

# New Believer Journey

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A 30 Day Intro to Growing in Your Relationship with Christ

# 30 Day New Believer Journey

Congratulations on taking this incredible step in your journey of faith! We're thrilled to walk alongside you as you embark on this new adventure with Jesus. Over the next 30 days, you'll receive daily guidance designed to help you grow closer to God and understand the fundamentals of your new faith. Each day, we'll explore key aspects of the Christian life, offering practical tips, heartfelt encouragement and opportunities to deepen your relationship with God.

## What to Expect

This guide exists to help you establish a strong foundation in your walk with Jesus. We'll cover a variety of topics from understanding how to read the Bible to developing a consistent prayer life; from learning about the Holy Spirit to discovering your unique purpose in God's plan. Each day's content is crafted to be accessible and relevant, ensuring you can apply what you learn to your daily life.

# Starting Your Journey: How to Read the Bible

Your Word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.  
- Psalm 119:105 NLT

Hey there! As you're starting your walk with God, it's crucial to get into the habit of reading the Bible. It's not just a regular book of stories; it's more like a guide, showing us the way through life and helping us know God more personally. Psalm 119:105 talks about the Bible being like a flashlight that helps us find our path. So, when you read the Bible, you can learn more about God and what He wants for you, and even develop a personal relationship with Him.

Now, you might be wondering how to get into reading the Bible. Well, it's not as tough as it might seem. You can set aside some time each day, even if it's just a few minutes, and start with the New Testament, especially the book of John. If you come across something that interests you, take a moment to think about what it might mean for you and don't hesitate to ask God to give you more clarity on what you're reading.

If you're feeling a bit lost or confused, that's totally okay! You can always join a group or church that reads and studies the Bible together or find a trusted pastor or friend who's more familiar with it and can help you out.

Just remember, the Bible isn't like any other book you might pick up. There's no other book like the Bible because in order to understand it, you have to know the Author (Jesus) firsthand. It's not primarily about you, although you are certainly included, but it's a story all about Jesus from beginning to end. The secret to reading the Bible is understanding that it's all about Him. It's like having a heart-to-heart with God, providing guidance when life gets rough, and giving you strength when you're feeling weak. So, when you're reading, focus on what God is revealing about Himself through His words and open your heart to Him.



**There's no other book like the Bible because in order to understand it, you have to know the Author (Jesus) firsthand.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How has reading the Bible provided comfort or guidance in your life so far?
- 2** Can you think of a specific Bible verse that has spoken to you recently? What do you think God might be saying to you through it?
- 3** Have you experienced any challenges in understanding certain parts of the Bible? How can you seek guidance to better comprehend these sections?

## Tip For The Day

**Start small and simple so you don't overwhelm yourself, but make sure to start!**

## Talking To God

Dear God, as I start diving into the Bible, please help me grasp what it's all about. Guide me on my journey and help me grow closer to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Opening the Door to Friendship with Jesus

**“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in, and We will share a meal together as friends.”**  
- Revelation 3:20 NLT

As a new believer, it's important to grasp that accepting Christ is only the beginning of an ongoing relationship with Him. Revelation 3:20 vividly describes Jesus knocking on the door of your life, waiting for you to invite Him in. This signifies an invitation to a deeper, more intimate fellowship with Him.

Imagine Jesus standing at the door of your heart, knocking not as a distant guest but as a close friend eager to share life with you. He desires to be a part of every aspect of your life, offering guidance, comfort, and companionship. Responding to His grace means allowing Him access to deeper levels of your heart, not just once but continually.

Building a relationship with Jesus is a lifelong journey. It involves daily moments of opening the door to Him, allowing Him into your thoughts, decisions, and emotions. Just as friends share a meal, Jesus desires to share in the joys and struggles of your life, creating a bond that grows stronger with each passing day.

Cultivating this ongoing relationship means embracing Jesus as not just a Savior but a constant companion. It's about acknowledging His presence in every area of your life, allowing Him to shape your character and guide your steps.



**Daily moments of opening the door to Him, letting Him into your thoughts, decisions, and emotions.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How can you actively open the door of your heart to Jesus in your daily life, inviting Him into your thoughts and decisions?
- 2** Reflect on a recent moment when you felt Jesus knocking on the door of your heart. How did you respond, and what could you do differently in the future?
- 3** In what areas of your life do you find it challenging to let Jesus in? How can you take small steps to invite Him into those aspects and deepen your relationship with Him?

## Tip For The Day

Today, invite Jesus into a specific part of your life – whether it's a decision, challenge, or joyful moment.

## Talking To God

Dear Jesus, thank You for standing at the door of my heart. Today, I open it wide, inviting You into every part of my life. Help me build a lifelong friendship with You, sharing each moment as we walk this journey together. In Your name, amen.

# Discovering the Fruit of the Spirit

**But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**  
- Galatians 5:22-23 NLT

As you embark on your Christian journey, it's essential to understand the fruit of the Spirit, which are not traits you muster up on our own to make yourself a better person. Instead, it's a supernatural work that God does within you.

The fruit of the Spirit, listed in Galatians 5:22-23, are like the beautiful blossoms on a tree planted by God Himself. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are not things you and I achieve by our effort but are the natural outcomes of God's presence within us.

Imagine the Holy Spirit as a master gardener cultivating these qualities in the soil of your heart. Love blooms as God's love fills you, joy springs forth in His presence, and patience takes root as you rely on Him. It's not about working harder; it's about surrendering to God's transformative work within you.

When you feel like impatience is taking over or joy is hard to find, remember that God is the ultimate cultivator. Allow His Spirit to prune away negativity and nurture the growth of His beautiful fruit. It's a partnership where your openness to God allows Him to produce these characteristics in your life. He is faithful to bring forth His fruit.

As you navigate your faith, lean into God's transformative power. It's not about striving to be better on your own but trusting that God's Spirit is at work within you, shaping you into a reflection of His love and grace day after day.



**It's not about working harder; it's about surrendering to God's transformative work within you.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How can you actively surrender to God's transformative work in your life, trusting Him to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit within you?
- 2** Think about a challenging situation in your life. How might relying on God to produce the fruit of the Spirit, like patience or kindness, change the way you respond?
- 3** In what ways can you invite God into your daily routine to nurture the growth of the fruit of the Spirit, recognizing it's not about your effort but His divine work within you?

## Tip For The Day

Ask God to grow the fruit of the Spirit in you and guide your actions. Trust in His work to bring forth love, joy, peace, etc.

## Talking To God

Dear God, thank You for the fruit of the Spirit. Today, I invite You to cultivate love, joy, and all Your beautiful qualities within me. Guide my actions, so I may reflect You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Embracing Jesus As Lord

**If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**  
- Romans 10:9 NLT

As a new believer, you've just taken a significant step by declaring your faith in Jesus Christ. Our verse today in Romans 10:9 beautifully sums up your newfound belief and salvation through faith in Jesus.

By declaring "Jesus is Lord" and believing in His resurrection, you've anchored your faith in the core truth of salvation. You can't earn it through good deeds or trying to be perfect.

Instead, it's a personal acknowledgment that Jesus is the Lord of your life, and through His death and resurrection, you find forgiveness and eternal life.

Imagine you are drowning in the water and you raise your hand up to reach out for someone to save you. In this analogy, sticking your hand up is the picture of your faith, but it's up to the Savior to actually reach in and pull you up out of the water. The good news is that Jesus will always reach in to save your life.

This faith is more than a set of rules; it's a relationship with God Almighty. It's about acknowledging Jesus as the center of your life and trusting in His redemptive work. Your faith is the bridge that connects you with the unending grace and love of God.

By declaring Jesus as Lord and believing in His resurrection, you've embraced the heart of salvation—a personal relationship with Your Creator who will always embrace you with open arms.



**This faith is more than a set of rules; it's a relationship with God Almighty.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** What does it mean for you personally to declare Jesus as Lord and believe in His resurrection, and how does this impact your daily life?
- 2** In what ways can acknowledging Jesus as the center of your life deepen your relationship with Him and shape your decision-making?
- 3** Reflect on the simplicity of salvation through faith. How does this truth bring comfort and assurance to your journey as a new believer?

## Tip For The Day

**The best way to embrace Jesus as Lord in your life is to get a steady diet of God's Word in your life day after day.**

## Talking To God

Dear God, thank You for the gift of salvation through Your Son Jesus. Today, I declare Him as Lord of my life and believe in His resurrection. Guide my steps, decisions, and thoughts as I submit to Him as my Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

# It's A Process: Don't Beat Yourself Up

**And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.**  
- Philippians 1:6 NLT

As you begin your new relationship with Jesus, it's important to understand that your spiritual growth is a process. God's work within you doesn't happen overnight. Philippians 1:6 assures us that the One who started this good work within you will see you through to the very end.

Imagine your journey of faith as a masterpiece in progress. God, the Master Artist, began a beautiful work within you the moment you accepted Jesus. This process involves refining, shaping, and transforming you into the very person He envisions.

So, when you stumble or feel weighed down by past mistakes, remember that God's love for you is unwavering. Every step you take and every moment of growth is part of His intricate plan. God isn't finished with you yet, and He won't give up on you.

It's okay to make mistakes; it's part of the refining process. Trust that God's grace covers your journey, and His love is molding you into a reflection of His goodness. Your spiritual growth is a journey, not a destination.

Be patient with yourself, for God is patient with you. Embrace the process, knowing that the same God who started the work within you will bring it to completion. You are His masterpiece in the making.



**Your spiritual growth is a journey,  
not a destination.**

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# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How can you embrace the idea that your spiritual growth is a journey, not a destination, especially during challenging times?
- 2** Reflect on a recent stumble or mistake. How does the death of Jesus and assurance of God's ongoing work within you bring comfort and encouragement?
- 3** In what ways can you be patient with yourself and trust that God's love is molding you into His masterpiece, even when you feel you're not making progress?

## Tip For The Day

Today, remember that growing spiritually takes time. Embrace each step, be patient with yourself, and trust God's love in every moment.

## Talking To God

Father, help me embrace the journey of spiritual growth, understanding that it's a process guided by Your love. Grant me patience and assurance in every stumble and step forward. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Significance Of Water Baptism

After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him.  
- Matthew 3:16 NLT

Water baptism is more than just a ritual; it's a powerful symbol of your faith journey, signifying a profound change that happens when you choose to follow Jesus. In Matthew 3:16, we see Jesus being baptized, a pivotal moment where the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended on Him.

Why is water baptism significant for you?

1. Identification with Christ. When you step into the waters of baptism, you are identifying with Jesus' own baptism. It symbolizes your decision to follow Him, publicly declaring that you are a follower of Christ.

2. Death to your old life. As you are immersed in water, it represents dying to your old self, the sins of the past, and resurrecting to a brand new life in Christ. It's a powerful visual of the transformative work God has done in your heart.

3. Public declaration of faith. Baptism is a public proclamation of your faith in Jesus. It's like changing your status on social media so the world can see you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you are committed to living for Him.

Choosing to be baptized is an important step of faith, a public expression of the inward change that has taken place in your heart. It's a profound moment where you declare, "I am cleansed of all my sins, identified and raised with Christ, and will always follow Him."



**It's a powerful visual of the transformative work God has done in your heart.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How does the symbolism of water baptism resonate with your personal journey of faith?
- 2** Consider the significance of publicly declaring your faith in Jesus through baptism. How might this declaration impact your daily life and interactions with others?
- 3** In what ways can baptism inspire positive changes in your thoughts, actions, and relationships?

### Tip For The Day

Talk to your church about being baptized if you haven't yet. If you've been baptized share your testimony with someone.

### Talking To God

Father God, thank You for new life in Christ. Give me courage and understanding as I think about being baptized. Help my decision to show my love for You and commitment to a new life. In Jesus' name, amen.



# Soil Check #1

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Great job completing your first 6 days! Keep it up. Perseverance is a key ingredient in your spiritual growth.

Today we'd like to introduce you to something we call a "soil check". Every seventh day we will invite you to slow down and reflect on what you read this past week.

In Matthew 13, Jesus taught the parable of the Sower. He talked about the 4 different kinds of soil which represent 4 different conditions of the human heart. We can never assume that the soil of our hearts will remain in a healthy place by default. Instead, regularly check the condition of the emotional state of your heart to make sure it isn't becoming hardened, shallow, or distracted.

Use the soil check below to assess your current condition so you can keep growing in a healthy way.

Rate on a scale from 1-5 your assessment of the soil of your heart.

## Hardened Heart



## Shallow Heart



## Crowded Heart



## Healthy Heart



## Soil Check for a Hardened Heart

- Do you find certain areas of your life are off limits to God's correction or word?
- How do you react when someone offers constructive criticism based on biblical truth? Are you open to learning and growing?

## Soil Check for a Shallow Heart

- How do you respond to difficulties or challenges in your new faith journey? Are you quick to get discouraged and feel like giving up when faced with obstacles?
- Did you initially receive God's Word with great enthusiasm and joy?

## Soil Check for a Crowded Heart

- What are the competing priorities in your life that might be choking out your spiritual growth?
- Are there worldly concerns or desires that consistently take precedence over your pursuit of God's Word?

## Soil Check for a Healthy Heart

- On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your desire to spiritually grow? One being the lowest desire and five being the highest.
- Do you feel like you have begun a relationship with Jesus and you are excited to know Him more?

# Praying For Others

**Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.**

**- James 5:16 NLT**

Do you want to deepen your prayer life? One simple way to do this is through “intercession.” This means we stand up for others by praying on their behalf. The Bible calls this “standing in the gap” (Ezekiel 22:30). The New Testament uses the term “one another” 100 times, 47 of which are used as commands. Many of them focus on unity, love, and humility. By praying for others, we are living out those qualities.

First, when praying for others, we stand in unity with them in their need. Unity means we work according to what the Bible teaches, and we seek His will together for their situation. It is God’s will and Word that unifies His people.

Second, praying for others shows love to and for them. It is love that focuses on someone else’s needs, and talks to God on their behalf. It is love that helps us open up to one another, sharing the struggles of our sins in joined prayer. Jesus showed us the fullness of His love in His sacrifice on the cross. We follow His example as we love one another through prayer.

Third, praying for others shows and grows humility. It is humbling to make someone else the priority, setting our needs aside. Jesus humbled Himself as a servant for us, so in humility, we follow His example of service. It is in this gift of prayer that we serve one another, doing what Jesus taught us by considering the needs of others above our own.

When we stand in the gap for someone else, God works in our hearts in these three ways, among many others, to shape us more like Jesus. He stood in the gap for us first. We pray for others as a way of echoing and spotlighting Him. That’s a powerful opportunity and a powerful gift!



**Jesus humbled Himself as a servant for us, so in humility, we follow His example of service.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 Do you remember the first time someone prayed for you? How did that make you feel?**
- 2 Consider how God “stood in the gap” for you through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus. How does that level of sacrifice affect your view of how you can serve others?**
- 3 Who can you pray for today? How will you make “standing in the gap” a part of your daily disciplines with the Lord? What reminders will you put in place?**

## Tip For The Day

**Keep a note on your phone to collect prayer requests for others.**

## Talking To God

**Father, help me to be mindful of others as You are mindful of me. Grow my heart for their needs and help me consider their needs more highly than my own. Jesus, thank You for doing this for me. In Your name, amen.**

# The Blessing of a Wholehearted Connection

Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”  
- Matthew 22:37-38 NLT

Did you ever get paired up for a school project with someone who didn't really care about doing things well, or even about completing the project? When you are passionate about something, you want to see it done well. When you have a personal stake in things, you want everyone to operate at the same level of commitment, right?

When it comes to loving God with ALL your heart, you're going to have to follow His lead. Romans 5:8 says that God showed us the fullness of His love through Jesus' sacrifice in the face of our sin. He held nothing back so that we might be rescued. So, when Jesus tells us to love God with our whole hearts, He's just telling us to walk after the pattern that He set.

1 John 4:19 tells us that we love Him because He first loved us. He started it, and He's helping us grow to be more like Jesus. This means we have to ask some key questions like, “How do I love God with my whole heart when it comes to my relationships?”, or “How do I love God with my whole heart when it comes to my finances and career?” You see, if we love God with our whole heart, it will start showing up in everything we do, every day.

When you and I choose to walk like Jesus walked, we end up knowing Him more deeply. In the Bible, there is a command and an expectation to live our lives in this way. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that we are God's life-long project. We are God's workmanship, trophies of His grace, and it is the honor of a lifetime to walk in the same way as the King of Kings.



**God showed us the fullness of His love through Jesus' sacrifice in the face of our sin.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** What things or concerns are competing for first place in your heart?
- 2** Love is a choice we make. How will you choose to love God with ALL your heart today?
- 3** How do you see Jesus exhibiting a wholehearted love for people in the New Testament?

### Tip For The Day

Keep track of your time to gauge what you're devoted to as you learn to prioritize what is important.

### Talking To God

Father, I am easily distractible. I know my heart can be divided at times. Help me love Your Son wholeheartedly and prioritize Him above all other things. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Power Of Thanksgiving

Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name.

- Psalm 100:4 NLT

Imagine your heart as a spiritual garden that needs to be maintained. It might have some neglected and unkept areas due to being overrun by worry, doubt, or unthankfulness. When you express gratitude to the Lord, it's like handing Him the tools to tend your heart by removing the negativity and allowing the seeds of future fruit to sprout.

Psalm 100:4 is an invitation to approach God through Jesus with thanksgiving. Here are three compelling reasons why giving thanks to the Lord is crucial for each one of us in our daily lives.

1. It helps to deepen your relationship with God. Expressing gratitude helps you to personally connect to God's goodness and provision. This practice fosters intimacy by deepening your relationship and understanding His love.

2. It fosters spiritual growth. Thanksgiving is a transformative practice that sows seeds of future fruit, nurtures a positive mindset, and helps you navigate challenges with resilience. Being grateful to Jesus becomes a source of strength, enabling you to overcome obstacles and grow in your journey of following the Lord.

3. It builds a foundation of joy. Gratitude is a response to God's blessings and also a mindset that shifts your perspective. In the midst of life's difficulties, thanksgiving is a tool that the Lord uses to increase your joy and happiness, reminding you of His constant goodness no matter what you may be facing.

Incorporating gratitude into your daily life is an absolutely vital practice for healthy spiritual growth. Always keep your heart open to allow God to nurture and cultivate the soil of your heart. Even if you're having a hard time in life, just begin by saying, "Thank You".



**Gratitude is a response to God's blessings, and also a mindset that shifts your perspective.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 How can you start incorporating simple expressions of gratitude into your daily life, recognizing God's goodness?**
- 2 What are three natural things you are thankful for and three spiritual?**
- 3 Write down 3 things that cause you to give thanks to the Lord in this season of your life.**

## Tip For The Day

**Start a gratitude journal. Each day, jot down at least one thing you're thankful for – big or small.**

## Talking To God

Dear God, thank You for today. Help me be grateful and grow closer to You. Teach me to see Your goodness even in tough times. In the mighty name of Jesus, amen.

# Does Anything Stay The Same?

**We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in His love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.**  
– 1 John 4:16 NLT

Have you ever felt frustrated, confused, or anxious because everything keeps changing in your life? Relationships shift, people move on, jobs change, and people pass away. How great would it be to have just one thing that didn't change? Think about the soul-anchoring benefits of having something personal and meaningful to you that would always remain the same. My friend, look no further because the steadfast love of God is what you and I are truly looking for.

A common and everyday human experience is the desire to connect with a person who truly understands you at your core. In those internal moments of longing for relationship and connection, you need to know that God is that special Person for you. The assurance that He not only knows every detail about you but is completely devoted to you and me, flaws and all, allows the soul to rest in indescribable peace. God's identity is selfless, expressive, perfect love that is completely committed to you no matter what. The consistency of God's love, knowing you in your entirety, and delighting in you like a good father with his children, provides a priceless solace beyond measure.

So, as you journey through all the unpredictability that this world has to offer, consider God's commitment to you. Look to Jesus and trust in His faithful love. He is the One Foundation that can't be shaken. It's natural to seek security in a million other things, but I believe that you will choose the most secure path. Are you shaken? Are you hurting? Friend, God Almighty loves you. His identity is unwavering, and He is the one Person that you can fully trust.



**The steadfast love of God is what you and I are truly looking for.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How does anchoring your soul in God's steadfast love bring peace in the face of life's changes?
- 2** Open the Bible to the book of Psalms and find one verse that you can apply to your life to help you experience peace during change.
- 3** How might sharing the depth of God's love with your family or friends transform your relationships and daily interactions?

## Tip For The Day

**Practice trust today by surrendering a specific concern or fear to the Lord. Allow His abiding presence to bring peace to your heart.**

## Talking To God

**Father, I am grateful for the depth of Your love that You have for me. You really do love me with all Your heart, and I am so grateful for the blood of Jesus poured out for the forgiveness of all my sins. In Jesus' name, amen.**

# Discovering Your Defender

**The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust Him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.**  
- Psalm 28:7 NLT

Imagine your heart as a spiritual garden that needs to be maintained. It might have some neglected and unkept areas due to being overrun by worry, doubt, or unthankfulness. When you express gratitude to the Lord, it's like handing Him the tools to tend your heart by removing the negativity and allowing the seeds of future fruit to sprout.

Psalm 100:4 is an invitation to approach God through Jesus with thanksgiving. Here are three compelling reasons why giving thanks to the Lord is crucial for each one of us in our daily lives.

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2. It fosters spiritual growth. Thanksgiving is a transformative practice that sows seeds of future fruit, nurtures a positive mindset, and helps you navigate challenges with resilience. Being grateful to Jesus becomes a source of strength, enabling you to overcome obstacles and grow in your journey of following the Lord.

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Incorporating gratitude into your daily life is an absolutely vital practice for healthy spiritual growth. Always keep your heart open to allow God to nurture and cultivate the soil of your heart. Even if you're having a hard time in life, just begin by saying, "Thank You".



**Focus your energy on remaining behind the powerful shield.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How does knowing that Jesus is your unwavering defense impact your perspective on life's battles?
- 2** Take a moment to identify areas in your life where you feel weak or vulnerable. How can relying on God as your impenetrable shield bring comfort and strength in those areas?
- 3** What habits or daily practices would best help you remain behind the powerful shield and stay close to Jesus?

## Tip For The Day

Read Ephesians 6:10-20 and apply what you read to your day today.

## Talking To God

Father, thank You for Your steadfast protective power in my life. Today I focus my eyes upon Your Son and I choose to look to Him as the strongest defense that exists. In Jesus' name, amen.

# Your New Captain

**“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.”  
- John 16:33 NLT**

Picture this: it’s 9 pm, you’re stuck in a small boat, 50 miles out, in the middle of the sea, and all of a sudden you’re caught in a really bad thunderstorm that came out of nowhere. You’ve been in many storms like this before, but this time it feels different. As the lightning crashes and the waves begin slamming against the hull, you remember the decision you made to hand over your role as captain to someone else.

In the past, you’ve had a lot of trouble navigating these storms on your own, but the reason it feels so different this time isn’t because the storms have changed; the authority has! You recently gave the control of your ship over to God, and He has given His Spirit to be with you as your seasoned captain through these chaotic waters. You can always trust that He will lead you better than you could ever navigate by yourself.

Your new captain has faithfully led millions of people successfully through the storms of life and won’t ever let you down. He is gentle, kind, trustworthy, inseparable from God, and always present, exactly like Jesus is. He always speaks the truth of God’s Word, just like Jesus does. In fact, He will never say anything that contradicts what’s in the Bible, which is why Jesus calls your new captain “the Spirit of Truth.”

So when you traverse through rough waters, God is with you. If you need truth amid confusion, ask the Spirit of Truth to give you clarity and light in the darkness. He sees the shores of eternity ahead and will steer you in the right direction because He loves you dearly. Your trip isn’t guaranteed to be smooth, but what you can always count on is your captain’s loving presence and gentle guidance as He charts your course through every storm.



**If you need truth amid confusion, ask the Spirit of Truth to give you clarity and light in the darkness.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 Consider the idea of surrendering control to God. What’s one area you can start giving control of to God today?**
- 2 Reflect on a challenging moment since your decision to follow Jesus. How has His Spirit helped guide you through that trial?**
- 3 How does knowing the Holy Spirit is always present as your captain impact your heart?**

## Tip For The Day

**As you read your Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to give you truth in an area of your life that is difficult for you to navigate.**

## Talking To God

**Father, I thank You for giving me Your Spirit as my guide. Thank you for cleansing me by Jesus’ blood and placing Your Spirit on the inside. I love You, and I worship You. In Jesus’ name, amen.**

# Soil Check #2

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Great job completing your second week! Keep up the dedication.

Continue to use the parable of the sower from Matthew 13 and Luke 8 to do a soil check. Ensure your heart remains teachable and receptive to God's Word.

Use the following questions to assess where your heart is at this time.

Rate on a scale from 1-5 your assessment of the soil of your heart.

<b>Hardened Heart</b>	<b>Shallow Heart</b>
● — ● — ● — ● — ●	● — ● — ● — ● — ●
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Crowded Heart</b>	<b>Healthy Heart</b>
● — ● — ● — ● — ●	● — ● — ● — ● — ●
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

## Soil Check for a Hardened Heart

- Do you find you lack compassion or a desire to pray for others? Why might this be?
- How do you react when reminded to love God with all your heart, especially in challenging areas of your life?

## Soil Check for a Shallow Heart

- How do you respond to life's uncertainties and changes? Do you anchor your soul in God's steadfast love, or do you feel easily shaken?
- Have you experienced joy in your new faith journey, or do challenges and negative changes cause you to become numb or disheartened?

## Soil Check for a Crowded Heart

- Are there distractions or competing priorities that hinder your daily practice of gratitude and thanksgiving to God?
- What areas of your life are you finding difficult to surrender control to God? How might these areas be an obstacle to your spiritual growth?

## Soil Check for a Healthy Heart

- On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your attitude of gratitude?
- Do you feel like you are growing in your love for God based on your desire to be with please Him?
- Are you practicing loving others by interceding in prayer for them?



# The Vine And His Branches

**“Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing.”  
- John 15:5 NLT**

Have you ever experienced a sense of disorientation or dissatisfaction with life, but you weren't able to pinpoint the reason why you felt this way? I've often experienced this persistent, nagging feeling, but what's truly fascinating is that whenever I join others in worship, prayer, or Bible study, those negative emotions fade, replaced by a sense of purpose and strength. Connecting with Jesus and sharing His life with others always realigns us, much like how drooping branches are revived with fresh water and sunlight, enabling them to bear more fruit.

In John 15, Jesus said that He is the life-giving Vine, and we are His branches. Picture a vine with only one branch – it wouldn't be fruitful. Now envision the most fruitful vine on earth, full of life and bearing interwoven, grape-producing branches. The more that healthy branches are joined together as one, the more glorious the vine is to behold.

A current challenge of our day is that a large percentage of Christians view their spiritual life as entirely private. A disease of "doing church on our own" has emerged, hurting and distorting the way of life that Jesus intended for us.

So, I encourage you to see the opportunity that is before you to have great friendships and good connections when you gather to meet to worship and honor the Lord. Psalm 34:3 urges, "Come, let us tell of the LORD's greatness; let us exalt His name together." It's a brand-new day to pursue healthy, thriving connections and glorify the Vine together.



**Connecting with Jesus and sharing His life with others always realigns us.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 How does connecting with Jesus in worship, prayer, or Bible study impact your sense of purpose?**
- 2 In what ways can you actively join with other believers to continue to bear good fruit?**
- 3 Reflect on the challenges mentioned. How can you contribute to overcoming the trend of isolation?**

### Tip For The Day

**Connect with others after the worship service is over. The people who stay the longest at church are usually the ones that love being there the most.**

### Talking To God

**Father, I pray that You would open up good and healthy connections with other believers to build godly friendships that ultimately glorify Your Son Jesus. In His name, amen.**

# The Power in His Name

**There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.**

**- Acts 4:12 NLT**

Has anyone ever told you, "Mention my name, and they'll help you out?" In life, opportunities often arise because someone else's name opens doors for us. That name grants us permission, a bit of authority, or even favor.

As Christians, we carry the name of Jesus Christ with us. In God's eyes, this signifies His love and grace upon us. To the world, however, it can be a point of contention, and some may even resent us for it. But we seek our identity in God's opinion, not in human approval.

When we read the Bible, we see Jesus' name being used by His disciples and apostles long after His ascension into heaven. Today, we continue to pray in His name, do good works in His name, and serve others in His name. As we go about our daily lives, God empowers us to act in His name and provides us with the Bible, His Word, which guides us in all the decisions we make.

There are no new revelations or understandings to be gained; the power lies in God's perfect Word and in the name of Jesus, which helps us overcome every hardship, trial, and temptation. However, it takes time to learn to rely on Him fully. He has given us grace, and out of our love for Him, we seek solutions and answers that honor His name.

Memorizing scripture equips us at all times (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 Peter 3:15), providing us with wisdom and understanding. By carrying the name of Jesus in our hearts wherever we go, we can truly make a difference in the world.



**But we seek our identity in God's opinion, not in human approval!**

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# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 In what specific areas of your life do you find it challenging to live in a manner that truly represents the name of Jesus?**
- 2 What does having a new identity in Jesus do for your heart when it comes to knowing you are free, a new person, and on a new path?**
- 3 Memorize Colossians 3:17 or any verse that helps you remember you carry the Name of Jesus over your life.**

## Tip For The Day

**Use scripture to sculpt your prayers. God's Word has power to guide your heart.**

## Talking To God

**Jesus, Your name is above every other name. Thank You for providing the power I need to face the day, and for Your presence in my daily life. I need You every day! Amen.**

# Grace: God's Reset Button

Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.  
- Ephesians 2:9 NLT

At some point, we all ask ourselves tough questions like, "I failed God... will He really forgive me?", "What if I sin again?", or "Have I gone too far?" As a new believer in Jesus, it's normal to feel like God may be disappointed or frustrated with you because of your struggles.

Friend, I have good news for you. God's grace is far more powerful than any sin you commit after your salvation. If you mess up, hit the reset button, turn away from your sins, and look up to the One who loves you and will never leave you.

Remember, for the Lord, it's an honor when you hit the reset button. It shows Him that you trust Him with your life, no matter how messy it may be, and that you believe there's no one better to bring your sins to than Him.

Are you struggling? Press the button today; don't wait. "How many times can I press it?" Unlimited. Seriously, the Creator of the heavens and the earth saw all your future shortcomings and still chose you. He is unconditionally devoted to you. God's commitment to you isn't based on your ability to make Him happy but on Jesus' infinite ability to carry you through.

Now, don't get me wrong—Jesus won't ever tell you to keep sinning. On the contrary, He will help and empower you to overcome your present and future struggles. If you regret past mistakes, remember that God's grace is not tied to your performance but is an unconditional love, always present even in difficult times. Continue to press on, embrace God's grace today in a new way, and live in the freedom that Jesus has for you.



**Remember, for the Lord, it's an honor when you hit the reset button.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 Remember your first experience of God's unconditional love. Describe what it felt like.**
- 2 One of the many great benefits of being saved is that you will always have an open door to return to God. How does it feel knowing that you are always welcome back home?**
- 3 In what ways can you embrace God's grace and live in the freedom Jesus offers you today?**

## Tip For The Day

**Worship Jesus with a thankful heart because you are totally forgiven.**

## Talking To God

**Father, I know I could never out sin Your grace. Grow me and strengthen my heart in Your grace as the foundation of my life. In Jesus' name, amen.**

# When Sorrow Creates Opportunity For Joy

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

- James 1:2 NLT

We rarely sign up for the hardest jobs on purpose. Occasionally, we'll "take one for the team," but usually, we look for tasks or roles that will cause us the least distress. However, life doesn't provide sign-up sheets for hard times. No one seeks our permission before difficulty arises.

In fact, Jesus Himself, the "Man of sorrows" acquainted with suffering (as Isaiah 53 reminds us), warned us that this world would bring trouble. Yet, He immediately reassures us to be of good cheer because He has already overcome the world.

As we follow Jesus, it's crucial to develop a biblical understanding of suffering, trials, and hardships. Many people say, "I feel like Job in the Bible!" during tough times. We must remember that Job, in all his trials, did not sin by blaming God (Job 1:22 NLT).

Understanding that hard times come because sin has broken this world helps us maintain a proper perspective. God's goodness, righteousness, holiness, and kindness remain unchanged, unshifted, and undiminished, even when we face difficulties. In fact, remembering His unchanging nature during tough times is a tremendous help.

James 1:2 tells us, echoing many other scriptures, that hard times grow us when we surrender them to God. When God grows us, we should rejoice. Look at Romans 5:1-6 or Philippians 4:1-9. Job 36:15 says that God speaks to us through adversity. So, no hurt is wasted when we bring it to God. Jesus suffered, and as His followers, we can expect to experience suffering too. But in following His footsteps, we find hope, because He has already overcome it all.



**But in following His footsteps, we find hope, because He has already overcome it all.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** Read the passages mentioned so far in this devotional. What do you see God telling us about suffering?
- 2** Have you known any Christians who have "suffered well"? Think about how God worked through their situation.
- 3** How will you prepare now to face suffering later? What passages of scripture will you memorize?

### Tip For The Day

Talk to mature Christians about how God got them through hard times.

### Talking To God

Jesus, I know You know suffering. Thank You for that proof that You understand us and the hurts we go through. I look forward to seeing You grow me through it all. Amen!

# The Significance Of Communion

**For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until He comes again.**  
- 1 Corinthians 11:26 NLT

Picture this: You're sitting down to a special meal with your closest friends and family. It's not just any meal; it holds deep meaning and significance for you. Each bite and sip reminds you of a great act of love and sacrifice that has forever changed your life. This is what communion represents for followers of Jesus.

When you take communion, you're doing more than simply eating bread and drinking grape juice. You are commemorating the greatest sacrificial offering ever given to you. The bread symbolizes Jesus' body, beaten and broken for your healing. The juice represents His blood, poured out for the forgiveness of all your sins.

A crucial part of receiving communion is ensuring that your heart belongs entirely to Jesus. To move forward, you must be willing to let go of everything God deems sinful in His Word. Take a moment to pause, reflect, and intentionally turn away from all wrongdoing as God's grace propels you to live a holy life.

As you eat the bread, remember Jesus' body, beaten and broken for your spiritual healing. His sacrifice is not just a past historical event but an ongoing reality of His active forgiveness in your life each day.

The juice represents His blood. Jesus' blood is the reason you and I will be in heaven forever. He endured the cross so that you could be free from the condemnation of your sins before God's throne. This means that you are completely forgiven, once and for all. Every time you receive communion, celebrate and remember the significance of Jesus and the profound love that drove Him to the cross for you personally.



**Jesus' blood is the reason you and I will be in heaven forever.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 How does remembering Jesus' sacrifice during communion impact your understanding of His love for you?**
- 2 In what ways have you experienced Jesus' presence and work in your life recently?**
- 3 What steps can you take to live out the grace and forgiveness you've received through Jesus' sacrifice?**

### Tip For The Day

**When you take communion, take your time. Slowly and intentionally remember when Jesus has done for you.**

### Talking To God

**Father, thank You for the incredible sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus. When I take communion, help me to remember and appreciate the depth of Your love expressed on the cross. In Jesus' name, amen.**

# What Do I Do With it Now that I've Read it?

**Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive His approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.**  
- 2 Timothy 2:15 NLT

Unless you have a photographic memory, you'll need to invest time to know God's Word and embed it in your heart. Even with a flawless memory, scripture isn't merely about memorization, acquiring knowledge, or understanding facts. Spending time with God in His Word is meant to transform us. It's part of the rebirth that Jesus purchased for us through His sacrifice on the cross. God loves us enough to meet us where we are, but He also loves us enough not to leave us there.

Therefore, when we read the Bible, one of the essential questions we should ask ourselves is, "How will God change me as I read this?" Some passages are "descriptive," informing us about events so we can be informed. Others are "prescriptive," showing us how to live our lives in Christ. Sometimes, passages intended to inform us are wrongly used as checklists of tasks. As we grow in our journey with Jesus, it's crucial to learn from reliable teachers who can guide us in understanding these distinctions.

The question of, "What do I do with this now?", is one of the most vital aspects of reading God's Word. Questions such as, "What does this reveal about God?", "What does this teach me about the human condition?", "How does this demonstrate God's provision for us in Christ?", "What response does God desire from me or from His Church?", and "Is there anything I need to confess or repent of?" Questions like these help us grasp how to apply what we read. The Bible is too profound to merely read; we must also act upon its teachings.



**The Bible is too profound to merely read; we must also act upon its teachings.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 Have you asked a mature Christian about how they study scripture? Who can you ask?**
- 2 What need for change in your heart did you see when you last read God's Word?**
- 3 How are you putting yourself in a position to listen to God's voice in the Bible every day?**

## Tip For The Day

Check out some articles on "Inductive Bible Study" to go deeper.

## Talking To God

Jesus, Your example of daily faithfulness in the Father's will is what I need today. Help me hear Your heart in Your Word, and provide the strength and wisdom to do what You say. I know my obedience comes from loving You. Amen.

# Encountering Jesus Through Prayer

**“And this is the way to have eternal life – to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the One You sent to earth.”**

- John 17:3 NLT

Whether you enjoy "get to know you" games or tend to avoid them, building relationships always requires time, trust, and vulnerability. This investment often results in a small, close-knit circle of friends. If we value a relationship and desire it to grow, we must prioritize the time and effort needed for that growth.

In John 17, Jesus offers a profound prayer for His disciples who were present with Him and extends it to include us today. This chapter provides deep insight into His heart and is a wonderful place to learn more about Him. Throughout the gospels, we encounter several prayers by Jesus, each offering lessons for us to grow and apply to our lives. John 17 stands out as the longest and most revealing of His prayers.

To truly get to know someone, inquire about what they've been praying about and how they've been engaging those matters with the Lord. Jesus taught us the significance of prayer as it lays bare our hearts before God, revealing our priorities, values, and concerns. When we observe Jesus in prayer, we witness His compassion, His zeal for God's glory, and His profound love for us. Prayer unveils an intimate space where our souls meet with God.

If we are to deepen our relationship with Jesus, we must meet Him in the place where He wants to meet with us. All of Scripture, including Psalm 119, which celebrates David's love for God's Word, reveals God's heart for us. David's joy in meditating and praying through the Word of God demonstrates how we draw closer to God and come to know Him more intimately.



**Prayer unveils an intimate space where our souls meet with God.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** If you only talked with someone once a week, or a few times a month, would you know them well? How often makes for a good relationship.
- 2** Do you learn more about someone by talking to them, or listening to them? Why?
- 3** If you want to prioritize getting to know Jesus, when will you listen to Him? How much time will you give to meeting with Him?

### Tip For The Day

**Setting an appointment is the best way to get guaranteed time. Schedule your time with Jesus.**

### Talking To God

Jesus, I want to know You more. Help me know You in a greater way. Help me hear Your heart in Your perfect Word. Teach me and help me be more like You. Amen.

# Soil Check #3

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Great job completing your third week! Keep up the dedication.

Continue to use the parable of the sower from Matthew 13 and Luke 8 to do a soil check. Ensure your heart remains teachable and receptive to God's Word.

Use the following questions to assess where your heart is at this time.

Rate on a scale from 1-5 your assessment of the soil of your heart.

## Hardened Heart



## Shallow Heart



## Crowded Heart



## Healthy Heart



## Soil Check for a Hardened Heart

- Do you find it challenging to connect with fellow believers? Are you holding them at arm's length?
- Are there areas of your life where shame and guilt are keeping you locked in a pattern of sin?

## Soil Check for a Shallow Heart

- When you feel disoriented or dissatisfied, do you turn to Jesus for realignment? Or do these feelings persist?
- Do you see a need to hit the "reset button" with God when you make mistakes?

## Soil Check for a Crowded Heart

- Are there distractions or competing priorities that prevent you from connecting deeply with other believers or fully embracing your new identity in Christ?
- Do feelings of inadequacy or past mistakes crowd your heart, making it hard to accept God's grace? (Romans 8:1)

## Soil Check for a Healthy Heart

- Would you rank your relationship with Jesus through worship, prayer, and fellowship with other believers as top priorities?
- Reflect on your recent experiences of God's grace and forgiveness. Have these experiences encouraged progress in your spiritual growth and daily walk with Christ?
- Are you consistently practicing gratitude, intercession, and surrendering control to God? How do these practices impact your daily walk with Christ?



# God Loves Imperfect People

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.  
- Romans 3:23 NLT

You are now a part of the family of God as an adopted child. Pause and let that sink in. You have made a lifetime commitment to follow Jesus! When I reflect on my own journey, I wish someone had shared with me what I'm about to tell you. These key points, if applied to your life, will equip you for the journey ahead.

It's crucial to remember that we haven't reached heaven yet. This might seem obvious, but it's important to understand. Everyone you meet in church, including myself, is still flawed in many ways, despite being completely forgiven through Jesus.

Here's a key insight: When you step into a church, expect that at some point, someone may hurt or offend you. It's part of being in a community of imperfect people. Approach others with a heart set on serving and loving them unconditionally. The church is where flawed individuals gather to support each other and grow in the grace of Jesus.

Colossians 3:13 reminds us, "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

So, dive into your church community with enthusiasm. Be prepared to forgive others, just as Jesus always forgives us. Ask God to cultivate humility and compassion in your heart when others cause hurt. His grace is more than sufficient for every human imperfection. As you walk alongside fellow flawed believers, you'll witness the beauty of God's redemptive work in each soul, including your own.



**Everyone you meet in church, including myself, is still flawed in many ways, despite being completely forgiven through Jesus.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 How does knowing that we're not in heaven yet change how you view other people?**
- 2 According to Colossians 3:13, are there specific people that you need to forgive right now?**
- 3 How does God's love toward you empower forgiveness and grace in your relationships?**

### Tip For The Day

Ask God to give you a heart like Jesus that is prepared to forgive others.

### Talking To God

Father, I ask You to give me a soft heart toward others that is prepared to love even when others may hurt me. Transform me into looking more like Your Son. In Jesus' name, amen.

# The Church: A Supportive Family

**All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's supper), and to prayer.**

- Acts 2:42 NLT

Every community has a rallying cry, cause, or mission. As Christians, our community rallies around the good news of Jesus. He is our Lord. The life we live together in Him isn't without direction. Our God isn't a God of chaos or apathy. How we live out our lives as Christians matters and should align with God's guidance.

Some Christians attempt to go at it alone, while others attend church sporadically, showing up only on Easter and Christmas. Unfortunately, these options leave us vulnerable and lacking in support. We aren't meant to navigate our faith journey solo.

Scripture provides clear instructions for how we should live this life. Beyond numerous "one another" passages (about 100 of them in the Bible), we see examples like Acts 2:42, which shows God's people gathering together often. From the onset, the Church purposefully gathered together for many reasons

These gatherings serve two primary purposes. First, for biblical teaching, and second, for fellowship with other believers. We engage in conversation, share laughter, and deepen personal connections. Breaking bread together adds an extra layer of closeness, while prayer, binds us together while we carry each other's burdens.

If we simply show up for the sermon and then leave, we miss out on the richness of what God intends for us. When we're sick, who brings the chicken noodle soup? When we're hurting, sad, or lonely, who offers a supportive shoulder? When we have cause to rejoice and praise God, who celebrates with us? In every case, the answer is "The Church!"



**If we simply show up for the sermon and then leave, we miss out on the richness of what God intends for us.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 How would having a healthy, growing Christian community be a help for your growth and maturity in Christ?**
- 2 What is one step you can take today to find a church or get connected to one in a deeper way?**
- 3 What signs in your life do you recognize that let you know when you need to be around other people? How do you anticipate the church helping in those moments?**

### Tip For The Day

**Joining a ministry team at church helps you meet new people and make connections!**

### Talking To God

**Father, thank You for giving us Your Church as a family and community. Help me be a blessing to others, even as they bless me. It's all for Your glory! In Jesus' name, amen.**

# Overflowing Love

And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows.

– 1 Thessalonians 3:12 NLT

Has anyone ever asked you what fruit trees are for? Probably not, because their purpose is in their name! Fruit trees must grow in various ways, but ultimately, a healthy fruit tree is expected to produce fruit, right?

When fruit is produced, its purpose is to carry and nourish seeds. The tree must generate something that benefits others, not itself, arising from the overflow of what sustains it. As fruit falls, its nourishing elements are used up, and the seeds sprout, initiating the cycle anew.

Similarly, when God first loved us, that love wasn't meant to remain within us. We were designed to produce fruit from God's love given to us and extend it to those who need it. Just as a hungry person is nourished by fruit from a tree, those who are spiritually hungry are nourished by the fruit that flows from our lives which should be an outpouring of God's love moving through us.

A healthy Christian takes the love poured into them and dispenses it into the lives of others they encounter. As the old poem says, "Love wasn't put in your heart to stay. Love isn't love till you give it away." Growing in a relationship with Jesus Christ means actively growing in and applying God's love to others.



**When God first loved us, that love wasn't meant to remain within us.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 Reflecting on the analogy of a fruit tree, how does the concept of producing fruit and spreading God's love resonate with your understanding of your own faith journey?**
- 2 In what ways can you intentionally plan to share the love of Christ with those around you, ensuring that the overflow of God's love in your life reaches others?**
- 3 Considering the highlighted quote, how has God's love transformed your perspective on sharing that love with others?**

## Tip For The Day

Sharing the love of Christ can happen spontaneously, but planning to share it makes sure we follow through.

## Talking To God

Jesus, Your example of love amazes me. Please help me see opportunities to share the love You first showed me. Let my life overflow with You to those around me. In Your name, amen.

# Bad Company Is No One's Friend

**Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character."**

**- 1 Corinthians 15:33 NLT**

As Christians, we are called to live a life that is distinct and separate from the world around us. This distinction between being "in" the world but not "of" the world becomes clearer as we walk with Christ. Those who embrace worldly ways produce fruit that reflects their motivations, as described in Galatians 5:19-21 which produces fruit that is ultimately corrupt and detrimental. In contrast, the Holy Spirit produces in Christians fruit that is productive, beneficial, and honorable, as outlined in verses 22-23 of the same chapter.

The Bible contains numerous warnings for us as Christians to avoid close relationships and associations with those who live according to sinful desires and motivations. Despite our good intentions to help them, Scripture reminds us that "bad company corrupts good character." It's often easier for a hardened heart to remain unchanged, and in our compassion, we may find ourselves compromising rather than standing firm in our faith.

According to 2 Corinthians 2:14, those who are lost in sin, who are not Christians, cannot comprehend our actions or motivations. This isn't due to their lack of intelligence but because their spirits are still dead in sin. We cannot expect people focused on sinful pursuits to share our values or understand our convictions. It creates a spiritual divide that cannot easily be bridged.

Therefore, while we can share Scripture and point others toward Jesus, ultimately, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts. Until that transformation occurs, we must remain steadfast in our faith and gentle in our communication when declining activities that are contrary to God's will.



**Ultimately, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts.**

## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1 What boundaries for Christian behavior do you need to set in your life?**
- 2 What relationships, in Christ, do you need to work on developing?**
- 3 Think about the choices God has rescued you from and thank Him for helping you.**

### Tip For The Day

**Knowing what your standards are before you meet up with people saves a lot of heartache.**

### Talking To God

**Father, I need wisdom to make good choices, and to develop spiritually beneficial relationships. Please help me see who You want me to be, and strengthen me to confidently follow You. In Jesus' name, amen.**

# A Love That Matures

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud.  
– 1 Corinthians 13:4 NLT

Back in 6th grade, I developed feelings for a girl who was in 4th grade, and it was a new experience for me. Since she lived nearby, we spent a lot of time together. However, things became complicated when I saw her chatting with another guy. I felt intensely jealous and didn't handle it well. Instead of being patient and kind, I acted strangely and suspiciously, wanting to know what was going on. Looking back, I now see how immature my behavior was, but everyone can act like that at times.

The Bible emphasizes something crucial about love in 1 Corinthians 13:4: Love is patient and kind. At that time, I didn't grasp this. I lacked patience and kindness. Real love requires time; it doesn't rush or force things. I wish my 6th-grade self had understood that better.

Love also entails kindness like helping and encouraging others. In my jealousy, I missed an opportunity to show kindness to the girl and her friend. The love described in the Bible desires the best for others, even when we feel disappointed.

Jealousy, boasting, and pride caused complications for me. However, 1 Corinthians 13:4 teaches us about a love that supports others without competing against others. Let's strive for a love that demonstrates patience and kindness, reflecting Jesus' love toward us. In our friendships and relationships, let's practice humility, refrain from showing off, and be considerate of others' needs. In doing so, we follow God's example of love, which is patient, kind, and always considerate of others.



**The love described in the Bible desires the best for others, even when we feel disappointed.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How can I actively practice patience and kindness in my interactions today, especially when faced with situations that may trigger impatience or unkindness?
- 2** How can I ensure that my love for others is genuinely focused on their well-being, even in moments of personal disappointment or frustration?
- 3** How can I incorporate humility, avoid showing off, and be more understanding of others' needs?

## Tip For The Day

Practice patience and kindness in your interactions today. Show someone kindness through small gesture or a kind word.

## Talking To God

Heavenly Father, grant me the strength to live out patience and kindness in my interactions. Forgive past lapses in jealousy and pride. May Your love guide my actions, reflecting Your grace in my relationships. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

# Soil Check #4

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As you complete this set of devotionals, it's essential to conduct a final soil assessment to ensure your heart remains fertile and receptive to God's Word.

Here's a comprehensive assessment to help you reflect on your entire journey.

Rate on a scale from 1-5 your assessment of the soil of your heart.

## Hardened Heart



## Shallow Heart



## Crowded Heart



## Healthy Heart



## Soil Check for a Hardened Heart

- Are there specific passages of Scripture that you struggle to accept or apply to your life? Why might this be?
- Do you find it challenging to prioritize time with God and His Word daily? What obstacles are in your way?

## Soil Check for a Shallow Heart

- How do you respond when you encounter passages that challenge you to change? Do you take the necessary steps to apply them to your life?
- When you face trials or difficulties, do you lean on God's Word for strength and guidance, or do you tend to rely on your own understanding?

## Soil Check for a Crowded Heart

- Are there distractions or competing priorities that prevent you from fully engaging in your relationship with God and His community?
- Do feelings of inadequacy, past mistakes, or unresolved conflicts crowd your heart, making it hard to experience God's peace and joy?

## Soil Check for a Healthy Heart

- On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your commitment to knowing and applying God's Word in your life?
- Reflect on your recent experiences of God's presence and work in your life. How have these impacted your spiritual growth and daily walk with Christ?
- Are you consistently practicing gratitude, intercession, and surrendering control to God? How do these practices impact your daily walk with Christ?

# Who Is Your “One”?

Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what He did for me.  
- Psalm 66:16 NLT

Have you ever had the chance to share with someone what God has done in your life? Have you spoken about how Jesus saved you and how the Holy Spirit is actively working in your life? If so, you've experienced the joy of giving testimony to God's goodness. Sharing our testimony is a natural part of our life in Jesus and it's a great way to honor the Lord and give thanks for what He has done.

Many people intertwine their testimonies with the gospel message, and that's completely natural because our testimonies often start with our response to the good news of Jesus. They go hand in hand and should be shared whenever we have the opportunity.

However, if we had to choose only one to share, it should always be the gospel. Our personal testimony doesn't save people; it's the gospel that has the power to save.

The gospel is succinctly summarized in Titus 3:4-7: "But—When God our Savior revealed His kindness and love, He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of His grace He made us right in His sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life."

Our testimony, then, is our personal reception and response to that gospel message. We share about our life before encountering Jesus, how He saved us, and what He is doing in our lives now. Sharing both the gospel and our testimony brings us joy, glorifies God, encourages others, and spreads the hope of salvation. It's a wonderful practice to regularly gather our thoughts, write them down, and prepare to share the story of how God is working in our lives with those who need encouragement to seek Him.



**Our personal testimony doesn't save people; it's the gospel that has the power to save.**

# Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** Read Titus 3:4-7 again. How would you summarize these verses in your own words?
- 2** Think about where you heard the Gospel for the first time, and what led to you responding in faith. What was going on? Who shared it with you?
- 3** Write out your testimony following these three points: 1) Your life before Jesus. 2) How Jesus saved you. 3) What is Jesus doing now?

## Tip For The Day

Find a friend to practice this with. Take turns sharing the gospel and your testimonies. It builds confidence!

## Talking To God

Jesus, thank You for being the Author of my story. Thank You for writing Your love on my heart. Thank You for giving me everything I need to share Your great grace with others. Amen.

# God's Love in Action

**"But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you."  
- Matthew 5:44 NLT**

During the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, a woman named Immaculée Ilibagiza survived the violence, seeking refuge in a pastor's house with other women. As violence escalated, they hid in a bathroom for 91 days. Immaculée, a Tutsi, prayed for those responsible, embodying Matthew 5:44.

After the genocide, Immaculée faced forgiveness challenges. She forgave perpetrators, including Felicien, involved in her family's killing, demonstrating love and forgiveness. Overwhelmed by guilt, Felicien begged forgiveness. Empowered by Jesus' words, Immaculée embraced and forgave him, illustrating Jesus' transformative message.

Immaculée's ability mirrors Jesus, who, 2000 years earlier, modeled forgiveness by dying on the cross for His enemies. Jesus never asks us to do what He hasn't done first. Does Jesus' teaching contradict human nature and logic? Absolutely, but God's love surpasses man's love alone.

God's love reconciles unreconcilable relationships and heals impossibly broken situations. Jesus's sacrificial death was the greatest act of love. Romans 5:8: "But God showed His great love by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." God loved us when we were His enemies, enabling us to love our enemies likewise.



**God's love reconciles unreconcilable relationships and heals impossibly broken situations.**

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## Pause & Reflect

Take a few minutes to pause and reflect on what you just read. Answer the questions honestly and be encouraged as you continue your walk on your faith journey with God today.

- 1** How can you apply the principle of loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you in your daily life?
- 2** Are there individuals in your life whom you need to forgive, and how can you embody love and forgiveness in those relationships?
- 3** In what ways can you actively demonstrate God's reconciling love in situations where relationships seem unreconcilable?

### Tip For The Day

**Practice forgiveness today by choosing one person who may have wronged you and offer a sincere prayer for their well-being and healing.**

### Talking To God

**Dear God, like Immaculée, grant me strength to love and forgive those who may have hurt me. Just as Jesus forgave on the cross, Your love can heal the most broken situations. In Jesus' name, amen.**



# Final Thoughts

Congratulations on completing the 30-day journey! Great job sticking with it! Here are some helpful tips to help you keep growing in your relationship with Jesus.

## Be patient and kind

Keep working on being patient and kind to others, just like 1 Corinthians 13 talks about. Think about how you can be more patient and kind, especially when things don't go your way.

## Share your faith

Don't be afraid to tell others about what God has done in your life. Practice talking about the gospel and your own story of faith, like how Jesus saved you and what He is doing in your life now.

## Forgive others often

Love your enemies and pray for people who are mean to you, just as Jesus taught in Matthew 5:44. Think about people you need to forgive and show them God's love.

## Stay connected

Be involved with your church. Join in activities, listen to Bible teachings, and look to strengthen and support fellow believers. This will help you grow stronger in your faith.

## Make time for focused time with God

Make time every day to read the Bible and pray. This will help you get to know God more and learn about His plans for you.

## Remember

It's not about being perfect, but about trying to get better every day. Keep growing in your love for God and others, and let His grace guide you. Keep up the great work!

