



**ROOTED**  
IN THE SPIRIT

**DAILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**PART 1**



To be rooted in Christ means more than simply knowing about Him—it means abiding in Him, consistently drawing from His strength through prayer, worship and His Word. Just like a tree’s roots anchor it deep into the soil to grow and flourish, our spiritual roots need to go deep into the presence of God. When we grow roots in Christ, we’ll naturally bear fruit—fruit that reflects His love, His power and His character.

Jesus modeled this truth throughout His life. His public power—His teachings, His healings, His authority—was the overflow of His private time with the Father. His greatest works came from His deepest moments of abiding in prayer.

In this devotional, we’ll learn how to abide more fully in Christ, recognizing that the strength and fruit we need come from our private prayer life. Let’s commit to growing deeper roots in the Spirit so that we can bear fruit that honors God and impacts the world around us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a horizontal line and a cursive 'J' with a long, sweeping tail.

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# DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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*"... Our Father in heaven..."*

**Matthew 6:9b (NLT)**

- **What do You want to say to me today as my Father?**

*"... may Your name be kept holy."*

**Matthew 6:9c (NLT)**

- **What do You want to reveal to me about Your power today?**

*"May Your Kingdom come soon."*

**Matthew 6:10a (NLT)**

- **Help me make Your priorities my priorities today.**

*"Give us today the food we need,"*

**Matthew 6:11 (NLT)**

- **Is there anything specific You want me to do with my time or the people I'm around today?**

*"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us"*

**Matthew 6:12 (NLT)**

- **Reveal to me anyone I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness.**

*"And don't let us yield to temptation..."*

**Matthew 6:13a (NLT)**

- **Is there anywhere I'm vulnerable to temptation?**

## BEING AND DOING

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*but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on His law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.*

**Psalm 1:2-3 (NIV)**

I've noticed that people and churches can focus on **being** or **doing**. I mean that some people say *I'm more of a **being** with God person*, while others say, *I'm more of a **doing** what God did person*. The problem is, to live like Jesus means you don't pick. Jesus spent an inordinate amount of time with the Father, but He also constantly loved and served others. If you aren't doing both, you aren't living like Jesus, and you'll never be spiritually healthy.

For those who are diving deep into the Spirit, they're creating fruit, but it's rotting, and no one around benefits from it. Those bearing fruit without great roots will eventually burn out or be knocked over. The key is to be a person like Jesus who can **be** and **do**.

Notice what Psalm 1 says: First, this tree is planted, and its water source is unending. This refers to the person whose roots are deep in the Spirit, who meets with Him and meditates on His word day and night. Once this happens, their fruit doesn't wither, and it's good for others.

For much of my life, I'd jump from one season to another. Then, I started to learn that the key to Jesus was both **being** and **doing**. Daily, I'd wake up and draw near to God. I stopped making excuses, and it became as necessary as breathing. I knew that without deep roots, I wouldn't be able to walk in love and handle the day's tasks. However, I knew that what God did in me, He also wanted to pour out through me for the benefit of others.

What if our church was filled with people whose roots went deep into the Spirit daily, who were filled with love and power, and then were sent out daily to restaurants, jobs, neighborhoods and schools to be broken bread and poured out wine for others? That would be a church following the way of Jesus. It's not complex, but it's not always easy. This is what it means to love God and others. You have to get the order right, and you have to be committed to both!

**APPLICATION:** Get with God today and listen to who He calls you to serve and love.

**PRAYER:** Ask the Spirit whether you fall to the **being** or **doing** side. Ask how He wants you to live more like Jesus. Thank Him for wanting to meet with you and use you!

# LEARNING TO DELIGHT IN THE WORD OF GOD

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*But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law, he meditates day and night.* **Psalm 1:2 (NKJV)**

One of the things that must shift in our discipleship is approaching His word with delight instead of as a duty! The psalmist says that the word of God is like honey to our lips. I don't know anyone who approaches chocolate cake like it's a duty. They approach it with delight. This should be how we approach the word of God.

The other day, I was tired and supposed to spend the day with my kids, but I just wanted to lay around and do what I wanted. As I started, I got frustrated because I couldn't do what I wanted, which is selfish, I know. I asked God to help me focus on Him and make my focus just being with kids and nothing else. I was surprised when it was one of the best days I've ever had. Why? I believe this because I had the right attitude and spirit! We always talk about showing up, but how we show up matters.

If we approach the word of God as though it's a duty, then we won't have the right attitude, and we'll end up missing so many of the blessings of God! So, each morning, ask God to help you show up with the right attitude and spirit. When you spend time with God, remind yourself that you're meeting with the God of the universe, and the most powerful being in the world delights to meet with you! How do we cultivate this delight? It starts with a desire to know God more intimately. When we begin to see God's word not as a task but as a treasure, our hearts will be drawn toward it.

The other part is understanding that every part of God's word is full of life and wisdom. When I read the Bible, I don't read it as a history book. I read it as a living book full of life and joy. There is life that transforms us and draws us into deeper life on every page and in every sentence. This will shift the way you approach God. Ask God to give you fresh eyes to see His word with joy and delight. His word is good and capable of changing your attitude, perspective and life!

**APPLICATION:** An attitude of gratitude will change the way you see God and others

**PRAYER:** Spend time reading Psalm 1 and ask the Spirit of God to stir your heart towards His words. As you read, thank God for what He reveals or what sticks out to you! Thank Him for His goodness and that He delights in speaking to you!

# ROOTED DAY AND NIGHT ON GOD'S WORD!

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*"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*  
**Joshua 1:8 (NIV)**

*but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on His law day and night.*  
**Psalms 1:2 (NIV)**

We're told to read the Bible and meditate on it. For many of us, the challenge is starting a day with God and staying connected with Him throughout the day. I can wake up and have a great time with God through the Spirit, but by lunchtime, I can forget Him or slip into the flesh. When Jesus invites us to take communion, He says, *"Do this in remembrance of me!"* Jesus knows we're prone to forget Him. When we read the Bible, sometimes we forget what we read. However, meditating allows us to read and remember the words of Jesus.

Meditation is reflecting on scriptural truths, allowing them to shape our thoughts and actions. When Joshua was about to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, God gave him the powerful command to meditate on His word day and night, promising it would lead to prosperity and success. God invites us to keep His word at the forefront of our minds. Meditating day and night means that His truths become a part of every moment of our day—our thoughts, decisions and interactions. The more we meditate, the more we internalize God's will for our lives.

**APPLICATION:** Here are a few ways to meditate on God's word day and night:

**Pick a Scripture:** Find a verse that speaks to you. Repeat it aloud or in your mind. Reflect on its meaning, how it applies to your life, and what God might say through it.

**Apply:** How does this verse speak to my situation or challenge me to grow?

**Write:** Journaling can help cement the Word in your heart. Write down insights you receive, prayers that flow from your meditation, and how the Word applies to specific areas of your life.

**Pause and Reflect:** Find moments throughout your day to pause and reflect on a piece of Scripture. This helps keep the Word at the forefront of your mind and heart.

**Memorize:** Memorizing verses helps you carry God's word with you throughout the day. Having a verse or passage in your heart allows you to meditate on it without needing a Bible.

**PRAYER:** Look at ways to apply the scriptures and pray about including this into your daily rhythm.



# THE HAPPY PERSON!

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*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on His law day and night.*

**Psalm 1:1-2 (NIV)**

The word *blessed* here means happy. It reads like this: *Happy is the one who....* For years, I thought of God as a killjoy, but I've come to see God as the happiest being in the universe. Think about this. There's no one in the entire world who is happier than God! Do you see Him that way?

Those who aim for happiness on this earth rarely get it. However, those who aim for heaven get happiness, too. It's a byproduct of life in the Spirit. When I think of the Godliest people I know, I think about their joy and happiness. How does this happen? Is it their upbringing or personality? Not at all. Some have had tough lives filled with adversity. God's happiness started to bleed into their lives. It came from hanging out with the happiest being in the universe.

Have you noticed that if you hang out with someone long enough, you start to talk, think and act like them? The same is true of God when you hang with Him regularly, not just on Sundays. You begin to act, think and talk like Him. Sometimes, we believe God is only in the serious things. The Bible helps us understand every good and perfect gift comes from God.

God doesn't just want to make you holy. He also wants you to be happy. Here's the key: Your happiness can't be at the expense of holiness, or you'll never be really happy. The world makes God a genie for pleasures and joy, but God doesn't just want our happiness. He also wants our holiness. When you go after the holiness of God, you'll find happiness. One thing that leads to happiness is hanging around people who don't follow the patterns of the world, as we see in Psalm 1. They deliberately avoid the influences of the wicked, sinners and mockers. They find delight in God's word, meditating on it consistently. Walk with God and Godly people and watch happiness bubble up in your life.

**APPLICATION:** When you go after the Holiness of God, then happiness will follow.

**PRAYER:** Thank God that holiness creates deep happiness and joy. You're free to love and find joy because you know the depths of God's love and provision. Ask the Spirit if there's anything blocking happiness in you today. Ask if there's anything you need to give to Him!

# WALKING WITH OTHERS

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*Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.*

**Proverbs 13:20 (NIV)**

I love this simple principle: You walk like who you walk with. You can be rooted in the Spirit, but spending time with foolish or evil people uproots the work God is doing in your life. Solomon, the son of the great king David, wrote Proverbs, and the Bible calls him the wisest man ever. Solomon had real encounters with God and was filled with a spirit of wisdom, but his life didn't end well. He turned from God, and his future generations would end up turning from God. He had such a great start but such a tragic ending. What happened?

The Bible is clear that he married wives that he shouldn't have. The Israelites were commanded to marry in their community. This wasn't a push against interracial marriages. It was a push against inter-faith marriages. God knew the principle that you walk like who you walk with. People can be nice and evil at the same time. We don't like hearing this, but any friend who would cheer you all the way into hell and destruction isn't your friend—that's evil.

Have you investigated those walking closely with you? Are they causing you to become more like Jesus or less like Him? You need Godly people who will help you step into the future and the life God has for you. The great thing about Godly people is they don't see you as you are. They call you to who you will be! They speak up when you're walking off the path. Do you have people in your life who will do that?

Knowledge is different than education. A wise person is someone who loves God and walks in the Spirit. A smart person is well-educated. Both can be true, but some smart people aren't wise. On the flip side, I also know people who are incredibly wise but aren't as educated as others. It's essential to understand the kingdom of God works differently than the kingdom of this world. Wise people focus on the kingdom of God. Wise people help you make decisions for the future. Wise people help you keep one eye toward eternity. Are you a wise person to those around you? Are you surrounded by wise people? These are two of the most important questions you can ask to help you become more like Jesus!

**APPLICATION:** You walk like who you walk with.

**PRAYER:** Ask the Spirit to reveal who you're walking with and their impact on your life. Pray for those friends who are blessing you and those bringing you down. Ask the Spirit to reveal who He wants you to walk closer with this season.

# YOUR ROOTS CREATE FRUIT

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*That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.*

**Psalm 1:3 (NIV)**

I deeply believe that when you grow roots, you'll always bear fruit, but so many people don't like this approach. We want power, peace and wisdom quickly. When your life is buried and hidden with Jesus, you'll become a blessing to others.

Here's a major key in creating fruit— you need the Spirit to work and create a new heart in you. The tree in this verse is not self-sustaining but relies on the constant flow of water for life, growth and fruitfulness. Similarly, those who remain connected to God's word are refreshed, fruitful and firm in their faith. You cannot bear fruit without the life of God flowing through you!

The fruit you bear in your life isn't for you. It should be a refreshment to others. Think about watermelons and how different fruits grow in different seasons. When we stay connected to God, He will grow us in busy seasons, retirement seasons, changing seasons with kids or work, joyful seasons and tough seasons. You don't have to worry about how you'll handle each season. You face them when they come to life.

The Bible is clear: when you focus on God, you'll bear fruit. You can trust God and His timing in your life. Also, I love that it says the leaves will not wither. Too many people fear losing their faith or wonder if it's real. This verse promises that if we focus on drawing near to God, the enduring power of God will sustain us and carry us! In contrast, those who do not follow God's ways may wither and be unable to withstand challenges.

This doesn't mean a life free from difficulties but highlights the overall success of living a life aligned with God's will. When we live in the way of the Lord, our paths are directed, and success in God's eyes is guaranteed! Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to refresh and sustain you? The psalmist reminds us that a life rooted in God will bring fruitfulness, stability and success according to His purposes. The most important thing is to seek God and let Him worry about the rest!

**APPLICATION:** Seek first the kingdom of God today, and don't let different seasons keep you from that!

**PRAYER:** Help me remain deeply rooted in Your Word so that I may bear fruit in due season. May my life reflect Your goodness, and may I stand strong in Your presence. Help me prosper in Your will and bring You glory in everything I do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# NOURISHING THE SOUL FOR PUBLIC WITNESS

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*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)**

*The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.*

**Acts 4:13 (NLT)**

Many years ago, I was introduced to a retired Pastor named Bill O'Brien. After an afternoon of swapping stories, Pastor Bill invited me to look at an unusual tree growing in his backyard. Upon further examination, I discovered that this single tree produced multiple varieties of apples. It turns out that he had painstakingly grafted the branches of different types of apple trees onto a single host. The key was to line up the green cadmium layer of the host tree with the adopted branches and then allow enough time for the sap to flow. Sap is the lifeblood of trees. It allows the life of the host to flow directly into its adopted members, and they bear fruit.

God uses this picture of grafting to describe our relationship with Christ. In fact, Jesus said that the bearing of spiritual fruit *is to My Father's glory* (John 15:8 ESV). You don't need to jump through spiritual hoops to bear spiritual fruit. We simply need to be connected to God. After all, His life flowing in our veins gives us the power to be His disciples. Don't be fooled into thinking that the amount of time you spend reading or praying makes you effective (Matthew 6:7-8, 2 Corinthians 12:8). This makes the results about our performance and not on the One who gives us His Spirit. Instead, we need to focus on spiritual practices that foster reliance on the power and presence of God.

**APPLICATION:** Before starting your day with all kinds of activities, sit silently before God for a few minutes. Ask Him to fill your mind with the awareness of His presence. Ask Him to bring you divine appointments today to bear witness to Him. Ask Him to put His thoughts in your mind and to empower you to do what you cannot do on your own.

**PRAYER:** Lord, I recognize that every assignment You give me today is a gift from You. Please help me not squander what you have entrusted to me on self-glory. Help me rely on Your power and leading today.

# CULTIVATING INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

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*Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.*

**Galatians 3:24-25 (NLT)**

I have had to enforce a strict, rotating, assigned-seating policy with my kids as I drive them to school. All three of them covet the seat next to the door that opens for drop-off. So far, the lesson, *regard one another as more important than yourselves* (Philippians 2:3 NASB) hasn't stuck. As annoying as the assigned seating is for them, it prevents bodily harm as they try to secure the best seat. As a father of small children, I sometimes marvel at their unbridled selfishness, but if the truth is told, this is just the nature of humanity. As adults, we get more sophisticated in our selfishness, but our nature is essentially intact. The rules keep us in line.

When Jesus came, He opened a new option of participating *in the divine nature* (2 Peter 1:4 ESV). Yes, you read that correctly. When we received the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our salvation (2 Timothy 1:14, 2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5), we were freed to do what pleases God and not just ourselves. That's a wonderful promise! Before Jesus, we were ruled by our selfish desires; however nicely we dressed them up (Romans 8:9, Galatians 5:18). Now, we can live by the Spirit with integrity and authenticity. In other words, we're the same in our private lives as in our public lives, but if we're honest, this is a work in progress.

How do we cultivate integrity and authenticity? It's clearly *not* about becoming rule-followers (2 Corinthians 3:7-9, Galatians 3:10). We need resurrection. A new Spirit who causes us to desire the things that please God. Rather than asking what we can get away with, ask, *What do you desire, God?* Jesus said, *your heavenly Father give[s] the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.* (Luke 11:13) As we experience the dual nature of flesh and Spirit (Galatians 5:17), we begin to attune ourselves to God's voice and recognize when what we're doing is just selfishness in fancy clothes.

**APPLICATION:** We all have hidden motivations based on our experiences and temperament. We're naturally bent toward self. Ask yourself today, *why am I doing what I am doing right now?* Am I being motivated by love or self-interest? Be honest with yourself. We are prone to self-deception.

**PRAYER:** Lord, help me recognize when my secret motivations are selfish. Guide and empower me to live by what is right, pure, loving and holy. Thank You for not leaving me to fend for myself but for giving me Your Spirit to guide me and give me strength beyond myself. Please help me to take a stand of faith in You today.

# EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PRAYER

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*Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.*

**James 5:17-18 (NLT)**

At Brookwood Church, we believe strongly in the power of prayer. We've seen *untreatable* conditions healed in Jesus' name with the laying on of hands and anointing with oil in agreement with James 5:16. If you're reading this thinking, *what kind of medieval superstition is this*, we ask you to suspend your judgment until you look at the evidence. As Jesus said in response to John the Baptist's doubts, *Go back and tell him what you have seen and heard* (Luke 7:22 NLT). While God does not answer every prayer with dramatic displays, He does answer. What we need to remember is our union with Christ. That's the true miracle. To deny that the power of God is working among us through answered prayer is not just ignorant— it's a refusal to believe that Jesus is who He says He is.

The context of our verse today is about prayer for miraculous healing (see James 5:16). In it, Jesus' younger brother James, compelled by the Holy Spirit, drives home a fundamental idea: ordinary people accomplish extraordinary things through prayer. Elijah's simple utterance upended the Judean economy for three years. It only ended when Elijah prayed for rain. Our temptation is to draw attention to the greatness of the man Elijah, but James doesn't allow for that. No, *Elijah was as human as we are* (James 5:17-18 NLT). So where does that leave us? You and I also have access to the power that raised Christ from the dead. Yes, God's power is meant to be known experientially (Philippians 3:10 NLT), accompanied by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*, said, *God has not called us to a difficult task, He has called us to an impossible task*. Impossible tasks require power beyond ourselves. What are you facing today that requires the intervention of Almighty God?

**APPLICATION:** Find a quiet place and speak out loud one thing that needs the intervention of God. Ask God to display His power in that situation. Write down and date your request for future reference to track what God does.

**PRAYER:** Lord, intervene in those areas of my life where the need is larger than my ability to change it. Bring honor to your name through the way you answer.

# THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF GOOD WORKS

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*In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in Heaven.*

**Matthew 5:16 (ERV)**

*Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.*

**Hebrews 10:24 (NLT)**

Many years ago, a young immigrant living in Turkey received an enormous inheritance. Because of his faith in Christ, the young man thought it best to keep his wealth a secret and continue to live a life of simplicity. That young man had a neighbor with three daughters of marrying age. In those days, it was customary for families to save dowry money for their daughters when they married. Unfortunately, the neighbor's family was very poor and could not afford the dowry. In fact, they were so poor that they couldn't even afford to feed the girls anymore. The night before they were to be auctioned off to the highest bidder, the girls hung their stockings up by the fireplace to dry. Upon hearing the heartbreaking story, the young man quietly broke into his neighbor's house that night and filled the girls' stockings with gold. Not only did the young man provide enough for the girl's dowries, but he also rescued them from a life of slavery.

Later that year, someone caught the young immigrant in the act of secretly blessing someone financially. He begged the person not to disclose his identity but to give glory to God alone. As you can imagine, this didn't go as he had hoped. The young man was spotlighted as someone who cared for his community with a kind of supernatural power. He was eventually even given the title of Bishop. To this day, people worldwide give each other gifts in remembrance of the way Saint Nicholas cared for people. My guess is that he would be horrified at how his identity has been stolen and morphed into that of a jolly, old elf, competing for the attention of Jesus on His birthday. However, don't miss the impact that Nicholas' spirit-empowered kindness had on a watching world. People had no paradigm or category for the love they witnessed throughout Nicholas's life. May we also be moved by God's Spirit in such a radical way that people will be forced to recognize that Jesus is in this place. May the good deeds we do in Jesus' name serve as an instrument of inspiration to others for *acts of love and good deeds*.

**APPLICATION:** Christians are like lanterns, but Jesus is the burning wick that they carry. Think of a person in your life who has radiated the light of Christ. Thank God for their witness.

**PRAYER:** Lord, make me an instrument of inspiration for others. Not the kind of inspiration that puffs me up. Instead, the type of inspiration that causes people to look at You, desire You, want to love You, and want to love others more fully.

# MODELS OF SERVANTHOOD

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*And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it.*

**Genesis 35:14 ESV**

*But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering ... I am glad and rejoice with all of you.*

**Philippians 2:17 NIV**

Have you ever noticed that the most frustrated people insist on having their way? And the harder we try to overcome a bad habit, the more intense it becomes. The world teaches that the pinnacle of human achievement is self-actualization. Jesus turns that message upside down, saying that *the greatest among you will be your servant* (Matthew 23:11 NIV). I love that about Jesus. His message is simple enough for a child to understand yet so deep that the most learned theologian can only scratch the surface of understanding. It's the paradoxical Kingdom, where God Almighty comes as a poor, Jewish son of a single mom and *the meek... inherit the Earth* (Matthew 5:5). As C.S. Lewis said, *Reality... is usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe Christianity.* Faith is the only key that unlocks the door of truth.

In the Old Testament, the drink offering was a sacrifice of fine, red wine poured out before the Lord. That seems like a terrible waste of good wine, especially when wine symbolized the blessing of God. It was as if the priests were saying, *I know how much you have blessed me, and I offer it back to you as a sign of my love for You.* This takes on even more significance when we realize that red wine foreshadows the blood of Christ. Jesus poured out His blood for the love of God and His people. The very same Jesus who poured out His blood for you before the Father, currently resides in your body, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Jesus isn't just calling us to follow His example. He's calling us to actively yield to His Spirit in us. As we said previously, if our obedience becomes the focus, we can only become proud or despondent. There are no other possible outcomes. However, if Jesus is actively displaying His self-emptying nature in our hearts and we yield to His showing, we cannot rightly say it's coming from us but from Jesus. *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.* (Romans 7:18 ESV). Yes, we are called to have the same attitude as Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11), but we know that even the desire to do right is a gift from God (Philippians 2:13). Are you willing to pour out your life to God as an offering?

**APPLICATION:** What areas of your life have you been holding back in reserve for yourself? Be brutally honest. Yield to the Spirit who openly displays His self-emptying nature to your mind and asks you to reenact the same attitude in that situation you just thought about. Worship the Lord in this act of surrender.

**PRAYER:** Lord, I offer up to you \_\_\_\_\_. I willingly pour out my life to you as an offering regarding that situation/person as a reenactment of the display of Your self-sacrificial love in my mind. Amen.

**WEEK TWO • FRIDAY**



# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LOVE

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*Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.*

**1 John 4:7 (RSV)**

*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

**1 Peter 4:8 (NASB)**

Somebody shared some advice with me about dealing with difficult people: commit to praying for them daily. Simple, right? In one sense, yes, but the prayer does as much for the one praying as it does for the one being prayed for. Remember the Prophet Jonah? God used him to bring about repentance among the Ninevites. *But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry* (Jonah 4:1 ESV). I can imagine Jonah asking, *Don't you care what these heathens have done?* What about you? Perhaps God is bringing someone to mind who has caused you great harm, and you're thinking, *God, don't you care what this person has done to me?* Maybe He's asking, *Do you do well to be angry...* (Jonah 4:9 ESV)?

What God is calling us to in private prayer is not the conjuring up of warm, affectionate feelings about people. Get that out of your mind as quickly as you can! No, sometimes the harm inflicted upon us is too difficult to have those feelings about people. If the truth is told, Jesus probably feels the same way, too. In the verses above, the word *love* comes from the Greek word *agape*, which means choosing to bless people despite how we feel. Otherwise, our love is just transactional and self-serving. It's the God-forged offering of a heart surrendered to Christ and His mission. This doesn't mean we excuse abuse or overlook bad behavior. Instead, we pray God's abundant blessing upon them, that they *may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:18-19 ESV). What gives us the ability to live out this kind of transformative love? Simply put, it's the same kind of radical love that Jesus has given to us.

**APPLICATION:** Think of someone you know who has hurt/annoyed you. Commit to praying for them daily.

**PRAYER:** Lord, I ask that You demonstrate Your favor toward \_\_\_\_\_. Reveal the full extent of your blessing toward them through union with Christ.

## PLANTED IN HIS LOVE

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*“But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.”*

**Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)**

This passage illustrates a tree that has found a source of life that isn't dependent on changing weather patterns. Instead, the source of its life is a river that allows its roots to grow deep, sustaining them through hardships and trials.

God's love is that river for us. It provides nutrition, wisdom and strength to withstand whatever drought, storm and uncertainty we face. Our faith grows and flourishes like that tree when we grow our hearts deep into His love.

But often, many things distract us from allowing God into our inner lives. It can be pain, busyness or just not feeling like we have the knowledge or skillset to hear His voice correctly. But I encourage you to lean in and fail toward God. What's five minutes of quiet time trying to hear and receive God's love for you if, for that day, it comes back blank? Essentially, the cost is nothing, but the benefits can be life-changing. We want to be people whose gut instinct is to go to God with our struggles and find peace with Him.

**APPLICATION:** Are your roots growing deeper into God's love, or do you find yourself adversely affected in a way that's more than the situation requires? Spend time today meditating on a promise from God about His love for you. Remind yourself that your strength comes from His opinion of you.

**PRAYER:** Father, help me sink my roots deeply into Your love. When life brings challenges, let me remain strong in the confidence that You sustain me. Teach me to trust in You completely, knowing that Your love never fails. Amen.

# PURSUIT OF LOVE

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*I will make you My wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you Mine, and you will finally know Me as the LORD.*

**Hosea 2:19-20 (NLT)**

God calls the people of Israel to be His bride despite her unfaithfulness and promises to restore her. His love isn't based on our worthiness but on His faithfulness. Hosea was a prophet God sent to remind the Israelites that despite their continual rebellion in following false gods, God is faithful in His pursuit of them.

The idea that God is saying *I am putting you, as My people, in priority above others and declaring My faithful and unending love to you* is profound and should cause us to reflect with humility. Do you sense this focused, intentional love of God for us? Do you know that God is *for you* in this way?

Just as God pursued Israel, He pursues you – even when you wander from Him. He invites you into a covenant that's not dependent on your value or worthiness, but instead, His covenant is based on His faithfulness and worth. It's a covenant that God refuses to break.

**APPLICATION:** Have you ever felt unworthy of God's love? Take a moment and ask God to remind you of His love for you. His love is freely given, not earned. Rest in the truth that God pursues you out of overflowing love for you, not because of what you've done or failed to do.

**PRAYER:** Lord, thank You for loving me even when I fall short. Your love is faithful and unwavering. Help me receive it fully and walk in the confidence that I am pursued, cherished and chosen by You. Amen.

# JOY DESPITE CIRCUMSTANCES

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*Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!*

**Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT)**

The prophet Habakkuk paints a picture of desolateness and scarcity. There are no fruit, no crops, and no livestock. Emptiness, barrenness, and sickness are all words that Habakkuk uses, and they paint quite a dim picture of the season they are in. Yet, Habakkuk declares that he will rejoice in the Lord!

There was a time in my life after a major disappointment when I didn't know if God still had good plans for me. But I knew that He loved me. A song called *Trust it All* came on my random Made for You Spotify Playlist. I felt like God was prompting me to sing my commitment to Him regardless of my perception of what was happening around me. Praising God when things are not as you hope is a way to respond to the Lord that He is faithful even when we cannot see or understand what He's doing.

Love that's truly rooted in God does not wither during difficult seasons. Even in times of emptiness, His love sustains and gives you strength to rejoice, knowing He is faithful. Take a step today to trust despite what you can see. Find joy in the fact that God knows your name and hears your prayers!

**APPLICATION:** Are you in a season of barrenness, feeling like nothing in your life is growing or producing desirable results? Choose to rejoice in God's love for you today. Trust that God is working invisibly despite what you can see. Praise God for who He is when you might not be able to see what He is doing.

**PRAYER:** Father, when life feels empty, please remind me that Your love never runs dry. Help me rejoice in You, not in my circumstances. Give me the faith to trust that You're always working, even when I cannot see it. Amen.

## GOD REJOICES OVER YOU

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*For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With His love, He will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.*  
**Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)**

I admit that this verse is hard to wrap my mind around. I'm not sure I'd ever consider myself worthy of anyone writing love songs about me, especially not God. Yet, that is what Zephaniah is conveying. You do not burden Him. Instead, He's delighted by you! He's singing over you with a joyful melody. This love can calm all your fears.

Imagine a newborn being cradled and sung over by his mother. The mother delights in her child not because of anything the baby has accomplished but simply because he belongs to her. I remember the joy I felt as a dad during my bedtime routine with my boys. When I held either of my sons, I would pray that they would know the love that God has for them. It's so far beyond what I could offer, but I would spend my life trying to model it. Seeing my sons peacefully asleep comforted me in a way I hadn't felt before.

God's love far surpasses this. He rejoices over you and delights in you because of His great love and that those who have placed their faith in Him belong to Him. Ask God to give you a glimpse of how He sees you today.

**APPLICATION:** Spend a few moments today asking God to help you see how He sees you. Resist the urge to fight against His love and ask Him to give it to you freely. Thank Him that this is available to you because of Jesus Christ.

**PRAYER:** Lord, it's hard to believe that You rejoice over me, yet Your Word says You do. Help me see myself through Your eyes. Let my heart be rooted in the confidence that I am fully loved, accepted and delighted in by You. Amen.

## INVITED TO LOVE

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*That is why the LORD says, "Turn to Me now, while there is time. Give Me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead."*

*Return to the LORD your God, for He is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish.*

**Joel 2:12-13 (NLT)**

It is not too late to turn back to God if you still breathe air in your lungs. In this passage, God is calling His people back to Him. This might be the exact invitation you need today to turn back to Him.

Do you genuinely believe that God is eager to receive you? Do you believe that His desire for you is good and not to punish you? Do you believe that His default posture towards you is love? I'm sure you've experienced a failure or mistake that you thought might change God's heart towards you, but the Scriptures teach us that God wants us to come back to Him. He isn't expecting you to figure it all out, but go to Him bearing the weight of your baggage, past hurts and mistakes, mourning and weeping.

God is not looking for specific acts of atonement, ritual sacrifices or good deeds. Instead, He desires His people to be with Him. God wants His people by His side, wrapped up in the joy of His presence. He just wants you to come back to Him. And He wants you just as you are. Bring your burdens to God. His shoulders are big enough to carry them.

**APPLICATION:** Is there an area of your life or heart that needs to return to God? He's not waiting to punish you but to embrace you. Today, take a step toward Him and trust His response towards you is one of love.

**PRAYER:** Father, I hear Your call to return to You. Thank You for Your unfailing love. Soften my heart and help me to surrender fully to You, knowing that Your love is always ready to restore and renew me. Amen.

# A LOVE THAT HEALS

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*But for you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture.*

**Malachi 4:2 (NLT)**

This passage gives an interesting picture of the sun having wings. Odd for sure, but what does Malachi mean? In the ancient Near East, it was common to depict the sun's rays as the wings of a bird and in the Scriptures, we see the imagery of a bird's wings providing protection.

Malachi states that the healing brought to you by God's love in that final judgment will be total and complete healing: physical, emotional and spiritual. That healing is provided by Jesus' wounds (Isaiah 53:5), which will cause you to leap like a calf with plenty of room to run!

My grandfather raised cattle. I can honestly say I've never seen one jump, but I have seen them escape through the gates! When those gates open, they sprint towards a spot that in some way must appear heavenly to them. You can almost see them smile as they escape their fenced area. I think this is the freedom that God wants for you. He wants you to roam, asking what is possible. God's presence provides the pathway for healing and freedom in your life.

Does following the commands of God feel like freedom to you, or do they feel burdensome? Ask God to help translate the freedom available through life in Christ to your heart today.

**APPLICATION:** While we await the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, God can still provide healing today, either by removing or redeeming your pain. Open your heart to the warmth of His love today and give Him access to restore the broken places and lead you into His joy.

**PRAYER:** Lord, You are my healer. Shine Your love into the places where I am wounded. Let Your presence bring healing, freedom and deep-rooted joy in my life. Amen.

# ENLIGHTEN ME

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*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms.*

**Ephesians 1:17-20 (NIV)**

Most people are born with five senses - smelling, seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling - though many live without one or more of those senses. But when we're born spiritually and start a relationship with Jesus, our spirit is made alive, and God gives us a spiritual sense to help us know Him. God's Spirit communicates with my spirit to help me see things I wouldn't see or understand without His Spirit. That is what's meant by *the eyes of your heart* - it's your spiritual sense. The Spirit of God enlightens us so we can know the hope He offers, the wonderful benefits of knowing Him, and the same power that raised Christ from the dead. The Spirit of God enables us to see things we can't see physically.

God's Spirit wants us to know God's message to us so we might get to know God better. The Bible is supernatural, not only in that it's God's Word, but it's a book that allows us to talk with the author while we're reading it. As I read it, I can ask, *Lord, what do you want me to know? How can I live this today?* The Holy Spirit can open our spiritual eyes, giving us thoughts that enlighten us regarding what God is saying to us. That's why we can receive different messages from God when we read the same passage on different days. May our spiritual senses be enlightened by God's Spirit so we'll understand God's message to us, sense God speaking directly to our current situation and understand things from God's Word that we've never seen before.

**APPLICATION:** As you read God's Word, ask Him to enlighten you regarding what He wants you to know and do.

**PRAYER:** Father, what does your Spirit want me to know about you from your Word today?



## HELP ME UNDERSTAND

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*"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*  
**John 14:25-26 (NIV)**

Sometimes, I hear people say, *I have a hard time reading the Bible because I don't get anything out of it. I don't understand what it's saying. How can I understand it?*

Though physically I may have enough light to read the words on the page, how do I allow God to illuminate the words I read from the Bible so that I see what He wants me to see and understand what He wants me to know? The Holy Spirit is the one who can illuminate the Bible, showing the meaning of God's Word and how it applies to my life. **I see what God wants me to see when I trust the Holy Spirit in me.** The Holy Spirit is the form of God that comes to live in me and is there to teach and remind me what Jesus is saying. He helps us understand and remember what God is saying. The Spirit will take these words and help us understand them so that we can live them.

The first step toward seeing what God wants me to see is starting a relationship with Jesus. I need a connection with Jesus first to see from His spiritual viewpoint. Until I am born spiritually, I can't see with spiritual eyes. I can only see physically.

The Bible says in **1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV)** *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*

When we trust Jesus Christ with our lives, our spiritual senses are activated. When we trust Jesus with the control of our lives, we become new people, and the Spirit of God helps us begin to understand the things of God.

**APPLICATION and PRAYER:** If you haven't started a relationship with Jesus, you can do that today. In your mind, you can say something like this to God: *Father in heaven, I admit I have messed up in life. I'm sorry for my sin, and I accept Your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus died in my place and rose from the dead, so I trust the rest of my life to You as my Lord and Savior. Take over my life and make me a new person. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

## SEEING THE SOLUTION

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*When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears. But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants." Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.* **Genesis 21:15-19 (NLT)**

The Old Testament book of Genesis contains the story of how God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. Abraham and his wife Sarah were very old and had no children, so Sarah devised a plan for Abraham to have a child through her servant Hagar. Abraham had relations with Hagar, and they had a son named Ishmael. Later, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son named Isaac. Sarah decided that she wanted Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael because Sarah would not have her son Isaac split the inheritance with Ishmael. Abraham had to send Hagar away, along with her son Ishmael, into the desert to fend for themselves.

As Hagar despaired, God opened her eyes to the solution He had provided: a well full of water. This saved Hagar and Ishmael's lives, and he also became the father of many nations.

Hagar had the solution to her problems right in front of her - this well of water - but she couldn't see it until God opened her eyes when she cried out to Him.

Possibly, a problem in your life is causing you to think, *There's no way out of this. I don't know what to do.* Cry out to God, look into His Word, and ask Him to show you what to do. Trust the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to His solution.

**I can see what God wants me to see when I trust the Holy Spirit in me.**

**APPLICATION:** Identify an issue that is causing you concern. Tell it to God's Spirit and ask Him to show you the steps He would have you take.

**PRAYER:** Father, you see the situation I'm facing. (Name the situation) I trust you. I'm asking you to guide me, provide me with the steps to take, and give me the strength to follow your guidance.

## BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

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*Then the angel of the LORD moved farther down the road and stood in a place too narrow for the donkey to get by at all. This time when the donkey saw the angel, it lay down under Balaam. In a fit of rage Balaam beat the animal again with his staff. Then the LORD gave the donkey the ability to speak. "What have I done to you that deserves your beating me three times?" it asked Balaam. "You have made me look like a fool!" Balaam shouted. "If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!" "But I am the same donkey you have ridden all your life," the donkey answered. "Have I ever done anything like this before?" "No," Balaam admitted. Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam bowed his head and fell face down on the ground before him.*

**Numbers 22:26-31 (NLT)**

Many of us have things we're trying to achieve. We're trying to make some progress toward some goal or dream, but we keep bumping up against an invisible wall. We can't understand why we're not making any progress.

Balaam was a good prophet of God but was about to help some bad guys. God put an angel in his pathway to block his progress, but Balaam couldn't see the angel. The angel was invisible to Balaam but not to Balaam's donkey. God used Balaam's donkey to keep Balaam from going down a path that would be destructive for him and bring negative consequences to many others.

This story may seem strange—talking donkeys and invisible angels—but do you notice any similarities with your own life? Maybe your plans are getting blocked, and you're taking out your frustration on others. Possibly, the issue is you and the fact that you're not trusting God to guide your next step.

When your progress is blocked, you've got one of two choices. Beat the donkey, or let God open your eyes. You can either get mad at everybody and blame others for your problems. Or you can begin to look in God's Word and say, *God, what do you want me to see?* **I can see what God wants me to see when I trust the Holy Spirit in me.**

**APPLICATION:** Identify a situation where you do not seem to progress. Ask God to reveal what He wants you to see.

**PRAYER:** Father, what do you want me to see today? When I face barriers or problems today, please help me to see what you want me to see.

## MORE ON OUR SIDE

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*When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. "Oh, sir, what will we do now?" the young man cried to Elisha. "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!" Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The LORD opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.*

**2 Kings 6:15-17 (NLT)**

Most of us feel under attack at different points in our lives, maybe even right now. What can you do when you feel like you're all alone and you don't know how to defend yourself against this attack?

The story of Elisha, the prophet of Israel, tells how Elisha always seemed to know the plans of the nation of Aram, who were often at war with Israel. Every time Aram planned to attack Israel, God would tell Elisha, then Elisha would tell the king of Israel, and the Israelites would be prepared for Aram's attacks. The king of Aram had enough of this, and he heard that Elisha was the one who kept divulging their battle plans. So he wanted to find Elisha and kill him.

When Elisha's servant woke up and saw the troops coming after him and Elisha, he looked at the situation from his perspective and was filled with fear. There was a whole army coming against just him and Elisha. But when he could see from God's perspective, he saw a supernatural army, and his fear subsided. **You lose your fear when you see God is near.**

Life may seem to be attacking you, and maybe you're feeling overwhelmed or panicked. I hope you can begin to see from God's perspective and realize that if God is for us, who can stand against us? (Romans 8:31) How can you get that perspective? By reading God's Word and asking Him to speak to you. **I see what God wants me to see when I trust the Holy Spirit in me.**

**APPLICATION:** What feels overwhelming today? Speak this verse throughout the day whenever you feel overwhelmed: *If God is for us, who can ever be against us?* **Romans 8:31b (NLT)**

**PRAYER:** Father, thank you that I can trust you. Remind me today that you are with me. Lead me to lean on you today. Please help me to see what you want me to see. In Jesus name, Amen.

## WALKING WITH YOU

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*By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if He were going on, but they begged Him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So He went home with them. As they sat down to eat, He took the bread and blessed it. Then He broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And at that moment He disappeared!*

**Luke 24:28-31 (NLT)**

Sometimes, we can feel like we're going through life alone. Even though we know it's not true, we might have a hard time feeling that God is with us or even notices us. But I assure you, He's right there with you.

This story happens on the day Jesus rose from the dead. After Jesus was crucified, his followers didn't know what to do. A couple of His followers were walking on the road to Emmaus, still grieving and possibly fearing for their lives. Then Jesus shows up and starts walking with them, but they don't recognize Him. They begin talking about all that has gone on the last few days, how Jesus has been crucified, how they thought He was the Messiah, and how some of His followers say that He has risen from the dead. Jesus begins talking with them about how the entire Bible points to the Messiah.

Suddenly, they realize they've been walking with Jesus all day. Jesus had been with them, but they didn't even realize it. They saw a man but didn't recognize him as Jesus, the risen Son of God.

You may have been through some type of trauma like these guys had, and you just can't see that Jesus is right there with you. In fact, He's been walking with you the whole time. Sometimes, we may see things physically, but we can't see them from God's perspective unless we allow Him to open our eyes.

How can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit to see what God wants me to see? So that I see with His perspective? I see what God wants me to see when I trust the Holy Spirit in me.

**APPLICATION:** Take a step today to notice that Jesus is with you. Read this story throughout the day, text yourself a verse, or take a minute to thank God for being with you.

**PRAYER:** Father, thank you for sending your Spirit to be with me throughout the day. Please remind me of your presence and help me notice how you're working around me today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# THE GOD WHO CELEBRATES

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*“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”*

**Luke 15:22-24 (ESV)**

The parable of the Prodigal Son is often centered on the wayward son's choices and return, but the story's true focus is the Father. Despite his son wasting all the blessings he had received, the father did not greet him with condemnation or a list of regrets. He met his returning son with *celebration*.

This story reveals a great deal about the character of the Father and the reality in which we live. Through Jesus, every debt and consequence of our sin, disobedience and rebellion has been fully satisfied. We've strayed from home, drawn away by the world's concerns, distractions and temptations. Yet, how deeply the Lord delights in welcoming us back.

We do not serve a harsh, distant or indifferent God. Instead, we serve a loving Father whose heart longs deeply for His children. He doesn't stand with crossed arms, waiting to condemn, but with open arms, eager to embrace. Whenever we return to Him—whether by receiving salvation or surrendering a long-held burden to Him in prayer—He rejoices. His love is unwavering, and His grace knows no limits.

The joy we experience in this life and the heart behind the art of celebrating do not stem from effort or duty. Instead, they flow from the abundance of an encounter with God's heart. When we celebrate God's faithfulness in the stories of our lives and those around us, our celebration is ultimately a reflection of Him—His goodness, His work and His love. We celebrate because we were first celebrated by the One who loves us most.

**APPLICATION:** Spend some time today asking the Father how He feels about you. Allow the celebratory heart of the Father to minister to you today.

**PRAYER:** Father, thank You for who You are. Your love and delight in me seem almost too good to be true—but they are. Help my heart fully embrace the joy of this reality. May I live with gratitude, hope and celebration. Amen

## DON'T FORGET TO REMEMBER

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*“One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!” He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking Him for what He had done. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And Jesus said to the man, “Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you.”*

**Luke 17:15-19 (NLT)**

These ten desperate men needed help. They were sick. Leprosy had stolen their relationships, health, dignity and hope. Isolated from society and abandoned by loved ones, they had no future. They needed mercy, and that’s what they cried out for. Their cry of *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!* (Luke 17:13) was met by a provision. All ten men were miraculously healed from their terminal disease, their skin restored, their suffering erased. But then something strange happens—only one returned to thank Jesus.

If you’ve been a human for any time, you know we’re fickle people. Our memories are fleeting, our needs always pressing, and our hearts often forgetful. Once the weight of unanswered prayer, an overdue bill, an unhealed illness, or an unfulfilled longing is lifted, we often move forward, excited and relieved that the tension has passed. But if we move too quickly, we can forget who it was that met our needs. It is easy to forget to remember.

God is so good. Every day is filled with His kindness, and His mercies are new every morning. In the rush of life’s demands, however, we sometimes lose sight of Him. The secret to a life filled with celebration is to *remember*—to consciously slow down and see both the big and small ways the Lord has been faithful in life yesterday and today. That man healed from leprosy understood this. He understood that there was only one giver of good gifts, and his heart overflowed with gratitude.

**APPLICATION:** Remembering God’s faithfulness fuels our faith and hope and causes celebration. Spend time asking the Lord to show you the big and small ways He’s changing your life. Thank Him for those things.

**PRAYER:** Father, thank You for all the obvious and unobvious ways You have helped, protected and saved me. Thank You for who You are and what You do. May I never become familiar with Your faithfulness. In your beautiful name, Amen.

# THE FERTILE SOIL OF CELEBRATION

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*"My heart rejoices in the LORD! The LORD has made me strong. Now I have an answer for my enemies; I rejoice because you rescued me. No one is holy like the LORD! There is no one besides You; there is no Rock like our God."*

**1 Samuel 2:1-2 (NLT)**

In the book of 1 Samuel, we read about a woman who was heartsick with desperation. Hannah, desperate after years of infertility and ridicule, wept before the Lord. So deep was her anguish that the prophet Eli mistook her for being drunk, yet God heard her cry and faithfully gave her a child.

What's beautiful is that once she received the promise of a child, Hannah did not hoard her promise for herself or let the long season of waiting turn her heart bitter. Instead, her heart celebrated what the Lord had done. She knew who had fulfilled her heart's longing, and she praised the Lord.

Sometimes, celebration is easy. A natural overflow from a full heart. Other times, we find ourselves in seasons where celebration seems hard, for it grinds on a far-distant hope or an unfulfilled desire. But here's the good news—with God, all things are made new! Scripture says, *"For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland."* (Isaiah 43:19 NLT) There is no one like the Lord. He takes what feels hopeless and turns it into abundance.

Just as spring always follows winter, joy always emerges from sorrow with the Lord. Henri Nouwen reminds us that *Joy never denies the sadness, but transforms it to a fertile soil for more joy.* This was true for Hannah—her deepest heartache became a celebration. Her honesty and trust in God during seasons of emptiness cultivated in her heart for joy in seasons of abundance. The same is true for us. When we trust God during what seems impossible, He turns barren hearts into fertile ground for grand celebrations.

**APPLICATION:** Spend some time with the Lord today being honest. What are your heart's desires, the things you're waiting for, and where do you need more faith? Then, remind your waiting heart of God's character—He is faithful, He is present, He is a provider, etc. Let both the request and the reminder cause celebration in your heart.

**PRAYER:** Father, thank You for Your faithfulness and for turning sorrow into joy. Help me celebrate both in waiting and receiving, trusting Your good plans. In Your precious name, Amen.



# CELEBRATING THE UNEXPECTED

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*“And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is His name.”*

**Luke 1: 46-49 (NIV)**

Of all the people in the Bible, Mary's life may have been the most unexpectedly interrupted. A young, unmarried girl from a small, unremarkable village was suddenly told that she would bear God incarnate. Imagine the shock she felt upon hearing such life-altering news. Yet, her response was remarkable—Mary *celebrated* this holy interruption with great humility.

God interrupts our lives all the time. Scripture proves this through countless stories of individuals whose lives were suddenly upended by His presence, bringing transformation, provision, healing and new purpose:

The boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish fed thousands.

Peter walked on water with his Lord.

Lazarus came back from the dead.

We serve a God who interrupts. Just as He met Paul on the road to Damascus, He meets us unexpectedly, bringing change beyond what we can imagine. Sometimes, these interruptions feel scary or uncertain. When God provided for the Israelites in the desert by sending miraculous bread from heaven, they called it *manna*, which literally means *What is this?* So often, when God interrupts our lives with His plan, it can feel like a *what is this* moment.

The good news? Those unexpected moments come from a God far greater and better than we can imagine. His plans and provisions far exceed anything we could do on our own. The book of Isaiah reminds us of this truth: *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV)

When we truly know and love God's character and trust in His faithfulness, something beautiful happens—we celebrate! Though life is full of unexpected twists and turns that may catch us off guard—whether a new job, a changing relationship, an unplanned ending, a big move, or an answer we never saw coming—we can take the posture Mary did and celebrate the unexpected.

**APPLICATION:** What are some unexpected ways God has (past or present) interrupted your life? Spend some time thinking about those things today and celebrate!

**PRAYER:** Father, thank You for the good plan You have for my life. Teach my heart to celebrate the unexpected and to fully walk in what You have for me. Amen.

## LEGACY OF CELEBRATION

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*“Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; He has hurled both horse and rider into the sea.”*

**Exodus 15:21 (NLT)**

The book of Exodus recounts the powerful story of how God heard the cries of His oppressed people and freed them from slavery in Egypt. As the Israelites stepped out of captivity, they lifted their voices in a song celebrating the glorious triumph of God. To this day, the Jewish people continue to honor His faithfulness from long ago. Each year at Passover, many Jewish people celebrate through a song called *Dayenu*, the Hebrew word for *it is enough*. The song goes something like this:

*. . . If He had brought us out from Egypt, and had not carried out judgments against them – Dayenu, it would have been enough!*

*If He had split the sea for us, and had not taken us through it on dry land – Dayenu, it would have been enough!*

*If He had taken us through the sea on dry land, and had not drowned our oppressors in it – Dayenu, it would have been enough! . . .*

The song continues, tracing the history of God’s people through the acts of faithfulness He continued to provide for them. Each time, repeating the phrase, *it would have been enough*. This song is stunning, for it taps into something often overlooked—we stand in a legacy of God’s faithfulness.

Each time we celebrate a life change, each time we see a promise fulfilled or a prayer answered, it’s not just the one thing we get to celebrate. We get to celebrate the masterpiece that God is creating through His countless good works. The amazing reality of our lives is that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross alone would have been enough. But He has saved us and *more*.

It’s not just big answered prayers that change our lives, but everyday kindness. He got you through that tough meeting, made ends meet, kept that old car running, eased your anxiety, and brought the right friend at the right time. Our lives are a rich tapestry of moments of mercy and goodness. God has triumphed gloriously in our lives *and* keeps doing so. He is worth celebrating!

**APPLICATION:** Take some time today and think back through your life. Where can you see God’s acts of provision and care? Thank Him for those things.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, Your death on the cross alone would have been enough, but You are an extravagant God. Thank You for the way You have constantly provided, protected and cared for me. You are worthy of all the praise! Amen.

# HOSANNA!

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*Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"* **Mark 11: 9-10 (NIV)**

The origins of the word *Hosanna* are fascinating. In Hebrew, the word was originally used as a desperate plea or prayer for help. As the word evolved, however, the meaning came to encompass even more. It became a word for both desperate cry for help *and* celebration. How did it come to have such a paradoxical meaning? Because when we pray, God moves.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey that day, the crowd shouted, *Hosanna!*—a cry that expressed both their desperate plea for deliverance from oppression and their joyful anticipation as they watched God's faithfulness unfold before their eyes. That one little word has so much meaning, hope, honesty, desperation and celebration tied up in it.

When we truly know God, our hearts naturally respond with love and trust. Even when life hits hard, the pain feels overwhelming, and provision seems distant, we can still cry out, *Hosanna*, knowing He hears us and will remain faithful—it's simply who He is. This is why we can find reason to celebrate in every season.

King David understood the paradox of this when he wrote,

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what He has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the LORD.* **Psalms 40:1-3 (NLT)**

In waiting, we can celebrate—not because circumstances align with our desires, but because we believe God is faithful. His unfailing love and faithfulness stir a new song in our hearts long before the promise is fulfilled. God is faithful in hearing our prayers, being present with us in whatever we face, *and* being our good Father. Because of this, our hearts cry, *Hosanna!*

**APPLICATION:** Take time to celebrate God in your present needs, wants and prayers. Thank Him for who He has been to you and who He will continue to be in your life.

**PRAYER:** Father, You are so good. You not only hear me, but You're with me. Thank You for always being faithful, present and accessible. There is no one like You! In your glorious name, Amen!



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