because they turned from the old ways to follow God devotedly.

So I'll ask, in those troubled times, what do you do to be able to stay faithful in your faith journey with God?

***Week 7: Friday***  
***Derrick Jackson***  
***Joshua 24:14-15***



This may be a Fruit of the Spirit that everyone understands pretty clearly. Most, if not everyone, knows what it means to be faithful. Having to be faithful is something that everyone has experienced at some point in their lives. Whether it's to a spouse, job, or something else, we've been asked to remain faithful at some point or another.

However, we have also made being faithful a decision based on our own wants and desires. If being faithful pleases us, we do it...if being unfaithful pleases us, we do that as well. It's, unfortunately, a pervasive attitude in the world today to just do what pleases you. If staying faithful is what is asked or required of us, the only way we remain faithful is whether or not it pleases us to do so.

This is prevalent in the book of Joshua and throughout the history of the Israelite people. God had very clearly and simply said to the people to remain faithful to Him. In Exodus 20, God gives us the Ten Commandments, and the theme of being faithful is all over them. We have a choice to remain faithful to God or not.

The question to remain faithful, or not, is the same question Joshua asks the people in Joshua 24:14-15. Joshua tells the people to choose. That question is just as applicable to us today as it was then. There may not be gods from other countries that we are interested in, but there are plenty of things to distract us from serving and staying faithful to God.

The choice is ours. I pray that staying faithful to the Lord is something you are willing to do. I know it's not always the easiest or popular choice, but I promise you it will always be the right one. God has repeatedly proven His faithfulness to us, and He asks for us to do the same for Him.

Who have you chosen to stay faithful too?

What is keeping you from remaining faithful to God?

*"All the lovely words he writes are, taken together, the fruit (singular) of the Spirit. Now fruit is the natural product of life. If a tree is alive, it will bear fruit. That is the nature of being a living tree! Fruit is what you get when a tree has life in it." —Christopher J.H. Wright*



***Week 8: Monday***  
***Brian Sutherland***  
***Proverbs 15:1-4***



Speech is the first thing talked about in this chapter. I think because keenly, we cannot control our need to become superior through cutting others down with our words. So many times, we choose to forgo a gentle response with that of anger and malice. Instead, we should have an approach of tenderness, kindness, gentleness, something that I personally, and I'm sure many others struggle with daily.

Gentleness is a virtue not only through speech but also through our actions commands a greater respect from others. It closes the mouth of the lion, it takes away the ammo of the wicked and leaves them with nothing but lies and deceitful talk. The words in Proverbs 25:22 also ring true, "for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you."

In my personal life, little makes me more furious than when somebody speaks an untruth against me. Their words burn in my head and make me want to lash out! I wish I could say that prayer for gentleness, meekness, and humility are the first in my battle plan to defend my heart from the effects of slander or actions of malice from others. It is in these moments, though, that the words of Proverbs 15 should resonate, subduing the want or the need for retaliation in that moment. We should pray that the Spirit subdue our tongue and guide us to a loving conversation.

*"Growing fruit takes time. In our society, we want instant results. We have no interest in taking two years to get into shape or thirty years to succeed. Much like it takes years of practice for a person to play Mozart's Requiem well, we can't be trapped into thinking spiritual formation will happen in forty days or even forty months. This work, this process, involves more like forty years."—Nathan Foster*



***Week 8: Tuesday***  
***Nancy Pearson***  
***1 Peter 3:13-17***

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines gentleness as “the quality or state of being gentle; especially mildness of manners or disposition.”

It is important in God’s eyes to treat everyone with kindness and gentleness. We teach our young children the golden rule to “do to others what you would have them do to you,” Matthew 7:12. We may not know or even like the people we come in contact with each day, but we still need to treat them this way.

There are different ways in which we can show gentleness. Maybe it’s a hug to someone who is going through a difficult time, a kind word, a card to brighten someone’s day, a smile, or a pat on the back.

When we show gentleness to someone, it may be the only time that person experiences it. We don’t know what a person’s life is like and how our showing gentleness to them will influence their life.

Show gentleness to someone today, make their day!

Remember Philippians 4:5, “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” (NIV).



***Week 8: Wednesday***  
***Jason Davis***  
***1 Timothy 6:11-16***



*Context!* These verses immediately follow a section of Paul's first letter to Timothy in which he warns against "conceited" men marked by "envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, constant friction...men who have been robbed of "truth," thinking that "godliness is a means to financial gain" (v.4-5) who "fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction" (v.9). Paul now reminds Timothy of the things he is to pursue: "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness." (v.11) These are all virtues that require humility to some degree, especially when he mentions gentleness.

I find it rather amusing that Paul chooses to use the example of Jesus before Pontius Pilate after this litany of virtues that he lays before Timothy. Go back and read the interaction for yourselves (John 18). Let's be honest, this is the official who had the authority to hand Jesus a death sentence simply because he had the backing of Rome. Why didn't Jesus say anything? Where were those who would come to the rescue of the King of the Jews? Jesus doesn't raise His voice, condemn Pilate or the crowd. He simply states the truth. In fact, Jesus tells Pilate, "For this purpose, I was born, and for this purpose, I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37b).

Perhaps Jesus is setting yet another example for His followers. So often, we are quick to get offended. We are quick to our defenses. We are bold and passionate in our responses. After all, we are at war with the world, aren't we? Or, are we? Just one chapter before this, Jesus prays this prayer, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:15-17). Don't get me wrong, I am not saying we should not be bold or passionate. What I am saying is sometimes, we need to set aside ourselves, the theatrics, etc. and just let the truth speak... in gentleness.

***"It is as I abide daily, deeply in Jesus the Crucified One that I will taste the sweetness of His love, the power of His life, and the completeness of His salvation." —Andrew Murray***



***Week 8: Thursday***  
***Sue Bennett***  
***Ephesians 4:1-3***

Paul penned this letter to the church at Ephesus from prison in Rome. Unlike his letters to the Corinthians, the Galatians, or other churches, he did not write to address any specific issues in the church. Instead, he wrote to educate and encourage the believers he continuously prayed for - to live lives that clearly portray their position as inexplicably loved Children of God.

In verse 1, he urges them to live a life worthy of the calling they had received. The Greek word for urge means to exhort, to press, or to push. Worthy literally means "bringing up the other balance of the scales," drawing a picture of a precise balance between confession and authentic practice of faith. The calling they had received was not one earned through personal work or human effort. It was a gracious gift that God planned before creation - one accomplished through the cross. All who share this calling, this totally undeserved gift of salvation are also called as members of Christ's bride – His church.

"Be completely humble and gentle." Although many people might associate these words in verse 2 with weakness, that is not really the case. Essentially, gentleness is the consideration for something or someone besides us. It's easy to think of ourselves, our needs, our wants. Gentleness requires thoughtful restraint and comes from a place of controlled strength.

Paul asks us to make every effort to maintain oneness – the oneness he describes with words like humble, gentle, patient, and bearing with one another. Every effort. It's not easy, requires self-control, and a conscious decision to consider others gently like Christ gently considered us. He gave up His throne in heaven to live with us and sacrificed Himself to pay our debt of sin. Living in gentleness may be hard work, but it's work that reflects our own personal relationship with Christ because we love Him.

***Week 8: Friday***  
***Dave Sims***  
***Galatians 6:1-2***



In this devotion, I want to focus specifically on gentleness as we deal with people's sin. When we see a brother or sister caught in sin, how do we handle the situation? If I had a physical problem and need it fixed, I go to a doctor. I know that the doctor may have to bring some level of pain into my life to ultimately help me heal. I prefer a doctor who will work with great care and compassion, wielding a scalpel with surgical precisions to fix my problem. I don't want a doctor that barges into the room with an axe in hand to root out my problem and, in the process, maybe leave me for dead. Both images are of one who, with a blade, seeks to eliminate a problem. Which one am I? When I see a person in sin, what is my approach, and which instrument do I grab?

The Bible is described as a double-edged sword, and it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training. I have many times used it as a scalpel, but I have also used it to bludgeon a brother or sister toward obedience. It is the age-old struggle of "loving the sinner and hating the sin." Notice in this passage, though, that we are commanded to "restore gently."

This is a very simple test of our attitude and intent. When I am dealing with sin in someone's life, am I working to "restore them gently"? If the answer is no then I need to change my approach.

Also we are cautioned not to fall into temptation ourselves. If I am a recovering alcoholic I may help someone out of that addiction, but I probably should not set up meetings with them at their favorite bar. In my case, I don't need to be involved in a strip club ministry.

"Carry each other's burdens," how does this fulfill the "law of Christ"? Well, His command to us was to "love one another as I have loved you." That kind of love sees the weight of someone's sin and chooses to carry that load for the sake of their freedom. Gentleness doesn't mean that we never hurt someone, it means that we, with care and compassion, hurt with them as we help carry their load, and they help carry ours.

***"I don't want a surgeon who says he won't hurt me.  
All surgery requires an amount of pain to get better."***

***—Gary Sinclair***



***Week 9: Monday***  
***Gary Johnson***  
***James 3:1-12***



This passage deals with trying to control the tongue. Without diligent effort and constant practice under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible.

We need to practice. Each time we are in a position to put into practice self-control, we need to. Basketball as an example. We have our kids participate in basketball when they are old enough to pick up a ball. We buy them children sized goals and basketballs, and we put ball goals in our driveways and over barn doors. They play little league basketball. They may even participate in an AAU team. Then they enter into jr. high basketball, where they spend hours each day. Then it's on to high school ball. Where they will play at a minimum of 20 games a season and 3-5 hours a day practicing. Later to college, where they will play 40 games a year plus 20 hours a week in practice. Plus, many other hours in conditioning. At the professional level, they will play in 82 games a year, practice 5-6 hours a day, six days a week, and whatever else they do to improve their game.

They spend a minimum of 50 hours a week to perfect their game. Larry Bird was a 37.6% three-point shooter for his career. Reggie Miller, who played for the Pacers was a 39.5 percent three-point shooter. Both made less than 4 out of ten attempts, and yet we consider them great players. Stephen Curry, considered by many to be the best shooter in professional basketball, shoots 44.4% from the three-point line. And Steve Kerr, now retired with the highest three-point average in the professional ranks shoots at 45.4 from the three-point line. Even the very best with all the years of practice make less than half of their three-point attempts.

We need to put ourselves in a position where we can practice the "fruit" the Holy Spirit produces in us. Most of us engage the Holy Spirit only one hour a week in a church service. Avoiding Sunday school, small groups, revival sessions, personal devotions, and time with fellow Christians.

How can we think that we are not quenching the Spirit when we avoid all opportunities to be with Him? Why would we think He will work in our lives when we avoid Him?



**Week 9: Tuesday**  
**Ryan Gayler**  
**Genesis 25:29-34**

Have you ever given up something valuable for something else in return only to find that it wasn't worth it? In this passage, Esau was more than willing to give up his right as the firstborn son for food! How often are we willing to sacrifice long term gain for short term pleasure? We all have been guilty of making such a risky trade; I know I have, especially when it comes to food. Many times as humans, we envision something better than what it is only to discover the reality was not worth the price we paid.

I've recently discovered fasting is not only healthy but also a way to grow self-control in my life. And it's biblical! Fasting takes on various forms, whether it be for spiritual or health reasons. Initially, I started for health applications but soon realized it overflowed into the rest of my life! What I've also been awakened to is that I have an addictive behavior. I have the propensity to be drawn to unhealthy things to satisfy the desire to be closer to Christ.

Addiction comes cloaked in many forms...power, control, materialism, pornography, money, food, social media, etc. Fasting has opened the door to self-control and discipline that I never before had in my walk regarding my own struggles. Saying "no" to yourself is truly powerful and freeing!

Galatians 5:16-17 talks about the struggle between our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit. We are always at war with the desire to please the flesh. The flesh desires immediate results, whereas the Spirit desires growth and maturity. God knows our personal struggles. He wants the best for us and has provided a way for us to work through them.

With the power of the Spirit and the ability to say "no" to ourselves, we can gain self-control in the areas that we stumble. Only then can we claim victory over our struggles and temptations!

*"I don't want my life to be explainable without the Holy Spirit. I want people to look at my life and know that I couldn't be doing this by my own power. I want to live in such a way that I am desperate for Him to come through...I deeply desire that the Spirit of God would do things that I know are not of me and cannot be faked or accounted for by human reason." —Francis*

***Week 9: Wednesday***  
***Chris Nickle***  
***Joshua 7***



We learned in school about cause and effect. How an action has a resulting reaction or effect on something else.

Have we ever stopped and thought about the effect our sins have on others?

I wonder if we ever stopped and thought it through, would we sin a lot less? If we thought about who we would be hurting, would we stop?

Would Achan take the devoted items if he knew how his action would affect him, his family, and all of Israel?

"I coveted them and took them" That was what Achan said to Joshua in verse 21. "I saw the robe, silver and gold, I wanted them, so I took them." Who am I hurting? What is the effect?

In his case:

Achan coveted, and 36 men were killed at Ai.

Achan sinned, and 36 families had to mourn the loss of sons or fathers.

Achan disobeyed, and Joshua lost hope.

Achan stole, and all of Israel felt lost.

Achan lost focus, and Achan, his family, and all his possessions were destroyed.

Achan defiled the devoted items that he stole, and they had to be destroyed.

It's like a snowball rolling downhill. One action, one sin, one moment of selfishness, and the result in some way, could affect more than you think.

You sin, and Your Family could lose faith in God.

You sin, and your witness to others could lose its power.

You sin, and a price has to be paid.

Achan sinned and paid the price with his life, the lives of his children, his livestock, and his name removed from Israel's future. He was left as an example to others of the cost of sin. Even the devoted items for the treasury of God were destroyed because they were tainted by sins effect.

We sin and God had to pay the price. Jesus, God's Son, was beaten and crucified. Cause and effect. Because of our sin there is an effect. We should think about that.



***Week 9: Thursday***  
***Chris Shoaf***  
***1 Peter 4:7***

We have all practiced self-control at various times in our lives. Each of us has applied our self-will, self-determination, self-denial, and other self-imposed restrictions for countless reasons. Sometimes we train long hours to increase our endurance and strength for one sport or another. Then at other times when our clothes no longer fit, we deny ourselves all the good tasting food to lose weight.

In this verse, Peter is urging us to focus our self-control toward holy living and on the eternal things of GOD, not these temporary pleasures. Throughout the book of 1 Peter, we are reminded of the suffering the believers are facing and the life choices that can lead us away from God. In this verse, Peter gives us the incentive to practice self-control as well as some instruction on what our mindset should be.

#### The Incentive

Peter encourages the persecuted believers with an incentive to endure their sufferings and practice holy living in the first part of this verse, "The end of all things." I believe this is referring to the second coming of Christ, as he has also referenced in chapter 1:3 and chapter 2:12. He also reminds them that it can happen at any moment, "is at hand," where he is calling believers to live obediently and expectantly as though Christ's return is imminent.

#### The Instructions

"Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." Peter instructs the believer not to live for human passions, sensuality, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, or lawless idolatry. He also reminds us that the world will be surprised when you don't join in, and they will even ridicule you. Peter earlier says we should remember who is ready to judge the living and the dead at the second coming. We are to be sober-minded, alert, and watchful as we pursue holy living as we wait for the return of Christ. This will cultivate a mindset fixed on God that can enjoy the fullness of fellowship with Him.



***Week 9: Friday***  
***Debbie Jackson***  
***Genesis 39***



Why do we need self-control?

Joseph displayed self-control. How did he develop this discipline? We are desperate for self-control, and we must desire this discipline, or we will drown in self-defeat.

The time to prepare is not when we are faced with a crisis but in advance. It requires discipline to form the habit of prayer and self-control to withstand the obstacles that compete for our souls. Any out-of-control area in our lives, no matter how big or how small, is an open invitation to the enemy. Satan will use this to trample us.

Maybe we won't be faced with the temptation that Joseph faced, but what about overeating, overspending, watching too much TV, you name yours..... We live in a culture motivated by one major goal – gain a little bit more. We work too hard and make too little. We have more than enough to live complicated lives, but less than enough to be contented.

The key to self-control is the refusal to allow our enemies to rule or hold us captive and the decision to remain within the boundaries. We've been given the knowledge through the scriptures. It is our choice to add self-control. Any and all sin boils down to an issue of authority, His will or my will.

Beth Moore, in her study *Living Beyond Yourself*, put it this way:

Physical discipline and spiritual discipline often go hand in hand.

Prior discipline prepares us for the present dilemmas.

Self-control enhances effectiveness; self-indulgence limits effectiveness.

Self-control for God's sake invites God's blessing.

So we need to do a self-examination and see where we lack self-control. Ask someone to be your accountability partner. Ask God to help you in your required area of self-control and give Him control.

Any part of us not surrendered to the Spirit is virtually surrendered to the flesh, plain and simple.

“A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.” —Proverbs 25:28 (NLT)





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