

# 50

## DAYS IN THE WORD

A Devotional Guide Taken from YouVersion



# Introduction

Thank you for deciding to go on this 50 Day Adventure with us at Life Church. We are excited about what the Holy Spirit is going to say and do during this time in our lives.

This Devotional will begin by exploring what it means to Seek and Pursue Jesus and then it will lead into a study of the Book of Acts.

This 50 Day Devotional is designed to be done five days a week, Monday-Friday. We will begin on Monday, September 9th and conclude on Friday, November 15th.

Remember you get out of things what you put into them. Make this time with Jesus a priority in your life. I believe that if you will...you will be amazed at what the Holy Spirit shows you and does in you.

I am honored to go on this 50 Day Journey with you...and so let us begin.

Sincerely,  
Pastor Ken Hansen

## Key



**Questions for you to ask yourself.**



**Prayer for the day.**



**A place for you to take notes.**

Sept  
9

scripture  
reading:

Psalm 63:1-2 • Colossians 1

God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. As we come before God in the next 50 days of fasting and prayer, God will renew our faith, launch new dreams and release us into our destiny. This in turn will result in a revival that changes the spiritual landscape of our nation!

We believe that in this season God wants to open up heaven over our lives. Under an Open Heaven, there's a greater sense of God's presence, clarity in hearing His voice, and a release of His favor and power on our lives.

Each day there is a scripture for you to read and a devotional reading with some suggestions for prayer and reflection. Don't just read the devotionals but take time to reflect and pray about your response to God's word. Allow Him to speak and change your heart and lead you into the things He has prepared for you this year.

Before starting the devotional, take time to prepare yourself by deciding what you will fast, and what you are believing God for in your life. The more prepared you are as you enter these 50 days, the more you can expect God to do.

During this first week, we will focus on fixing our minds and hearts on Returning to God. We begin our 50-day journey with humility and a heart that's marked with a desperate desire to come back to God. We must decide in our hearts that it's God or nothing. Let's lay hold of God and not let Him go until He blesses us. God will reward your spiritual hunger for Him with great satisfaction!

As we start this 50 Day journey that God has for us, we must begin with a desperation for God Himself. We need an encounter with Him more than anything else.

When David wrote **Psalm 63**, he was running away from someone who wanted to kill him. Anyone would be desperate to get out of those circumstances. But instead of asking God to deliver him from his situation, David cried out in desperation for God Himself! David recognized his need for God and knew how important it was to search not just for deliverance, but for the One who could deliver him. Like David, we must seek God earnestly. Put aside other things to make time to read His Word, pray, and be in His presence. Be aggressive about not letting urgent things crowd out what is most important...an encounter with God.

God promises that those who seek Him will find Him, so decide today that you will stay the course over the next 50 days to seek His face. Like David, we must long for God. Ask God to stir up a fresh hunger and thirst for the things of God.

Choose to deny your flesh through fasting and ask God to give you a renewed desire for spiritual things. Spiritual Renewal begins with us getting desperate for God. Make Him your greatest desire and your greatest pursuit this year!

**Have you become more desperate for the things of God than God himself?**

Take some time to re-focus your attention on Him and ask the Holy Spirit to stir up a fresh desperation to encounter God.

**What are some things that we desire more than God?**

Surrender them to God and choose to pursue God more than these things.

Dear God, I acknowledge that I need You in every area of my life. I want to seek You sincerely and with all my heart. Change my desires so that You are foremost and that I will desire nothing more than You. I believe that as I do so, I will find You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



Sept  
10

scripture  
reading:

**Daniel 9:3 • Colossians 2**

Daniel was a leader whose heart was for his people. Knowing that Israel would be taken captive by Babylon for seventy years, his first response was to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting. As he gave up food and set aside time to pray, he humbled himself and magnified God. He repented for the sins of Israel and cried out for God's deliverance.

When we fast, we abstain from food and direct our attention to God. We choose to seek Him with greater focus and commitment. We demonstrate that we desire spiritual things more than natural things and are willing to forgo something important to us because God is more important. We humble ourselves and align our hearts and motives to His and invite him to speak to us and move in our lives.

When we fast and pray, we make God bigger than everything else. We turn our eyes to Him rather than our problems and believe that He is able to bring breakthrough in our lives. Like Daniel, there are situations that are beyond our control where we need God to intervene. Fasting and prayer magnifies God above all of these situations and raises our faith to believe that nothing is impossible for Him. As you fast and pray over these 50 days, choose to deny the flesh and live by the Spirit. If you haven't decided what to fast yet, make that decision today! It could be food, TV, your phone, or whatever the Spirit leads you to fast.

As you intentionally pursue God, He will build your faith and deepen your intimacy with Him. As you empty yourself, He will come and fill you up with every good thing. And as you make Him bigger in your life, God will work on your behalf and open heaven over your life!

### What are you choosing to fast these 50 days?

Take time to humble yourself before God. Acknowledge that He is God and you are not, and invite Him to come move in our hearts and work on our behalf as we seek Him in fasting and prayer.

Dear God, help me to have the right heart and motives and to be sensitive to Your voice as I take the time to fast and pray. I believe that I will grow as I choose to set aside my time and desires to seek You. I know that You can bring a breakthrough in my life as I humble myself before You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

### What is God speaking to you about?

Sept  
11

scripture  
reading:

Matthew 16:25 • Colossians 3

Letting go is hard. We feel bad when we lose something. If you've ever had to pack your house and go through years of accumulated possessions, you would have experienced the dilemma of whether to keep something or to let it go.

More often than not, and especially if you are sentimental, we tend to hold on! This may explain why our shelves are filled with books we never read, or our cupboards are full of trinkets and ornaments gathering dust!

We are more prone to hold on than to let go because of fear. There is a fear that we may one day need what we're letting go of. There is a fear of uncertainty and new things; a fear of losing out if we were to let go. Fear will drive us to do everything we can to hold on and convince us that it's safer to hang on to the things already in our hands. So we hold on to our own expectations, experiences and ways of doing things.

But God's perfect love casts out fear. We can trust that God loves us and has the best intentions for us. He is not trying to take something from us; He wants to give us something better! If we want to trust God's leadership in our lives, we need to learn to let go.

Jesus says that if we try to hang on to our life, we will lose it! We must let go of our own plans or dreams, so we can receive God's plans for us. We must let go of past hurts or memories so that God can heal us deeply. We must let go of some unhealthy relationships so that we can get into community with people who will spur us on in the things of God.

When we release control of our own lives, we position ourselves for more. God wants to release an Open Heaven over your life today, so choose to put aside fear, trust God, and let go of the things that hold you back!

**What are some things in your life that you have been holding on to that you need to let go?**

**What are the new things that you want God to bring into your life once you have made room for Him? Ask Him for these things.**

God, I acknowledge my tendency to hold on tightly to things, and to my own life. I desire to fully return to You and give You leadership of my life. Today, I choose to release the things in my heart that I have held on to, so that I may receive the better things that You have in store for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
12

scripture  
reading:

Matthew 6:33 • Colossians 4

Have you ever made a resolution to improve your health that you did not see through? Whether it's going on a diet, exercising more or sleeping better, these goals all sound great when we're setting them. But more often than not, we fall short of reaching these goals. We may have one or two good days, or even a good week, but sometimes even the best of us don't see these resolutions through.

Sometimes we face the same struggle trying to put God first in our lives. It could be that we find it hard to spend time reading the Bible or praying. We may have occasional powerful encounters with God, but slowly, life has a way of dragging us away from Him. We need to continually re-order our lives and make sure we put the first things first. Here are three truths that will encourage you to put God first in your life.

**The first truth is:** We desperately need God. When we make spending time with God simply a routine, we underestimate our need to be with Him. God is the source of all life. He allows us to draw close to Him and gives us access into His presence where we find joy, strength, peace and all that we need. We need to put God first, because without Him, we are nothing!

**The second truth is:** God provides when we put Him first. **Matthew 6:33** says that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other things that we need will be added to us! God does not take away from us or deprive us from something better. When we give our best to God, He is more than able to give us everything we need in return.

**The third truth is:** Today is the best time to put God first! Unlike new year resolutions, we don't need to wait till January 1 to choose to put Him first in our lives. Start with the small decisions - making time to meet with God first thing in the morning, faithfully giving your tithe to Him, making decisions based on the Word of God - and watch as He blesses you for honoring and placing Him first!

**Which of these truths speaks most to you?  
What will you do to apply the truth in your life?**

Ask God to show you an area of your life where you might not have put Him first.  
**What small steps can you take to put Him first in that area?**

Lord, help me to put You first. I want You to be the first in my thoughts, decisions and actions. I choose to prioritize you in my life today. Show me how I can arrange my life to put You first in all that I do. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
13

scripture  
reading:

Genesis 28:17 • 1 Timothy 1

In **Genesis 28**, Jacob was on the run from his brother Esau. After deceiving his brother and messing up his life, their mother sent Jacob away to preserve his life. Jacob was alone, uncertain of the future, and feeling a turmoil of emotions. It was in this anxious state that Jacob fell asleep at Bethel and received a vision for his future. When he awoke, he realized that He was in the house of God and had entered an atmosphere of faith and favor from God!

God's house is where His presence dwells. There was nothing magical about Bethel, the place where Jacob lay down to rest; it was the presence of God that made all the difference. Today, you can host the presence of God at home, at school or in your workplace! Take a moment to worship or pray; find other Christians and seek God together; invite God to dwell in the place you're in and get ready to encounter Him!


We find all we need in the house of God. At Bethel, Jacob heard God's voice, had his perspective renewed, and experienced the power of God. Everything had changed because of a moment in the house of God! You too can find all you need in His presence - strength, encouragement, direction, power to live a godly life. Don't go seeking in other places to find the things you need - you can receive them all in God's house!

The place to experience an Open Heaven is in God's house, where His presence dwells, and with other believers. Don't delay - come just as you are, make time to draw near to God, and have faith that you can receive all that God has promised you.



Right now, make the place you're in God's house. Worship, pray and invite His presence to surround you.

**What do you need from God?** Everything can be found in His house, so get into His presence and ask God to supply you with these things.



Dear God, thank You for placing me in Your house. I commit to taking steps to draw near to the place where You dwell. Help me to love Your people just as You love me! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
16

scripture  
reading:

Genesis 32:26 • 1 Timothy 2

**Genesis 32** describes an account of Jacob wrestling with God. The Bible doesn't explain why God decided to have this wrestling match with him, but it does describe Jacob's remarkable response. Jacob held on to God for the whole night, not letting Him go even when his hip was dislocated!

In the midst of his pain, he then demanded a blessing, and received a new name, Israel. The name and fate of a nation was transformed because Jacob decided to take hold of God and not let Him go!

Like Jacob, we too need to lay hold of God. Laying hold of God means to focus on Him and not be distracted by other things that demand our attention. It means to persist in waiting on Him until we see His face clearly, and push through the pain of our circumstances until we receive God's blessing.

Often, we give up too easily, and don't expect there to be a struggle before the breakthrough. We want to experience an Open Heaven but aren't prepared to wrestle through the night.

We lay hold of God through prayer. If you're believing God to do something in your life in this season, pray continuously and consistently. When it gets tiring or difficult, or circumstances look like they're going south, don't give up, but keep praying! The Bible says that the fervent prayer of a righteous person yields fruit, so ask God to give you greater fervor and passion in your prayer life.

Make a decision to lay hold of God. Ask Him to help you grow more focused, determined and persistent in your pursuit of Him!

**When was the last time you received a revelation of who God is?**

Ask God for a desire - as Jacob had - to know God's name and to see His face more clearly.

**What are some of the breakthroughs you are needing to persist in prayer for?**

Set a regular time every day or every week this year to lay hold of God for them.

Dear God, thank You for Your promises. I want to see Your promises fulfilled and experience Your blessing in my life. I want to see Your face clearly and know You more intimately. I choose to lay hold of You and will not let You go until I have received my breakthrough. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**



Sept  
17

scripture  
reading: **Deuteronomy 14:2 • 1 Timothy 3**

This week we have been focused on Returning to God - getting desperate for Him, putting Him first in our lives, and drawing near to Him. As we end this first week, let's consecrate ourselves to Him. To consecrate something or someone means to make it sacred or set apart for a specific purpose.

**Deuteronomy 14:2** tells us the following truths about how we should be consecrated to God:

We have been set apart as Holy. This means that our thoughts, words and lifestyles should conform to what the word of God says. Our lives should demonstrate righteous living, with a standard of purity that distinguishes us from the rest of the world.

What are some thoughts or behaviors that we need to put aside or change so that we can be holy, just as God is holy? Make a decision to consecrate those to God today. We have been chosen. Of all the people in the world, God has chosen you to be His child. You are not just one among the crowd of your family, school or church; God has a specific plan for you to fulfill. Commit yourself to be used by God in the unique purpose He has destined for your life.

This means saying 'no' to some things that the world may offer you so you can say 'yes' to what God wants you to do!

We are His special treasure. When we live lives of holiness and make decisions that align ourselves with His will, we find our true worth as His special treasure! We are valuable to Him and useful for the kingdom because God can use us to accomplish His purposes on the earth. Choose to set yourself apart today!

**What are some areas in your life that have not been set apart as holy?**

Surrender these things to God today and ask Him to make you wholly consecrated to Him.

**What are some things that God is asking you to do that you have delayed saying 'yes' to?**

Choose to set yourself apart for Him and say 'yes' to these things today.

Dear God, thank You that you have chosen me. I commit myself to You, that I might be set apart as holy and bring You glory wherever I go. Help me see the destiny You have for me and help me to model what it means to be consecrated for You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
18

scripture  
reading:

**Deuteronomy 30:16 • 1 Timothy 4**

This week's focus is on Stepping into an Open Heaven. We see what it looks like to step into an Open Heaven when Jesus obeyed God and came to John the Baptist to be baptized before beginning His ministry. The heavens opened above Him and the Spirit of God came down and rested on Him. And the Father's voice thundered from heaven declaring His affirmation and love for His son.

What triggered this awesome event? It was Jesus' earnest desire to obey His Father in whatever was required of Him, and it must be the same with us. To step into an Open Heaven, we must obey what He tells us to do. When we obey, we enjoy deeper intimacy and a closer walk with Him. We can then hear His voice more clearly, know our identity as children of God, and step boldly into the plans He has for us.

**Love is a verb.** To know if someone loves us, we need to see it put into action so we can feel and experience it. This is true of a child's relationship with his parents, where an expression of love is his obedience. What a joy it is for a father when his child chooses to obey, not out of compulsion, but because of love and trust that his father has good intentions for his life!

Today, God is calling us to love Him and walk in His ways. He does not compel us but gives us a choice. **Deuteronomy 30:16** says "If you do this..." because God wants us to respond to His call to love Him by choosing to obey Him. This verse was written as a promise to the children of Israel that He would bless them if they would obey His commands. Our obedience is the key to unlock the promises of God over our lives!

We can show our obedience to God in the choices that we make today. Saying 'yes' to God is a tangible way to show that we trust in His love. We can choose to put a stop to an ungodly relationship or forgive someone who has offended us or take a step of faith to serve Him in a ministry.


We can set aside some time every day to communicate with Him by reading His word and building a consistent prayer life. Whatever the Holy Spirit is saying to us today, choose to obey and say 'yes' to Him.

God wants to lead us to walk under an Open Heaven because He loves us. When we love and obey Him, we embark on an adventure with Him, and can expect a great reward for it!



**Make a list of the ways God has blessed you in the past when you obeyed.** Remembering God's goodness gives you the courage to trust Him more.

Write down some things that might be holding you back from obeying God. **Talk to Him about it and let Him assure you that what He has for you is greater than any of these things.**



Dear God, I thank You because Your plans for me are always good. Help me to trust in Your love for me and love You in return by obeying You. I want to receive Your blessings and experience the abundant life You have planned for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Sept  
19

scripture  
reading:

John 14:16-17 • 1 Timothy 5

In **John 14**, Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving them. He had spent about three years with them and now He was going to be with the Father. But He was not abandoning them to fend for themselves. He had asked the Father to give them the Holy Spirit, who would be with them and never leave them. The Holy Spirit isn't a mystery, or an elusive person or concept. He is a gift from God to us. We do not have to search for Him, or unravel who He is.


In fact, the Bible says clearly that we can know Him, because He lives with us and is in us. God has given us the Holy Spirit to navigate the journey of life.

The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Whatever problems or uncertainty there may be in our lives, the Holy Spirit has been given to us to help us. He will guide us and lead us and give us the answer we need to walk through those situations. When we are tempted, He is there to provide a way out for us. When we fail, He is there to convict us and lead us to repentance.

The Holy Spirit will never leave us. He is the helper that the Father has sent to be by our side. We don't have to walk through life alone because the Holy Spirit is with us. Regardless of our situation or our feelings, the truth remains that the Holy Spirit has been sent to us to be by our side. What a great comfort and assurance God has given us! We are never alone!


The Holy Spirit is in us. He is not just a guide, or someone by your side - He is alive and lives in you! The Holy Spirit is a part of you and walks with you through life. He is not just a force or a power, but a Person you can talk with and pour your heart out to.

So invite Him today into your work, marriage, finances, ministry, and every area of your life. Acknowledge His presence in your life and choose to know Him more today.



**Start every day by inviting the Holy Spirit to be a part of your life** - whether it's in your family, relationships, finances, studies or work. Acknowledge your need for the Holy Spirit because He is here to help you.

**What is an area of your life where you need the Holy Spirit to guide and help you?**  
Invite Him into those areas and trust that He can work on your behalf.



Dear Holy Spirit, I need You! I welcome You into my life. Thank you for being my Teacher, Encourager and Counselor. Help me to depend on You and be led by You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
20

scripture  
reading: **John 10:27 • 1 Timothy 6**


Jesus says that His sheep hear His voice. His voice isn't something distant, or an obscure frequency that we have to tune in to. Jesus desires to speak to each one of us because we were created to have fellowship with God. He speaks to us through His word, through our leaders, and through the Holy Spirit living in us! So ask God today what He wants to tell you about your situation or your life, and hear Him speak to you.

Jesus also says that He knows us. This is a call to a personal relationship with the Good Shepherd who longs to communicate with us and have a relationship with us! He knows us by name and has a good plan for every person. There is so much security in knowing that the Good Shepherd is not just interested in what we do but in who we are! He knows our likes and our dislikes, and He understands exactly how to speak to us and guide us because He knows us. And because He knows us, we can trust what He is calling us to do.

Jesus says that His sheep follow Him. When the shepherd calls for his sheep, he is not wondering if his sheep will follow. He expects them to follow, because to do otherwise would be dangerous for the sheep!


Today, the Shepherd is calling you to follow Him. What is He saying to you? Make a decision today to follow Him, because that leads you into the place of safety and blessing.

God has an open heaven that He desires to place over our lives, but we can only access that when we hear Him and follow Him! And the good news today is - we can hear Him speak, and He does speak to us!



Begin hearing His voice by asking God to speak to you. As you open up your heart to hear Him, He will speak to you. **What is He saying to you today about your situation, or where you are in life right now?**

**Are there things in your life that are distracting you from hearing God's voice? If so, what are they?** Begin to lay these things aside in this season and ask God to help you re-prioritize your attention to hear Him speak.



Dear God, thank You for being my Good Shepherd. I know You want to speak to me. I need to hear Your voice and live by Your Word. Help me to guard my heart and always be ready to hear Your voice. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
23

scripture  
reading:

1 Peter 2:9 • 2 Timothy 1

Today is grocery day. This means the fridge is loaded with goodies for the family. Expectantly, you pull open the freezer door and see a glorious box of your favorite ice cream bars. Without a second thought, you help yourself to one, sinking your teeth into the cracking chocolate shell and velvety smooth ice cream. You don't pause for even a moment to ask if you could have one because you know who you are. You are family, and that gives you access.

Knowing who we are is so essential. Even Jesus' ministry on Earth began with the Father declaring at Jesus' baptism that He was His Son! Similarly, if we want to live out all that God has for us, we need to first know who we are in Christ. The problem is, we sometimes struggle with accepting this God-given identity because of past mistakes or flaws, or we don't feel like we're there yet. But identity is not a feeling. We may not be the perfect child or feel like the best parent, but that does not make us any less of a child or a parent!

Likewise, 'not feeling it' does not change who God already says we are. This is precisely the enemy's plan - for us to believe ourselves to be less so that we will deny ourselves access to Heaven's resources and live our lives shortchanged.

We can begin to accept our God-given identity in simple faith. Put your doubts aside for a minute and tune in to God's voice - you are who He says you are. You are chosen, not forsaken; a child of God, deeply loved, richly blessed, and highly favored! This means you are a deliberate part of God's plan and not an accident! He made you intricately, loves you unconditionally, and watches over you unceasingly! Now, declare it and experience for yourself the power of a declaration, especially in moments when you don't feel like it.


When we truly know who we are in Christ, we access the authority, power and resources that are available to us. That makes us a threat to the kingdom of darkness. This is why the enemy works to steal or distort our identity to cripple our potential. We can decide today to not let him have his way. Know who you are, and guard it fiercely!



Make a list of some of the things that God says about you.

These could be Bible verses, or truths from past encounters you've had with God.

**Declare your God-given identity and how it can help you get through difficult situations you might be facing today.**



Dear God, help me to accept that I am who You say I am - deeply loved, richly blessed, and highly favored. Help me know that this is not because of what I have done or what I can do, but simply because You have chosen to delight in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
24

scripture  
reading:

**Romans 8:15-16**  
**1 John 3:1 • 2 Timothy 2**

As a child, we feel safe knowing that we belong, and there is a sense of authority when we are in the house. We can freely access things in the house when we know our parents give us permission to. We belong! This is what **Romans 8** says - our Heavenly Father has adopted us as His own children!

We can be confident in the relationship we have with our Father. Even if your relationship with your biological father was not perfect, we can be sure that God is the good and perfect Heavenly Father. 1 John 3:1 reiterates this when it says, "See how very much our Father loves us, for He calls us His children, and that is what we are!" He is a good Father. We don't have to second-guess His intentions towards us or feel the need to strive for His approval. He is a perfect Father who loves us unconditionally!

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the Father's heart to you. If your view of God has been shaped by past negative experiences or identities that others have tried to place on you, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what the Father's heart really is. Declare **Romans 8:15-16** over your life today because you belong to God!

Allow this truth to transform the way you relate with your Heavenly Father. We can approach God with honesty and vulnerability, and boldly enter into His presence.

It is an honor and privilege to be called sons and daughters of the Most High God! We have this access to God as His children and can tap into all the good things and blessings that He desires to pour out on us. Start today by declaring Whose you are - you are a child of the Living God, and He is your Father. He loves you and protects you. He has good plans for your life and there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God!

### **Have past experiences distorted the way you see God, and what He thinks about you?**

Surrender these experiences to the Father today and let Him assure you of your identity as His child.

Thank God for the privilege of being His child and begin to have honest conversations with God about your life, your circumstances, your feelings and your struggles. He cares for you and you belong to Him!

Thank You Lord, for the awesome privilege to call You 'Abba, Father' and to have this confidence in knowing Whose I am. Because of this, I now come boldly into Your presence and receive freely all You have for me - Your unconditional love and overwhelming goodness! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

### **What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
25

scripture  
reading: **Hebrews 11:8 • 2 Timothy 3**

Everyone has that one friend that claims to be good with directions, but who always ends up getting lost! Instead of pointing you in the right direction, listening to this friend leads you further away from your destination. And you'll be telling yourself that the next time you need directions, you will not look to this friend! Thankfully, God knows the destination that He wants to lead us to.

God is leading us into an Open Heaven. God told Abraham to leave his home to go to a land that he did not know.

God promised Abraham an Open Heaven over his life, and the generations after him. Without any hesitation, Abraham stepped out in faith and obeyed because he heard God's voice and trusted in His leading. The journey was not easy, but Abraham believed in the promises of God.

We can trust God's leadership because His heart towards us is good. Like Abraham, it might not seem that good at first, but God's plan is always to prosper us, and to give us a hope and a future! If you haven't seen God's promise fulfilled in your life, don't give up! God's not done with you yet.

As you continue in these 50 days, declare God's promises over your life. Speak those promises over your life and step out in faith into whatever He is calling you to do. Trust His leadership, and He will fulfill His promise of an Open Heaven over your life.

**Write down some of the promises that you are believing for your life today.**

As you set time aside during these days, ask God to increase your faith to believe Him for these promises.

**What is a decision you need faith for that God is leading you into?**

Start taking steps towards it and talk to a leader about it today.

Dear God, I trust that Your plans for me are good and are to give me a future and hope. In times when I cannot see where You are leading me, help me to trust that You are good. I believe You are leading me into an Open Heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
26


scripture  
reading: **Matthew 26:41 • 2 Timothy 4**

In 1972, a well-known psychologist, Walter Mischel, conducted an experiment where children were offered one marshmallow which they could have immediately, or two treats if they resisted and waited for 15 minutes. This was known as the Stanford Marshmallow Experiment. Although most children could not resist the marshmallow, some children successfully resisted the temptation and were rewarded, doubly. Although most of us don't struggle with marshmallows anymore, all of us struggle with sin and temptation. As we step into an Open Heaven, this is how the enemy will try to trip us up.

The good news is that God promises to be faithful in times of temptation, and will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure. God also promises that when we are faced with temptation, He will provide a way out for us! **Matthew 26:41** tells us how we can overcome temptation:


**First**, we need to “keep watch.” Be on the lookout for what trips you up. Are you more susceptible when you're feeling down, or when you're alone, or when you haven't spent time with God? God has also given us a community of believers so we can be accountable and look out for one another.

**Second**, we need to pray. Turning to God is the surest way to run from sin and temptation. He is light, and the darkness flees in His presence. So many times we turn to our own strength and willpower to run away from sin, when what we needed to do was to have the strength and willpower to run towards God and be in His presence. Strengthen your spirit through prayer. Fast and deny the flesh, and yield instead to the desires of the Spirit. As you do this, believe that God will lead you out of these 50 days with victory over sin and temptation, and into the open heaven that He has promised!



Identify the circumstances where you are most likely to give in to temptation and share this with a leader or trusted friend. Bringing it to light is the first step towards overcoming the enemy.

**As Jesus did, memorize one or two verses of Scripture that will enable you to fight temptation when you need it most.**



Dear God, I thank You that You are faithful, and that You will provide a way out for me when I am tempted. I declare that You have won the victory over sin and death, so I can also experience victory over temptation. I step into the life of calling and the Open Heaven that You have for me! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**



Sept  
27

scripture  
reading: **Revelation 1:17-18 • 1 John 1**

This is the third week of our journey to Live Under an Open Heaven, where we experience the fullness of God's power and blessing.

Under an Open Heaven, we boldly enter God's presence with great expectation. We experience a greater revelation of who God is and have more powerful encounters with Him. We access God's provision of health, joy, and spiritual and natural abundance. Receiving dreams and visions for the future become commonplace. We receive God's anointing and power just as the apostles did in the New Testament church.

This week, believe that Heaven is open wide over you and let His rich presence and power fill you! When we think about going on a holiday, we get excited about experiencing new things. We are eager about seeing a whole new world, tasting different cuisines, and enjoying the culture of that place. We get to bask in all these experiences and ensure that nothing deters us from having the full experience.

But as much as we enjoy these new places, it cannot compare to experiencing God. He is the one who created us, the universe, and all that is in it! God has given us full and free access to Him and welcomes us to encounter the fullness of who He is.

Living under an Open Heaven means having a right perspective of the One who lives in heaven and opens it over our lives. How we view and understand God affects the way we think and live. How are you seeing God? Do you see Him as bigger than your problems? Do you see him as the One who has the power to touch you? Saul, Stephen, Isaiah and John were all great men of God who saw God for who He is, and whose lives were transformed as a result.

We can also be confident that God never changes. Even if situations have blurred our vision of who God is, the Bible assures us that He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The God who parted the Red Sea, provided the children of Israel manna in the desert and raised the dead to life is the same God who can lead you out of impossible situations and heal you.

Ask God today to give you a fresh revelation of who He is. Turn your eyes towards the Open Heaven, see Him seated in authority on His throne, and stir up your faith and expectation for what He will do!

**What perspectives of God have you had that are not in line with what the Bible says?**

Surrender those to Him, and choose, instead, to see God as His Word says He is!

**Write down three things about who God is that you will choose to believe and declare over your life this week.**

Dear God, thank You that You reveal Yourself to us, and that we can experience the fullness of who You are. Help me to look past my doubts and unbelief and give me the faith to see You for who You are. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Sept  
30

scripture  
reading:

Acts 9:3-6 • 1 John 2

Living under an Open Heaven means walking in the destiny God has for us. For the apostle Paul, heaven opened over him, and in a moment, God turned the course of his life around. He was transformed from a persecutor of Christians to the most prolific missionary of the early church! As you live under an Open Heaven, expect that God will show up, speak, and direct you towards your destiny and calling.

Walking in our destiny requires us to make intentional decisions. After Saul encountered God, he shared with others the miracle he had experienced, and about the reality of God in his life. He didn't just hear God speak; he made a decision that took him in the direction of that calling. Choose to make decisions today that will also take you in the direction of the destiny and purpose that God has for you! With each decision, God will make the next step more clear.

Walking in our destiny also requires us to humbly submit our talents to God. For all the bad that Saul did before he encountered God, he was a man with passion and leadership. These were directed towards persecuting the Jews, but after he received a new destiny, he used these talents to build the early church!


Today, you may not have the full road map to your destiny, or know clearly the way to get there, but Heaven is already open over your life! Take the next step in obedience to what God has already spoken to you. Surrender your time and talents to Him, and ask Him to lead you to places where these can be used for His kingdom.



### What are the things God has already asked you to do?

Start doing them, because these are the building blocks to walking in your destiny.

Speak to a close friend or leader about where you feel God is calling you and account to them about what you're doing to move forward in that calling.



Lord, thank You for the destiny You've placed on my life. I choose to surrender my decisions and choices to You. Give me courage to take daily steps to walk in my purpose. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



### What is God speaking to you about?

Oct  
1

scripture  
reading:

**Colossians 3:1 • 1 John 3**

It is uplifting to hear stories of people such as Abraham and Paul who gave up earthly things to follow Christ and pursue a heavenly reward. It is also sad, however, to read of men such as Gehazi, Judas and Demas with high callings who paid more attention to earth's treasures and lost much in the process. When we live under an Open Heaven, our perspectives can be renewed, and our attention directed towards heaven! Here are a few things we can expect:

***We will seek heaven's treasures and not earths.*** We will begin to see the greater value and worth of heavenly things. We will recognize that God is heaven's greatest treasure, and begin to invest more of our time, attention and resources into heaven's agenda. And the more we store up treasure in heaven, the more we grow to love heavenly things, for where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also.

***We will move according to heaven's rhythm.*** When we follow our own timing and schedules, we tend to mess things up. Abraham went ahead of God's timing for the promised child and had Ishmael. Instead, the Bible exhorts us to keep in step with the Spirit. Under an Open Heaven, we will become sensitive to God's timing and seasons for us to act. We can expect moments where we partner with God and He moves on our behalf, at just the right time!

***We will align our hearts to doing heaven's will.*** In heaven, God's will is obeyed at once and without question. The angels in heaven serve Him and do His will. As we walk under an Open Heaven and align our hearts to Him, we will experience what the Lord's prayer says: Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!

**What are some mindsets you hold that are not rooted in a heavenly perspective?**

Ask God to change those and turn your heart towards the things of heaven.

**What are some beliefs that you've held onto, dearly?**

Ask yourself if they are Biblical, or simply tradition, and allow God to renew your mind.

Dear God, help me to recognize that Your perspective and Your ways are higher than mine. Get rid of my old mindsets, give me a heavenly mindset, and empower me to respond in obedience as You begin to renew my perspective. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
2

scripture  
reading: **Philippians 4:19 • 1 John 4**

The Bible is full of stories of God's supernatural provision. In Exodus, God provided manna and quail for the Israelites as they journeyed in the wilderness, after leaving Egypt. In Matthew, God multiplied five loaves of bread and two fish and fed 5,000 in one sitting. Today, we serve the same God of the Bible who is more than able to supernaturally provide for all our needs. We can access the supernatural provision of God in the following ways:

**Acknowledge God as our Provider.** Jesus demonstrated this in the feeding of the 5,000 where He looked to heaven and acknowledged His Father before performing the miracle. Acknowledge that all you have comes from God, and that He is more than able to supply what you need. Giving thanks to God for His provision is a simple way of acknowledging Him as your source.

**Know that God's supply is unlimited.** God supplies us from His glorious riches, which never run out. God Himself is infinite and He gives to us out of His inexhaustible treasury of wealth. Faith is the currency of heaven. Through faith, we can stand on His promises and know that God's bank cannot run dry.

**Give much and you will receive much.** God will supply our needs and will use us, at times, to be His channel to supply the needs of others. In 1 Kings, the widow of Zarephath gave the prophet, Elijah, her last meal which was everything she had left to live on. God intervened to supernaturally provide for her and the prophet during the famine. As we sow much, we can expect to reap much.

As we live under an Open Heaven, God will pour out his provision and blessing beyond what we can expect, so that we may experience an abundant and overflowing life!




**Which areas of your life are you believing God to provide for?**

God works supernaturally when we are at the limits of what is naturally possible.

**What is a step of faith God is asking you to take?**

Take it and see how that unlocks the supernatural provision of God.



Dear God, I acknowledge that all that I have comes from You. I believe You will never fail to provide for all my needs. Help me to have the faith to put my trust in You, and to look to You to fulfill all my needs. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
3

scripture  
reading:

**Ephesians 3:20**  
**Acts 1:8 • 1 John 5**

When you think about powerful people, some that might come to mind are billionaires, superheroes or heads of big companies. They often share common traits - being successful, confident, and having influence. Does that sound attractive? Here is a truth: as God's child, you have access to power that comes from God, himself, which accomplishes much more than what money, position or influence can buy.

In **Ephesians 3**, Paul says that the power that comes from God enables us to effectively fulfill everything He has called us to. His power is supernatural, giving us strength beyond our human capacity and accomplishing things of eternal value! Here's how we can experience more of His power flowing through us:

**Attempt greater things.** Think about the times when you avoided God's plans because of your own limitations. It may be a time you held back from sharing the gospel because you feared rejection, or a time when you said 'no' to discipling or mentoring a newer believer because you felt inadequate. Today, decide that you will step out boldly to do these things, because it is God's power working within you that enables you to do them!

**Ask for bigger things with boldness.** He is able to do much more than we can ask or imagine! God is creative, strong, powerful and able to do the impossible. He can go way past the limitations we face, and we are only limited by what we are willing to ask and expect. So have faith and ask God for bigger things, and experience His power in action!

**Be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit.** Acts 1:8 says that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you! The mighty power that works within you is the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. As He does, His power overflows in us and gives us strength and boldness to accomplish His will. Living under an Open Heaven gives us full access to God's power, so let us walk boldly in it!

**What can you do in your difficult situations to remind yourself of God's power?**

Think of a difficult situation you're going through.

**How will you respond differently now, knowing that you have God's power within you?**

Dear God, thank you for empowering me to accomplish Your will and to overcome difficult situations. Give me the faith to believe that as I set out to do Your work, You will give me the power I need. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
4

scripture  
reading:

Luke 4:18-19  
John 14:12 • 2 John 1

The Bible tells many stories of how Jesus performed miracles, signs and wonders wherever He went. The Bible also tells us that He did them as a man, just as we are. But because He had the anointing of the Holy Spirit, He moved in power to bring healing, breakthrough, and freedom to others. Under an Open Heaven, God pours out this same anointing on us, so we can be just as effective as Jesus was in His ministry.

**When God calls us, He anoints us for His work.** He anoints us to bless those around us through ways that are beyond our natural abilities. You can boldly preach the gospel to your family and friends and see them saved, pray for sick people and see them healed, and minister to the broken-hearted and see their joy restored.

**The Holy Spirit works, even through our weaknesses.** God declares, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” God has freely given you the anointing so that you may serve Him in power. Even if you feel unqualified, the Holy Spirit anoints you to touch the world in a unique way that only you can! Be encouraged - it isn't you. It's the Holy Spirit working through you!

**We can do greater works as we operate in His anointing.** Shortly before Jesus went to the cross, He said these words: “...anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works because I am going to be with the Father.” This same promise holds true for you today.

The best way to experience God's anointing flowing through you is to go to where the needs are and begin ministering God's love and grace. Start believing you are anointed. Start now, and see a greater manifestation of His power in, and through, your life.

**What are some feelings, thoughts, or things in your life that hold you back from moving in the anointing?**

Ask God for a fresh anointing! If we are to do new things for the kingdom, we cannot just rely on what we have received in the past.

Dear God, thank You for anointing me to serve You and to bless those around me. By faith, I receive a fresh anointing to do the extraordinary things that You are calling me to. Let me be a channel of Your love and power to this world. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
7

scripture  
reading: **Revelation 4:1 • 3 John 1**

Heaven is open wide over your life and God is pouring out His blessing, anointing and power on you. But these 50 days are just the beginning of something new. To go the distance, we must have vision for the future!

***Success in God's kingdom begins with a God-inspired vision.*** As we walk under an Open Heaven, God gives us vision for our lives and for His kingdom. A vision is a picture of where God wants to bring us. It gives us an aim and guide on how we should invest our time and effort, make decisions, and set our priorities. If you want your life to be significant, let it be built around a God-given vision.

***We must possess God's vision in every season of life.*** As a boy, Joseph, in the Old Testament, was given dreams of greatness. Years later, this dream was fulfilled. Even in his older years, he nurtured a dream of his bones being re-buried in the promised land. In whatever season you're in right now, or are walking into, ask God for a clear and compelling vision of what He wants to do in and through you!

***Vision must be nurtured by focusing on it and declaring it.*** Vision needs to be kept alive by keeping it at the center of our attention. When God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, he was declaring something that did not seem possible. Abraham had to keep his eyes on the vision and declare it by faith, even though its fulfillment did not come until many years later. Likewise, we must remind ourselves of the vision God has given us and continually declare its fulfillment.

Ask God to give you a vision for your life, family and ministry. Live with great faith and expectation that God will fulfill the vision as you walk under an Open Heaven!

**What is the vision you feel God is giving you for your life?**

Take time to write it down and share it with someone.

**What will you start doing to turn that vision into reality?**

Dear God, thank You for giving me a vision for the future. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on You and to run wholeheartedly in the direction of Your plans for me, even when it is uncomfortable or difficult. I know You will be faithful in helping me accomplish Your will. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
8

scripture  
reading:

Acts 1

During the remainder of our 50 Day Journey in the Word, we're going to work our way through the Book of Acts, which tells the story of Pentecost and the Spreading of the Gospel. God gives us His Spirit to give us the power and courage to share the Gospel. That's our Mission!

Have you ever been lost before? The first time I went backpacking through Rome, we couldn't afford a guide. So we found myself wandering around in a foreign country without knowing where to go, how to speak the language, or how to maximize our trip.

But on our 25th wedding anniversary, we went back to Rome and hired a private guide who grew up in the area. Our guide changed the trip from average to an adventure. He knew the history, the backstreets, the best pasta places, and even where to find the best gelato. We had the best time and learned so much. All because we had a guide.

In Acts chapter one, Jesus tells His disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the gift that He's going to send them after His ascension, that gift was their guide (John 16:13), the Holy Spirit. When you think about the group He's talking to, they should have been the most prepared and equipped to do anything.

After all, they just spent three years in a one-on-one leadership intensive with Jesus! They were the recipients of the best leadership material ever communicated. But Jesus basically said to them, "Listen, before you try to go do anything, wait for this gift I have for you. Don't try to do it on your own."

If the disciples needed the Holy Spirit to fulfill their purpose, you and I need the Holy Spirit to fulfill ours. Many times, we try to be too self-sufficient in our Christian walk, and we don't realize how dependent we need to be on the Holy Spirit. We go through life trying to do it on our own, like I did on my first trip to Rome. We end up wandering around lost, without a guide, and missing out on so much. We need The Holy Spirit to lead us, guide us, and fill us with His presence and power.

A lot of Christians believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit but avoid an experience with Him. Some have heard of Him but don't realize they can hear from Him. They are missing out on the daily adventure of having the Holy Spirit as their guide. The best way to live is not dependent on us, but dependent on the Holy Spirit. As believers, we should live in such a way that if the Holy Spirit doesn't show up, we cannot do what God is calling us to do. We see examples of this Spiritual dependence and desperation all throughout the Bible, but especially in the Book of Acts.

Try starting each day saying, "Come, Holy Spirit, I need you today to fill me with your power and your presence." When we stay in that place of an open-handed posture to receive and depend on the Holy Spirit, it keeps us walking in His supernatural power instead of living limited in our own abilities. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your daily guide and watch as He takes your life from average to an adventure.



**Are you settling for partial power or depending on the full power of the Holy Spirit?  
Do you feel in over your head?**

**What examples from God's Word encourage you to depend on the Holy Spirit rather than your own abilities?**



Holy Spirit, fill me with your power and presence today. Be my guide. Lead me and help me to depend on you. Help me to step into the adventure of surrendering to you daily. Amen.



Oct  
9

scripture  
reading:

Acts 2

Since our son was an only child, we had so much we wanted to give to him when he was little. But when holidays came around, he would only ask for a small gift, like a \$5 video game. While we were dreaming of giving him a trampoline or a golf cart, all he asked for was Mad Libs or a simple Rock ‘Em Sock ‘Em Robots game.

There was a huge gap between what we wanted to give him and his request. This reminds me of how many of us believers live in the gap between all God wants to give us in a Spirit-filled life and what we settle for in our daily lives.

**Acts chapter 2** is like an introduction to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit available to us, and God used the Apostle Peter to set the stage. In Matthew 16, Jesus called Peter “a rock,” but later, Peter fearfully denies Jesus on the night of the crucifixion. But when the Holy Spirit was poured out in **Acts 2**, Peter began prophesying and preaching a powerful message. Peter had a new boldness, he was a different person, finally convinced of his identity.

Peter was no longer living in the gap between what God wanted to give him and what he was settling for. Peter became who Jesus said he was, stepped into his identity as a rock, and received the gifts God wanted to give him. That is what the Holy Spirit does, He empowers us to be who God created us to be in the first place.

I am a huge believer in investing in ourselves by reading books, listening to podcasts, or knowing your personality type. I do all of that. But a natural grace will not take you to a supernatural place. We need to learn how to pray big prayers, ask for Spiritual gifts, and depend on the Holy Spirit’s supernatural power and enablement for our lives. Because no matter where you are on your Spiritual journey, the Holy Spirit always has more for you.

Several years back, I found myself in a desperate place. I needed more than what I had in my own natural ability and strength. I remember kneeling on the floor and crying out to the Holy Spirit. Before that point, my relationship with the Holy Spirit was, You can come close, but not too close. But that day, I fully surrendered. And all I can say is that I experienced what Peter did—I came up different than when I hit my knees.


This kind of encounter doesn’t happen every day, but I know that the more desperate I am, the more the Holy Spirit pours out. He doesn’t always pour out in the same way, but he always pours out.

When I think back to my son in those early years, he missed out because he didn’t know how much capacity we had. In the same way, we need to remember the Holy Spirit’s capacity is greater than we can comprehend. Like Peter, when we rely on Him, we can step into a new boldness and become everything God created us to be.



**Are you settling for less than what God wants for you or daily relying on the Holy Spirit?**

**When did you last feel desperate for the Holy Spirit in your life?**



Holy Spirit, thank you that your capacity is so much bigger than I can fathom. I want every gift you have for me. Help me to fully surrender to you. Pour out your presence. Amen.

Oct  
10

scripture  
reading:

Acts 3

Have you ever felt like you didn't measure up? When my oldest son was younger, nothing made his blood boil more than being told he wasn't tall enough for a ride at an amusement park. The attendant would say, "41 inches. Sorry buddy, that's too bad. You have to be 42 inches to ride. Not quite tall enough. Maybe next year. Please step aside."

When my son heard those words, his face turned red, his brow furrowed, and his bottom lip stuck out like a saucer. He hated being told to step aside because he was too short. One time, he even wore hiking boots to Disneyland to seem taller.

I can relate to my son's hatred of feeling "not enough." For many years, I let the enemy convince me that I didn't measure up, that I didn't have enough, couldn't do enough, and wasn't enough. Somehow, I bought into the lie that there was an invisible line I could never reach and that I needed to step aside.

In **Acts chapter 3**, a man lame from birth begged Peter and John for money. Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Peter and John could have focused on what they didn't have—silver and gold.

They could have allowed their "not enoughness" to stop them from giving anything to the man in need. But instead, they allowed Jesus to be enough. And because they offered this man the presence of Jesus, he not only was healed, but he shared his story of transformation with everyone in the region.


Many of us don't offer the world the richness of Jesus because the enemy has us too focused on what we lack. We think we don't have enough time, enough charisma, enough money, or enough talent. When we haven't allowed God to define our worth, the invisible line of approval, qualification, and validation will always seem just out of reach.

Ask yourself, who is holding the pen that marks the invisible line of "enoughness?" The day I realized the pen was in the wrong hands was the day I was liberated. I realized that I am enough because Jesus in me is enough, and I have enough because Jesus is enough. And when I focus on God's abundance and limitless power instead of my lack, it is a reminder that the presence of Jesus is the greatest gift I can offer to those around me.



**Are you focused on your lack or God's limitless power?**

**Have you allowed someone or something else to measure your identity and worth other than God?**



God, thank you for your limitless power. Thank you that your presence is a gift to me and a gift to those around me. Help me to find my identity in you and to rest in the fact that you are enough. In Jesus' name, amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
11

scripture  
reading:

Acts 4

Congratulations, you're halfway through 50 Days In The Word! Keep it up, the Word will change your life! Not long ago, I was walking downtown and came upon a group of people dressed in the same color and incredibly exuberant. Some even had their faces painted. It did not take long for me to determine that they had just left an arena up the street where their favorite basketball team had won.

You see, it was apparent where they had been and who they were passionate about. It was as if they were walking the streets, still carrying the atmosphere of the place they had just left. Have you ever encountered something like this? Or have you ever been that person?

In the **Book of Acts**, we see something similar occur, except it wasn't people marked by love for a sports team, but rather marked by the person of Jesus. Peter and John were on their way to the temple to worship when they came across a beggar who was crippled. Instead of walking past him, Peter told him to get up and walk in the name of Jesus, and he was instantly healed! People nearby were in awe, and the atmosphere shifted.

Peter and John then began to preach the name of Jesus, the gospel message, to anyone who could hear. The religious rulers of the day did not like this and ended up seizing Peter and John and throwing them in prison for the night.

The next day they were questioned, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" (**Acts 4:7**) Peter responded, empowered by the Holy Spirit, "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but who God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed" (**Acts 4:10-11**). How did the leaders respond to his answer? "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (**Acts 4:13**).

What was different about them? They exhibited Christ's likeness and the Holy Spirit. They were marked by the presence of Jesus. Those who spend time with Jesus and have a true, personal, and intimate relationship with Him are marked by His presence.

Through the Holy Spirit, we are filled with His presence and given the same power that raised Jesus from the grave to live and dwell in us. God gave us His son, His Spirit, and Spiritual gifts so that we may be walking expressions of Him here on earth.

May it be said about us as Christ followers that above others, knowing the sports team we cheer for, what band we are passionate about, or the places we love to go, that we are known to be marked by the presence of Jesus.

**Have you ever thought about what people know you by and why?**

**Where are the places and spaces where you can spend more time with Jesus in your daily life so that you, like Peter and John, will be known for being marked by the presence of Jesus?**

Lord, today I ask for more of your Spirit, more of your presence. I desire to be empowered and emboldened by your Spirit to carry your presence to those around me so they can find and experience you. Amen.

Oct  
14

scripture  
reading:

Acts 5

Let's be honest. Today's reading in **Acts chapter 5** is a bit of a doozy. In the first portion of this chapter, we see the story of Ananias and Sapphira—a husband and wife who were dishonest about the money they earned from selling their property and withheld some of their profit. When confronted about their lie, both Ananias and Sapphira fall and die on the spot. While this may be a bit tough to swallow at first glance, we must look at the Scripture that precedes this story to give us clearer context.

In the concluding thoughts of **Acts chapter 4**, we see that the believers in the early Church, filled with the Holy Spirit, were functioning in one mind and accord. As time passed, these people would sell their land or property and bring the entirety of their profit to the disciples' feet. The apostles would take this money and use it to serve the community's needs.

This was the tone as we enter this story in **Acts chapter 5**. With Ananias and Sapphira, their actions spoke louder than their words. They wanted to appear open-handed and receive credit for their generosity, as they had seen other believers do, but they didn't want to feel the full impact of giving everything. As hard as it may be to process, this story presents two questions that we all need to ask ourselves: What am I holding back? Why am I holding back?


In our lives today, 'holding back' might not look like Ananias and Sapphira's story, and the stakes may not seem nearly as high as passing away on the spot. But maybe, for you, it looks like putting on a face for everyone that you have it all together when you're actually crumbling. Or it could look like choosing to break a commitment when the right thing to do is to press through difficulty. We all have something to release from our grip.

When we think about what we are holding back, it brings us to the awareness of what God has put in our hands. When we confront why we are holding back, it makes us reckon with the things hindering us from fully trusting in God's will for our lives. Answering these questions helps us recognize the weight of stewardship in our lives and empowers us to step fully into the life that Jesus has for us.



**What are you holding back?**

**Why are you holding back?**



God, reveal to me the ways I have been holding back. Allow my eyes to be opened to what I have in my hands, and give me the wisdom to steward it well. Help me to relinquish my fear or distrust, and teach me to trust in you fully. Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
15

scripture  
reading:

Acts 6

Just like the Church today, the first-century Church had issues that arose from time to time. Our enemy, Satan, always looks for ways to divide the Church through "issues." He schemes to distract and destroy the power and potential of the Church through disunity, but those early disciples took action. They wouldn't allow a disagreement to disrupt their unity and the ministry of the Word.

A particular group in the Church, Grecian Jewish widows, was being neglected in the daily food distribution. Muzzling and complaints were beginning to rise, and the disciples were being pulled from preaching the Word and prayer to wait on tables.

What did the disciples do? They brought the right people into the room and agreed on a game plan to grow the ministry team.

Before we move forward, it's important to note that waiting on tables is no less important than preaching the Word and prayer. There is a leadership value that says, "What we are a part of is bigger than the part we play, but the part we play matters."

Without proper food distribution, the Church would be stunted and distracted. Finding the right people to help the disciples wait on tables meant that the Word of God spread (**verse 7**). Side note, as someone who worked as a server in some of America's most fabulous restaurants like Applebees and Bob Evan's (haha), everyone should wait on tables for at least a few months. Trust me, that experience will change how you interact with and tip your server.

In the early Church, as today, everyone has a part to play in the ministry. From hospitality to prayer. From helping with kids to greeting. Every one of us. Every day of our lives. Everywhere we go, we have a part to play. **Acts 6:3** tells us what they looked for to grow their ministry team and invite others to participate. They looked for people with three godly traits...one, a good reputation; two, those full of the Holy Spirit; and three, those full of wisdom.

What a list to consider. Two names of those selected to serve on the team stand out for us: Stephen and Philip. While Stephen and Philip started serving, God sent them out and used them incredibly. Stephen did signs and wonders that led to opposition from the religious leaders and eventually his death. Philip became an evangelist, bringing the Good News to the Ethiopian eunuch and changing a nation forever. Acts 6 reminds us of the power of serving together and that our serving leads to transformation.

**What's my reputation? Am I making much of Jesus or much of myself? What do others see in me and say about me?**

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh and anew today so you will walk in step with the Spirit.

Ask God to give you wisdom and direction in where and how you are serving others. In our serving, we fulfill our purpose and identity.

God, thank you that I have a part to play in your Church and kingdom. I pray that you would fill me afresh today so I can walk in step with your purpose and your Spirit. Amen.



Oct  
16

scripture  
reading:

Acts 7

At first glance, it seems crazy that Stephen would be put to death over telling these Jewish leaders about the history of their people. He starts at Abraham and summarizes the highlights up to the temple of Solomon. I mean, let's be honest, it's pretty basic and a little boring! We teach the stories of Joseph and Moses to little kids. So where is the controversy?

Why does Stephen need to tell these iconic Old Testament stories in defense of his proclamation of Jesus? The nuance is in how Stephen tells these stories. Stephen roots his defense of Jesus in their shared religious history but accuses them of continuing in the Israelites' pattern of disobedience, missing how God works, and persecuting the prophets.

Stephen roots his history lesson in Abraham but quickly focuses on the stories of Joseph and Moses. In doing so, he presents both massive heroes of the faith as rejected by the people they were leading. God was constantly intervening in their stories, but the people of God did not understand it and turned on the leaders. As you read chapter 7, look for all the aspects of conflict in the stories of Moses and Joseph. Stephen infers this is the same conflict that Jesus regularly encountered by the religious leaders.


Another critical theme in Stephen's story is place. Read **chapter 7** a second time and take note of all the places. Cities, regions, nations, and mountains (even a bush) are highlighted as places where God intervenes. The temple in Jerusalem acted as a crown jewel in this ancient, storied religion. Still, Stephen masterfully reminds his listeners that God has moved throughout history in various ways and many places.

The God of Abraham is not confined to one system, region, or temple. God spoke and worked in all these places. Stephen shows that religious leaders need to get outside of their box. They need to admit that Jesus is, in fact, the long-awaited "Righteous One" (that they murdered) and who is now at the right hand of the Father. They are stiff-necked, just like their ancestors who often missed the signs and got it wrong. When you read it like that, maybe Stephen's speech was more controversial than we realize.



**Are there places in your life you don't expect God to speak into?**

**How do you resist God?**



Father, you are the God of all time and eternity. Help us to see beyond our modern-day expression of faith and the patterns we fall into. Speak to us when we don't expect it, and we invite you into all the areas of our lives. Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
17

scripture  
reading:

Acts 8

**Chapter 8** is a major turning point in the story of the early Church. This is like a massive billboard, blinking lights-type moment. This is your professor saying, “You might want to write this down,” as it is surely important. “The Way” of Jesus, as referred to in the following chapter, takes a major advance forward. But this spreading of the gospel occurs due to Stephen’s death and the ensuing persecution of the believers. Out of something tragic, something good occurs. People fled as “Saul was going everywhere to destroy the Church,” which brought about the opportunity to share the gospel in previously deemed unimportant places.

The chaos leads believers (Philip’s dramatic encounters are given in **chapter 8** as just an example!) to preach in Samaria. We might be tempted to gloss over this proper noun as another Mediterranean city we don’t know, but it carries major significance. Deep, longtime political and religious divides led Jews to call them traitors of God. Their insults also had racial undertones, as they were called “half-breeds” for intermarrying with pagan foreigners during a time of foreign occupation.

By Jesus’ time, Samaria was so hated that most Jews would travel long distances to avoid the region. Jesus bucked the system by cutting through the area, interacting with the Samaritan woman at the well, staying in Samaria for several days, and setting up the Good Samaritan as the hero of the famous parable. Now the apostles are actively ministering in Samaria, welcoming them into the movement of Jesus!

But the spread of the gospel doesn’t stop there. Philip encounters an African eunuch who previously would have been kept on the fringes of faith. His nationality would always restrict him to the outer courts of the temple. But his physical condition would perpetually render him unclean. As Philip explains the impact of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the eunuch puts him on the spot by asking about baptism. He forces the issue to see if he could truly be welcomed as a fully participating member of this new movement.

Because of this chapter, the Jesus movement spreads out of Jerusalem. It welcomes those who are different. It includes those with different backgrounds. It includes those who speak different languages. It expands to the nations.

We see the fulfillment of Jesus’s words in **Acts 1:8**, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” I’m so thankful his message spread around the world to include you and me.

**How might God redeem the hardships in your life for a greater purpose?**

**What walls have you built to avoid those who are different from you?**

**How will you share Jesus with those who may seem on the outside of faith and hard to reach?**

God, we confess that we build walls with those whom we don’t like and who are different from us. We know you have called each and every one of us to be your witness, both near and far. Give us the courage to connect with, listen to, and share the message of hope with those around us. Amen.

Oct  
18

scripture  
reading:

Acts 9

How do you react when you're corrected? Do you fight it out and attempt to argue your way out with a deny-until-you-die attitude? It's easy to hold onto our beliefs, even the ones that are wrong, and not remain open to another point of view.

One of my favorite John Mayer lyrics comes from his song, Shadow Days, where he writes, "Did you know that you could be wrong, and swear you're right. Some people been known to do it all their lives."

Here in **chapter 9**, Saul is convinced of his own belief. He is both compelled to action and committed in his methods. And yet, Saul has a personal and powerful encounter to expose the error in his ways. This Divine encounter was outside the realm of possibility for Saul.


It was unbelievable for those traveling with him. Even the disciples who would welcome Saul in Damascus and later in Jerusalem would struggle to believe this transformation in Saul was even possible. Saul's transformation quickly proves to be valid. In this dramatic encounter, he learns two facts that will alter the course of his life.

The first is that Jesus is, in fact, alive. The second is that in persecuting Christians, Saul is, in fact, persecuting Jesus himself. Saul allows these new revelations to change his mind, actions, and mission. Saul is not the only one who is changed. **Verse 31** shows how the Church throughout the whole region thrived.



**When was the last time you experienced conviction from the Holy Spirit?**

**In what areas of your life are you resisting the truth?**



God, speak your truth in my life. Convict me of the things that are not in alignment with you. Give me the courage to address any impure way within me and supply me with a community to help me live fully for you. Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**



Oct  
21

scripture  
reading:

Acts 10

Have you ever been in a rut? You know what I mean. Life is just ordinary and seems to be the same every day. You naturally do the same routine every day. Get up. Go to work so you can pay the bills. Come home and do some chores. Turn on the TV and fall asleep on the couch, watching whatever is on TV. And then get up and do the same thing again tomorrow. Sound familiar?

Our passage in **Acts 10** describes a different kind of life, one that is more than natural, it's supernatural! Natural vs. Supernatural. That is the choice we all have every day. What about you? Which do you choose daily?

A natural life is focused on the ordinary and conformity with that around you. Even Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines it as "not marvelous or supernatural." Who would want a life like that? Surprisingly, just look around. It seems many do.

However, a supernatural life is anything but ordinary. It's a life focused on God and empowered by His Spirit. Again, Merriam-Webster defines 'supernatural' as a life chasing after an "order of existence beyond the visible observable universe." That's biblical.

**2 Corinthians 5:7** says, "For we walk by faith and not by sight." And in **Acts 10**, we see how Peter lived the supernatural life, and we can do the same three things every day.

First, we are invited to hear God. Peter did this through a vision that revealed God invites all people to have a relationship with Him through faith in Jesus. That is the beginning of the supernatural life! Second, we get to obey God in response to what He says. Peter did this by listening and obeying God and going with a Gentile (Cornelius, who wasn't Jewish) to his house in another city with more Gentiles! All of this was unacceptable in the Jewish culture of Peter's day.

Lastly, we gladly declare God to those around us. Peter, in a Gentile house, surrounded by other Gentiles, preached about Jesus, they received Jesus, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Peter couldn't believe what he was able to be a part of! It was incredible, supernatural! And the same God wants the same for you today.


He has something to say to you. Will you take time to hear God by reading the Bible? He has wisdom and guidelines that will help you live daily the supernatural life. Will you obey God as He leads you—no matter what the culture of the day says? He has plans not only for you to live a supernatural life but also for other people. Will you declare God to those around you?

Why would anyone live an ordinary life when God is inviting us into so much more? Something supernatural!



**Are you living a natural life or a supernatural life?**

**Are you spending time in God's Word and taking time to listen to Him daily?**



Thank You that You are a supernatural God and invite us into a supernatural life. Help us to depend on you and follow your lead. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oct  
22

scripture  
reading:

Acts 11

What's the best gift you've received? Maybe it was for your birthday or at Christmas. I've always loved receiving gifts, especially wrapped gifts, so I don't immediately know what it is. I love the mystery, the anticipation, and the surprise! But one birthday was exceptional. After I opened my presents, my wife had one more—she sent me an email with a video attached. It was 15 people who I hadn't seen in years, from all over the country, who shared what my life and ministry had meant to them. It's still the best present I've ever received for my birthday or Christmas.

Gifts have that power since they are an expression of love. You receive gifts because you matter to someone and are significant in their life. Guess what? God loves you and has a gift for you because you matter and are significant to Him.

Peter often witnessed God giving a gift to people. Peter saw it in **Acts 2** when God gave the gift of His Holy Spirit to the people in the upper room on Pentecost, and in **Acts 11** when God gave the same gift to the Gentiles or those who aren't Jewish.

Peter and the Jewish leaders were surprised by that last one. So, in **Acts 11**, Peter shares everything that happened with the leaders in Jerusalem, especially in Cornelius' house. Peter tells them what God did: Gentiles confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior, and they received God's gift of the Holy Spirit, just like they did. Peter didn't expect this but said, "Who was I to think I could stand in God's way?" Peter and the leaders shouldn't have been surprised.

How can you even live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit? How could you understand the Bible? The Holy Spirit helps you understand God's Word. How could you grow in your walk with the Lord? The Holy Spirit empowers you to resist sin. How could you bond with a group of people at your church that you now call family? The Holy Spirit unites you with other believers in the Church.


And as good as that is, Acts 11 reminds us that God has another gift for you, He gives you a new identity. Once you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, you are a "Christian," as **Acts 11:26** tells us. You are still known by your own name, but now you have a new identity, Christian, which means you are a follower of Jesus, and that's logical since His Spirit, or the Spirit of Jesus, now lives with you forever.

What's the best gift you've received? And even if your gift was as exceptional as mine on that one birthday, I guarantee the gift of the Holy Spirit that God wants to give you is better. Because it's from God, it reveals you matter and are significant to Him.



**Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what gifts He wants to give you. What do you sense Him stirring in your spirit?**

**Have you fully received the gift of a new identity in Jesus?**



Holy Spirit, thank you for your generous gifts. Help me to live a life surrendered to you and open to every new gift you have for me. Amen.

Oct  
23

scripture  
reading:

Acts 12

“So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” In a modest house, a group of believers gathered, praying desperately for their leader, who had just been arrested. These were violent times for the early Church. Many followers of Jesus were being hunted down, persecuted, and even killed. Most of us never have and will never know the terror these believers lived with daily.

For the days leading up to Peter's scheduled execution, they gathered and earnestly prayed while he waited behind locked gates and ready swords of the prison guards. The word “earnest” holds the idea of someone literally stretching out all they can for something. It's a medical term to describe stretching a muscle to its limits. Luke, the author of Acts, used the same word in his Gospel book to describe Jesus' anguish as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood.

I don't know about you, but stretching isn't something I enjoy doing. It's uncomfortable, even painful, but health experts will tell you that the benefits far outweigh the burn. Like stretching, His type of serious-minded and dedicated prayer isn't easy. It takes focus, intentionality, and commitment.

In **Luke 18:1**, Jesus told His disciples a series of parables “that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” The early Church practiced this well. Even in the face of uncertain outcomes, they persisted. There's much we can learn from them, but three areas stand out to me:

### 1. Stay Connected

**Acts 2:42** tells us that when the Church was birthed, they “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”

Peter may have been behind bars, but no prison gate could hold in the prayers of the Church. They had seen firsthand what happened when people came together in prayer because of the example set by the apostles. They knew anything was possible when they were all united in prayer.

### 2. Pray in Faith

In **Matthew 17:20**, Jesus tells His disciples that anything is possible if they only have the faith of a mustard seed. Based on the horror these believers had already experienced with the death of James, their faith was likely as tiny as that mustard seed at this point! But by combining what little faith with their earnest prayers, they were about to experience a miracle!

### 3. Don't Miss the Answer


They were so caught up in deep prayer that they almost missed the answer to their prayer! When Peter showed up, they were caught by surprise. The answer didn't come the way they expected. But a young girl recognized him, and God used her to deliver the joyful news. God uses all generations to build and grow His Church!

When the first church gathered and prayed in faith, two things happened: Prayer opened the prison gates for Peter, freeing him to continue and complete his calling. Prayer allowed a new generation to witness its power firsthand, freeing them to testify boldly of God's faithfulness. Earnest prayer isn't cheap—it will cost us. But the price is worth it when we're fighting for someone's freedom.

“Do not work so hard for Christ that you have no strength to pray, for prayer requires strength.” - Hudson Taylor

 What would it look like for you to stretch beyond what is comfortable in your prayer life?

How have you experienced the power of prayer in your life?

 God, thank you for the power of prayer. Help me to stay connected, pray in faith, and not miss the answer. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oct  
24

scripture  
reading:

Acts 13

We usually have no problem talking about things we love. One of my favorite things is cheering on my favorite basketball team. I LOVE this team for so many reasons. I was a basketball player myself and love the game. I've cheered for this team since I was young, I am invested in their success. This team also wins often. It's always fun to cheer on a winning team. I have become quite passionate about this team over time, and I pretty much tell everybody I know about how this team is so great.

What's it for you? Maybe it's a show you've binge-watched, an amazing new restaurant you discovered, or maybe it is your favorite gadget. Now think about this, how often do you share about Jesus with others?

Today, we enter the scene in **Acts 13** where we see the beginning of Paul's powerful mission to advance the gospel to reach the ends of the earth. As you read through this chapter, you see the **BOLDNESS** Paul had to share the gospel. He shared with passion and boldness, no matter the situation or the response.

Why? Because He had experienced the power, transformation, and love of Christ. He knew God desired that none should perish but that all should repent and have eternal life.

We must understand that God gave us the right, responsibility, opportunity, and privilege to share the good news with others too! So many still needed to hear His message. Listen to what Paul says later on in **Romans 10:14 and 17...**

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ"

None of us lack opportunities to share our faith, but often we lack the boldness. What can we do? Pray that God would give you eyes to see the opportunity He has already put in front of you and the boldness to walk through the door when it opens because, as believers, we have a call—like Paul—to share the gospel.


And don't forget, above Paul's example and teaching, Jesus himself showed us the way and left the earth by giving us the Great Commission, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

May we have as much passion sharing about how Jesus has changed our lives and is the Savior of the world as we do talking about everything else. No one thing or one person has changed our life more than He has. Let's declare that with boldness!



**Who is the family member, the coworker, the friend, or the neighbor in your life that needs to hear the message of Jesus?**

**When is the next opportunity, and how can you boldly share the gospel with them?**



Thank you, Lord, for your love for us, grace, forgiveness, never-ending pursuit of us, and the gift of your Son. Thank you, Jesus, for what you did for us on the cross, for rising again three days later, and for all that it means for us. Thank you for the victory, hope, and eternity we have in you. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Today, we ask for more of your Spirit. Give us your eyes and heart for those around us who need the Good News. Quicken our step and speech toward them and give us the boldness to share with them about you. We want them to experience the transforming power of you in their lives. Use us, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

Oct  
25

scripture  
reading:

Acts 14

In **chapter 14**, we find Paul and Barnabas continuing their work of preaching about Jesus. In one sense, they experience a typical result: many people believe, some don't, and they face death threats and move on. In Lystra, the pattern is changed. They don't preach in the Jewish synagogues like normal. Instead, their ministry is kickstarted with a healing of a lame man.

This gets the people's attention, but they mistake Paul and Barnabas for Greek gods, causing them to play catch-up in their preaching. Paul and Barnabas become worship figures while trying to persuade the crowds not to sacrifice offerings to them.


This passage is striking because it's a reminder of how easily people can be misguided. Here the people misinterpret the work of God and connect it with what they know in their culture. In our world, we can see people trade the work of the Spirit for positivity and good vibes.

The end result of this almost comical scene is quite tragic for Paul. Opposition from their last two tour stops arrives to turn the crowd against them. They went from being celebrated to fearing for their lives. Paul is beaten and left for dead, yet he gets up, returns to town, and leaves the next day to keep at his preaching tour. We love stories where athletes have to fight through adversity, but Paul's resolve is unmatched.



**Do you recognize the work of the Spirit in your life? If God's not active in your life, what needs to change?**

**Do you have a sense of purpose in your work? What would a sense of zeal for the Good News mean in your life?**



Father, you have called us to go and make disciples. You promise that your Spirit is with us. Help us to see where you are working in and around us. Give us the courage to partner with you and join the work of your Kingdom. Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
28

scripture  
reading:

Acts 15

I've heard it said, "If you find a perfect church, don't join it because you'll ruin it." It's a funny reminder that God's Church is full of imperfect humans who don't always get it right or see eye-to-eye. As we read in **Acts 15**, we see the early Church faced many challenges and disagreements, just as we do today—yet they still found a way to move forward and fulfill their mission.

Many of us are so scared of conflict that we run at the first sign of it. We fail to realize that conflict is an opportunity for unity and an opportunity to go deeper in our relationships. The strongest relationships are not the ones that remain safely at the surface but the ones that weather the storms of disagreement and find a way to honor one another through their differences.

If we remember back to **Acts chapter 9** when Saul (who became Paul) encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. The ascended Christ said to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Notice Jesus didn't say, "Why do you persecute my church?" or "Why do you persecute my people?"

All throughout Scripture, God connects our love for Him with our love for others. And here, it seems the opposite applies as well. Paul wasn't just persecuting Christians, He was persecuting Christ. After Paul's transformation, it's easy to see it wasn't just Paul's affection toward Jesus that shifted. It was also his affection toward His Church. Becoming a friend of Jesus went hand-in-hand with becoming a friend of His people.

However, Paul's journey of learning to love God's people wasn't always smooth sailing. In **Acts 15**, we see a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark. The Bible doesn't leave out their humanity or the fact that even the godliest individuals sometimes see things differently. But \*spoiler alert\* we know that Paul later reconciled with both Barnabas and John Mark because he mentioned them both positively in his letters (**1 Corinthians 9:6; 2 Timothy 4:11**).


We often think about repentance as changed actions, but it is also about changing our minds. The Greek word *metanoia* means "to change one's mind." Somehow, these godly leaders found a way to change their minds and focus on their common mission rather than their differences. Instead of spreading gossip, they spread the gospel.

Instead of allowing bitterness to grow, they laid that aside so the Church could grow. When it comes to the differences or offenses that might arise, are you willing to change your mind? We can fight to be right, or we can unite. Or, we can keep looking for that perfect church we'll ruin once we walk through the door.



**In what ways might you need to change your mind—not to think exactly like someone else—but to choose a bigger mission and goal of unity?**

**How is the way we love others linked to our love for God?**



God, thank you for inviting me to deepen my relationships through conflict. Help me not run from it but see it as an opportunity for unity—to show the world a greater example of love, your love. Amen.

Oct  
29

scripture  
reading:

Acts 16

As I slide into my car daily, I turn my music on and start my day praising God. That time in my car is never wasted time, but it is a holy time of prayer and praise. I have seen the power of praise change my mind, attitude, and even sometimes, eventually, some of my circumstances. The power of praise is much more than a coping strategy through difficult days—it is a supernatural connection with the Almighty God.

As we read **Acts 16** today, we can't help but be in awe of two things. I first noticed that Paul and Silas had been directed and led by the Holy Spirit throughout the days leading up to their imprisonment. He had opened and closed doors and spoken clearly to them in a vision. This gave them the confidence that their imprisonment was part of their assignment.

Their praise, singing, and praying were not affected by their circumstances. They knew their calling was to preach the Good News of Jesus wherever they went, including a place they did not want to be, a place full of pain and hardship. Paul and Silas, at that moment a couple of thousand years ago, set an example for all believers who follow them in responding to the darkest of nights.

We choose to pray and praise and allow others to watch us do it. We are called by God to be set apart for His purposes and to be holy. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** says, "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."


Our role is to learn to hear His voice simply by spending time with Him in prayer, reading His revealed Word, the Bible, and aligning ourselves with what He has spoken to us. As those daily decisions lead us into our next days, we can then be full of praise and confidence as we walk into the challenge, obstacle, or even our darkest season.

We know there is a power in our praise that will bring glory to God, strength to our spirits, and bring others to know His hope by watching us. What God has done before, He will do again.



**How can you pray and praise today in the middle of what you are walking through?**

**How have you seen the power of praise work in your life?**



God, thank you for the power of praise. Thank you for the example of Paul and Silas, who show me how to respond with faith during the darkest nights. Help me to be thankful in all circumstances. In Jesus' name, amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Oct  
30

scripture  
reading:

Acts 17

Do you know about God, or do you know God? In **Acts 17**, the Apostle Paul addresses the people of Athens by saying, “I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship, and this is what I am going to proclaim to you” (**Verses 22-23**).

Paul goes on to explain that we are God’s offspring. This was a foreign concept in a culture where gods took the form of statues and idols. Offspring is a relational term, a family term. Paul introduces the people of Athens to the “unknown god” and tells them He wants to be known.


If you’ve struggled to feel or hear God, don’t buy into the myth that He is unapproachable or far off. He is not a mysterious force or an impersonal idol, nor is He a religious box to check on Sundays. He wants to know and be known, and He wove the same desire into your DNA as a relational being. He’s not only powerful, He’s personal. God is love (**1 John 4:6**), and love doesn’t exist without a relationship.

The language of relationship permeates Scripture, such as the nature of the Trinity or Jesus teaching us to pray to “Our Father...”. In Bilquis Sheikh’s memoir about her conversion from Islam to Christianity called *I Dared Call Him Father*, she shares her experience trying to relate to God as a father, “No Muslim, I felt certain, ever thought of Allah as his father. Since childhood, I had been told that the surest way to know about Allah was to pray five times a day and study and think on the Quran. Yet, Dr. Santiago’s words came to me again, ‘Talk to God. Talk to Him as if He were your Father.’ Alone in my room, I got on my knees and tried to call Him ‘Father.’ It was a useless effort, and I straightened in dismay. It was ridiculous. Wouldn’t it be sinful to bring the great one down to our level?” Bilquis followed the advice of a Christian (Dr. Santiago) and tried approaching God as her Father again the next day. Soon she entered into a sweet and transformative relationship with her Father in Heaven and God’s Word, the Bible. She went on to risk her life to become an evangelist and missionary. Her previous image of God could only be known about but not known.

Why is it important to remember that God is relational? Because if we forget, we settle for religion. Today, as you enter your time with God, don’t go through the motions. Don’t take for granted that you serve a God who wants a relationship with you.



**When it comes to God, have you settled for religion or entered a relationship?  
In what ways have you been going through the motions in your faith?  
How can you reignite your relationship with God?**



God, thank you that you are a relational God. Help me not to take that for granted. I pray that I will not go through the motions in my faith but seek you as a Father and a friend. In Jesus’ name, amen



**What is God speaking to you about?**



Oct  
31

scripture  
reading:

Acts 18

If you've ever felt discouraged, like giving up and backing down from what you believed God told you to do, you're in good company. You're not just my company, but you can identify with the Apostle Paul too. In **Acts 18**, we find Paul discouraged and opposed by the religious leaders' response to the Good News of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul has recently left Athens, a place of intellectual prominence, and entered Corinth, a less refined city known for immorality and selfish pride. Corinth was a ripe mission field, unknowingly ready for harvest, much like the city we live in today.

Paul's discouragement didn't last long. God surrounded Paul with people of encouragement. A couple in exile, Aquila and Priscilla, opened their home to Paul and labored together as tent makers. Soon, Silas and Timothy, Paul's mentees, arrive on the scene. Their arrival meant that Paul could fully devote himself to teaching and preaching.

Just as God put specific people of encouragement in Paul's life, he's done that for us. My wife and I have several CEOs...Chief Encouragement Officers. We know who they are, and they know who they are to us. They lend us their faith when we don't have enough faith for ourselves. When we grow weary and tired of praying, they continue to pray bold prayers over us.

Who are your CEOs? Who has God placed in your life to encourage you? We all need people like that, but even with encouraging people of God in our lives, we will still face opposition as Paul did.

**Acts 18:6**, when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles." Even in the face of opposition, God continued to encourage Paul. This time, He spoke to him in a vision: "Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." Those words, "Don't be afraid, I am with you," are reminiscent of God's words to Joshua (**Joshua 1:9**) and Jesus' words to us in The Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**). We serve a speaking God, who, through His Word and His people, reminds us that He is with us and for us. If you find yourself in a place of discouragement today, you can borrow my faith. God is not finished with you yet! Surround yourself with people of faith and spend time learning to listen to His voice. I've heard it said that if you want to hear God audibly, read His Word out loud. Give it a try. Read **Acts 18:9-10** a few times out loud and envision God speaking those words over you. Don't quit. Don't be afraid. He is with you. And so are we.

**You are the sum of your five closest friends. Are your friends encouraging you in your faith journey or discouraging you?**

**What do you believe God is speaking in this season of your life? Is there a Scripture you can memorize and declare over your life as a reminder?**

**If heaven seems silent, what distractions could you remove from life to lower the volume of this world to hear God speak more clearly?**

God, thank you that you still speak and want me to hear your voice. I pray that you would help me turn down this world's noise so I can tune into you. I pray that you would help me identify encouragers in my life and be an encouragement to others. In Jesus' name, amen.



Nov  
1

scripture  
reading:

Acts 19

As we read **Acts 19**, we see one of the most action-packed chapters in the entire Bible. Paul starts by praying for some disciples to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, then Paul preaches “boldly,” performs “unusual miracles,” and “evil spirits were expelled” (**verses 11-12**). The ministry of Paul was so powerful that the chapter ended with a city-wide riot against Christians, but not even that could stop the gospel from spreading.

We see Spiritual warfare all throughout the Bible. Jesus’ ministry was characterized by a constant battle with the enemy of our souls. The same thing can be said of the ministry of all the apostles, especially of the Apostle Paul. No wonder the Apostle Paul was inspired by these events when he later wrote his epistle to the Ephesians and instructed them to “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the Heavenly places” (**Ephesians 6:11-12**).

There are two extremes in regard to Spiritual Warfare: Passive and Obsessive. Passive Christians are simply unaware, naive, or they just over-intellectualize everything. Here, the strategy of the demons are, as C.S. Lewis said in his book *The Screwtape Letters*, to “conceal themselves.”

On the other hand, there are Christians that are too obsessed with the devil. They see demons everywhere, even in circumstances of their own making. None of these extremes are good or Biblical.

Instead, we should develop a balanced and spiritually realistic attitude. Yes, there is a battle, but we shouldn’t panic or be fearful because God has equipped us with powerful Spiritual weapons (**2 Corinthians 10:4**) to overcome an already defeated foe.

It’s important to understand we don’t fight for victory but from victory. Scripture tells us that we are “more than conquerors” (**Romans 8:37**) because Jesus already defeated the enemy and his demons “by triumphing over them” (**Colossians 2:15**). However, just as victory was promised to the people of Israel as they entered Canaan, they still had to fight some giants; so, it is with us. God is inviting us to be part of His victory by fighting in the Spirit and putting on the armor of God.

If you look closely at all the seven parts of the armor of God...truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer, they are the Spiritual weapons that the Lord has given us to live a victorious and joyful life!



**Have you put on the full armor of God?**

**Are you fighting for victory or from victory?**



God, thank you that we always have the victory in you. Help me to put on the full armor of God and stand firm through every Spiritual battle. Amen.

Nov  
4

scripture  
reading:

Acts 20

I love watching competitions among elite athletes. I have caught excerpts on television of the CrossFit competitions where these buff people with five percent body fat do all kinds of pull-ups and squats within a set period. So much easier watching from my couch with some snacks and a soda in hand. All throughout these competitions, they have to endure pain to win the race. This is why they call their race an obstacle course. What makes the race challenging is that they must push past the obstacles while enduring physical pain. Ouch.

The Apostle Paul was called to run his race of faith. He would have to endure pain while pushing past obstacles getting in his way.

“And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.” **Acts 20:22-24 (NLT)**


How was he able to do this? Why did Paul embrace his race, knowing how painful and difficult it would be? His decision was to be led (bound) by the Holy Spirit. Wherever God’s Spirit led Him, Paul followed. Why? Because Paul wanted to finish his race of faith. For Paul, a win for him was in living out his holy assignment given by the Lord Jesus. Paul saw success not in comfort but in calling. Mission drove him, and his ministry fulfilled him.

Are you willing to run that race if God calls you to a tough assignment? Are you willing to push past obstacles and endure pain when it comes? Can you endure that theology? You can when you accept your holy assignment given by the Lord Jesus to share His Good News message. You can when you decide to let the Holy Spirit speak to you and lead you where He wants to take you.



**What assignment are you called to in this season?**

**Are you willing to continue to run the race even when it gets hard?**



God, thank you for your calling on my life. Help me to continue to run the race even through obstacles and hardships. I pray that you would fill me with your presence, power, and strength to continue to do your will. Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Nov  
5

scripture  
reading:

Acts 21

Has there ever been a time when you committed to something but didn't realize how uncomfortable it would be until you were in it? I have had many. But one that comes to mind is when I was on a mission trip to Thailand. Before I went, I made a commitment to myself that I would eat everything in front of me, no matter where I was or what situation I was in. I mean, after all, who doesn't like Thai food? I might not have known the language, but I planned to build relationships however I could. Sounds reasonable, right?

Unfortunately, I hadn't quite anticipated the food that was going to be put in front of me. From fried crickets to frog legs to fruit that smelled like baby diapers, it soon became very uncomfortable, but I knew that God had called me on purpose for a purpose. Sometimes, we need to choose God's calling over our comfort, but that may take some courage!

In **Acts 21**, we see Paul on a missionary journey that would lead him to Jerusalem to face some potentially uncomfortable situations. Not the "eating smelly fruit" uncomfortable, but the "go to prison or be killed" kind of uncomfortable. During this journey, Paul had plenty of people trying to dissuade him from continuing. They wanted him to see the comforts that he currently had and stay there. But Paul knew that God called him on purpose for a purpose. So, he was willing to be courageous and step into his calling even though it might be uncomfortable or even cost him his life.

**Acts 21:13 (NIV)** Then Paul answered, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."


Now that is next-level commitment! Could there be something God is calling you to commit to that might be uncomfortable to do in the name of Jesus? Maybe it is going on a mission trip, starting a group with your neighbors, or helping "Get There First" by serving kids or students.

You never know the impact that you may have because you were obedient to God's calling to possibly get uncomfortable. In my case, I found out after living in Thailand for six years that my willingness to eat anything that was put in front of me resulted in people inviting me into their homes and into their lives which then provided an opportunity to share about Jesus.



**What is God calling you to do, but you have hesitated to do it because it might be uncomfortable? What steps will you take today to pursue that?**

**How could your obedience to God's calling impact your family? Your friendships? Your workplace? Your school? Your community? Our world?**



God, thank you for calling me on purpose for a purpose. I pray today that I will step into that purpose even if it feels uncomfortable. Thank you that you will be with me each step of the way. Amen.

Nov  
6

scripture  
reading:

Acts 22

Today's reading from **Acts 22** reminds us of the power that comes through sharing our story. In front of a crowd of rather rowdy witnesses, we see Paul give his personal story of what God has done for him and the radical change he experienced as a result. Looking at the life of Paul, it is made clear that a revelation of who God is changes everything.

In Hebrew, the word for 'testimony' is translated to 'do it again, with the same power and authority.' When we take the step to share our story of the power and miracles that God has done for us—it's more than just words spoken or written. Our testimony invokes faith, it shouts loudly of the power found when we run to the cross, and it helps to tear down the walls of sin and shame to rebuild on the firm foundation of Jesus.

From middle school through my early 20s, I walked through a weathered season of depression and suicide that I felt trapped by. To me, life had no purpose or meaning, and I had no value or place. It wasn't until I opened up to a friend honestly about the journey, I'd been on that I began to open myself up to the healing power. My painful honesty, the accountability my friend held me to, and the power of God to heal and restore me saved my life. Since then, I have been able to walk with people through similar seasons of life and point back to the hope I found. That's my testimony, death to life.


Have you ever traveled out of town and looked for recommendations on where to go? Whenever I'm looking for advice on navigating a new place I'm stopping in, I'm reaching out to people who know the in-and-outs—the best places to stop and eat, the streets you should avoid, and the hidden gems that will highlight the trip.

I think of our testimonies from a similar perspective. While what we've once walked through might have caused us shame or pain, we have the insight to help guide others through their own voyage of faith with Jesus. We can help advise on where to stop and be filled, how to avoid temptation, and how to enjoy the journey, even when you're unsure of the ending. Your testimony is a sacred gift that is meant to be shared.



**Take some time to think about what God has done in your life. If you've never written your testimony down, take a few moments to reflect and write it down.**

**How has God used your testimony to point back to the hope that is found in Him?**



God, thank you for how you have moved and worked in my life. I pray that You would use my testimony for Your glory and open myself up to be used by You. Allow my story to be used to help point people to the hope that's found in you. Amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Nov  
7

scripture  
reading:

Acts 23

For the Apostle Paul, doing ministry was not easy. It was rough. We like to focus on the moments where He wrote great theology in His letters to the Church. We marvel at the healings and miracles that God did through Paul. However, in this part of the journey, Paul is on trial. As Jesus had led Him to Jerusalem, Paul would face accusations and then an attack on his very life. Human nature is that we want to be appreciated for our ministry efforts but certainly not attacked for it. Could you imagine attending church to serve in your area of ministry and then being accused or attacked?

What do you do when you feel accused or attacked while ministering to people? I will tell you what most people would do: they would defend themselves and attack back. They would find the door and go to a place where they feel appreciated. They run from attack. But not Paul. He stood firm through the trial.

Sometimes, God will lead you to walk through a trial. Your ministry will require you to face adversity. Will you run away or stand firm? When you feel attacked, it is natural to want to defend or to feel discouraged.


We even see that Paul must have felt these emotions. Jesus had to speak to him in the trial in **verse 11**:  
“That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.”

You can stand firm in the trial when you know that you are called by Jesus in your ministry. When others attack you, Jesus will encourage you. Your aim is not to please man, but to please God.



**How do you respond when you feel attacked?**

**What can you learn from Paul about standing firm through trials?**



God, thank you for giving me strength, wisdom, and grace through every trial. Help me to stand firm no matter what I face. I pray that I will live to please you and not other people. In Jesus' name, amen.



**What is God speaking to you about?**

Nov  
8

scripture  
reading:

Acts 24

In a society where we can get most things how we want them, and when we want them, we don't do well when things appear delayed, or we are just stuck. Need shampoo? Order it online, and it arrives in two days. Hungry for food? Uber Eats will deliver it within the hour. How about eliminating the road trip and just flying to the destination?

All of these sound great, until it takes three days for the shampoo to arrive, or they didn't have the shrimp alfredo that I was craving, and let's not even get started on traffic or canceled flights. Let's face it, most of us like it when we can control the outcome and dislike it when things are delayed, and we have lost that control. Is there something that you are waiting for today and feel discouraged because you aren't able to see the end in sight? In **Acts 24**, Paul was truly in a holding pattern. For two years, Paul went back and forth from prison to going before Governor Felix for possible freedom. For two years, he was stuck between "Will I be free" or "Will I stay and perish here"? If there were ever a time to be discouraged, this situation would qualify.

A few years back, I was flying to another country overseas. While I was in the air to my first layover stop, a volcano erupted at my final destination. When I arrived at my layover stop, I went back and forth to the airport for three days, trying to get to the final destination or my original starting location. Being stuck in the middle was super discouraging as I had no control over my situation. That was for three days. Can you imagine how Paul felt being in prison and stuck in the middle for two years?

What I love about Paul is that he wasn't focused on the delays or the uncertainty; instead, he trusted God with his life and used every opportunity he had to share about Christ. In **Acts 24:24 (MSG)**, it says, "...Felix and his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, sent for Paul and listened to him talk about a life of believing in Jesus."

I must confess that I didn't respond as Paul did in my three-day delay, but what a great example of how when we feel stuck in the middle and not moving forward, we can still trust in and share the name of Jesus. If you are facing a delay or detour—remember not to put your trust in "when" but "who." God is a promise keeper, and He won't let your season of waiting go to waste.

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." **Isaiah 40:31**

**Are you currently facing something that feels discouraging as you are in a holding pattern or stuck in the middle?**

**What does God want you to be doing during this season of delay? How can you take advantage of this season of uncertainty while you are waiting?**

God, thank you that you use every season of waiting for a purpose. Help me find purpose and strength through life's delays and detours. I trust in you to fulfill every promise. In Jesus' name, amen.

Nov  
11

scripture  
reading:

Acts 25

During my college days in the late 90s, I knew I had received my calling from God. I had already been walking with Him for many years, but I wasn't sure exactly what my calling was. I knew His will for me was my way of life—believing, following, being set apart, and being thankful to Him. A calling, however, is more specific. It's hard to describe, but my best efforts land me describing it as that burning passion He puts in your heart as you walk closely with Him. In my late teens, as I lived on a college campus, God called me to a life of serving foster children.

I don't even know how He did it, but I know He did. I was drawn to and driven to pursue jobs and opportunities to serve the children in my community who needed a loving adult in their life. That led my husband and me to foster six teenage boys at a time at Place of Hope and then to foster babies in our home. It also led to the adoption of my youngest child, who was my 35th foster child. That calling was clear, and although it was the hardest thing I have ever done,

I knew that nothing less than 'all in' was acceptable. It was hard, and on many days I wanted to give up, but I didn't. It wasn't my own strength, it was completely the grace of God, but it did require my commitment. After the adoption of my youngest son, almost in an instant, my calling changed. It was like I completed that part of my calling, and it brought me so much joy to look back and know God Himself released me.

As quickly as that calling was removed, He placed another one in my spirit as I spent time in a daily relationship with Him. He called me to teach, lead, and pastor in the Church with my husband—another challenging call but a burning passion I can never get away from. I am quite sure you know exactly what I am talking about because He has given you one too.

We read in **Acts 25** about Paul's calling on his life. He couldn't do anything else—he had to be faithful to it and preach in the lowest places, and in the highest places in the presence of King Agrippa, about the Good News. Paul never gave up his commitment to that calling; He persevered—he spoke and preached when he felt like it and when he didn't. He gave all of his best to his calling.


You and I aren't going to give up, either. We will complete what our Savior has called us to do. There is purpose, peace, and joy right in the middle of these callings that nothing else this world tries to distract us with can offer us. I am praying for you today! Walk confidently and committed to your calling because God is using it to bring glory to Himself and to bring salvation and encouragement to His people.

“But if I say I'll never mention the Lord or speak His name, his word burns in my heart like a fire. It's a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold it in! I can't do it!” **Jeremiah 20:9**



What is your calling from God?

What can you do today to stay faithful to that calling as Paul did in Acts 25?



God, thank you for your calling in every season. Help me to stay focused on your plan for my life and not get distracted by lesser things. Help me remain faithful to you and whatever you call me to. In Jesus' name, amen.



Nov  
12

scripture  
reading:

Acts 26

One of the things I love most about the Apostle Paul is his passion for sharing his faith. No matter where he went in the Book of Acts, he always told people about Jesus. He did this so boldly that the Romans arrested him, stripped him naked, beat him, and nearly flogged him to death before throwing him in jail. All this was because he committed the crime of sharing his faith!

Paul sat in a Roman dungeon for two years, but when his case finally went to trial, he was warned not to say anything about Jesus. But do you think this stopped Paul? Not a chance! In **Acts 26**, Paul boldly shared his faith, presenting the gospel and his personal testimony. The prosecutor, a guy named Festus, said: “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable” (**verses 24-25**).

Then Agrippa asked Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains” (**verses 28-29**).

Seriously, you’ve got to love Paul! He is unashamed and courageous. He had every reason in the world to keep his mouth shut, but not only does he share his faith, he actually attempts to lead the prosecutor and the judge to Christ as well! If Paul is willing to risk his life to tell others about Jesus, what excuse do we have for not doing the same? And yet a recent study said that 95% of Christians have never shared their faith with another person.

The Bible gives us at least three reasons why we should share our faith:

**1. God loves us.**

God’s love for us compelled Him to send His Son to die for us (**John 3:16**), and that love should compel us to share our faith with others.

**2. God commands us.**

In **Matthew 28:18-20** Jesus gave us the Great Commission, where He didn’t just suggest that we share our faith—He actually commanded us to do it!

**3. God promises to empower us.**


Jesus didn’t just send us out to tell others about Him—He actually promised to help us as we share our faith (**Acts 1:8**).

**Church, let’s follow Paul’s example and boldly share our faith today!**



**When was the last time you shared your faith?**

**Who in your life do you need to tell about Jesus?**



God, I pray that you would put people in my path and on my heart that need to know you. Equip me to share my faith with those people and give me boldness like Paul. Amen.

Nov  
13

scripture  
reading:

Acts 27

“Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.”

The truth is, after almost 34 years of marriage and life together, this isn’t our first rodeo. Menacing storms have found us throughout every season and stage of life. You name it; we’ve probably experienced it. When you’re in the storm, it can be terrifying and exhausting, and it’s tempting to lose hope that life will ever be good again. Some of you may nod as you read this, you’ve been there, too.

In **Acts 27**, Luke tells of his own story of surviving a deadly storm while accompanying his imprisoned friend, Paul, across the Mediterranean to his trial in Rome. There are several parallels between their journey across the sea and the journey of life. For one, “difficult” is used repeatedly to describe their experience, all before the first headwind! But once the stormy gale lets loose on them, time and days bleed into each other, and darkness overtakes them, leading to despair and sweeping fear.

Here’s what I know: Life’s going to be difficult. Jesus told us in **John 16:33** that “In the world, you will have trouble.” We can expect storms to last longer than they should, get worse before they get better, and the darkness will keep trying to push out the light. But that’s not the end of our story! The second half of that verse in John says to “take heart; I have overcome the world.” Paul’s words to the crew in the middle of an actual typhoon illustrate three measures we can take to help us trust God through the corresponding storms of life.

### **1. Look for Messengers**

God never leaves us alone. He always finds a way to encourage His children. I’ve found this to be true time and time again, especially in our most recent predicament. Paul says in **verse 23**, “For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship...”. I love this because it reminds me that even in the middle of our darkest hour, we aren’t abandoned. God may or may not send an angel as He did for Paul, but one thing is for sure—we can always trust His Holy Spirit and His people to show up! We just need to be looking for them.

### **2. Let Go of Fear**

It’s okay to be afraid—even Paul was afraid. Just don’t stay afraid. The angel told Paul, “Do not be afraid, you will make it and so will everyone with you.” We can trust that God’s watchful eye and active care will be present even in our times of trouble, freeing us from fear.

### **3. Lean on God's Promises**

“...take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.”

God can do all things—but there’s one thing He can’t do, and that is to break His promises. His word, the Bible, is full of promises we can cling to, like **John 16:33** and others... **Psalm 33:18** “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love.” **Psalm 10:17** “O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear.” **Psalm 4:8** “In peace, I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

There’s no way to avoid storms in this life, but you can be ready for them. If you’re prepared when the storm comes, you will not only survive, but you’ll be a living testimony to God’s loving provision and protection. Ask me how I know!



**Which measures can you start taking to prepare for the storms that may come your way?  
What are some of your favorite promises from Scripture?**



God, help me to look for messengers, let go of fear, and lean on your promises. Help me to be ready for any storm that comes my way. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Nov  
14

scripture  
reading:

Acts 28

The Book of Acts ends with the apostle Paul awaiting trial before Caesar in Rome. While awaiting trial, Paul was allowed to rent his own house. Perhaps because he had already been broken out of prison before, Paul was permanently chained to a Roman guard while he was in prison. Or rather, guards were permanently chained to him! **Acts 28:30-31** says: “For two whole years, Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!”

Those last few words are pretty remarkable if you think about it, “with all boldness and without hindrance,”—even though he’s in chains!

While Paul was under house arrest, many people came to visit him. Because they were chained to Paul, his guards overheard all his conversations. Paul describes what happened next in **Philippians 1:12-13**: “Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.”

I love this! If you think about it, Paul had a captive audience. Literally, these guards were chained to him for six-hour shifts throughout the day! Most of us would be pretty bummed to be under house arrest. But not Paul. He saw this as a great opportunity to share his faith. Can you imagine being chained to the apostle Paul? Can you imagine the impact that would make on your life?

Basically, Paul is saying in **Philippians 1:12-13**, “Hey! Don’t feel sorry for me. People are coming to Christ!” Not only were people coming to Christ, but Paul also used his time under house arrest to write four letters that would later make it into the New Testament: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

This is where the Book of Acts ends, and it’s a powerful reminder that God can work in and through us regardless of our circumstances. God, in His sovereignty, knows what He’s doing!

Some of you need to hear this today: no matter what circumstances you’re going through, no matter what difficulties you’re experiencing, no matter what trials you’re facing, God knows what He’s doing! As we wrap up our study of the Book of Acts, I pray that each of us will do what Paul did and proclaim the kingdom of God and teach about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!



**How might God want to work in you and through you despite your circumstances?**

**Who in your life do you need to tell about Jesus?**



God, thank you that you can work through me regardless of my circumstances. I pray that I will share my faith with boldness and without hindrance. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Nov  
15

scripture  
reading:

Psalm 119:1-8

Today concludes our 50 Days in the Word journey. One closing thought that I want to share with you is this. We all have ambitions and desires, but as believers, our ambitions and desires must always be weighed against God's Word. As important as our earthly pursuits, responsibilities, and relationships may be, they cannot compare to the value of a life spent seeking our heavenly Father.

This Fall we have been intentional about seeking Jesus and immersing ourselves in His presence. The act of seeking Jesus describes a wholehearted effort to know Jesus and follow Him more closely. Those who pursue or seek this kind of relationship with Jesus are determined to spend time with Him above all other things. They make a decision to forsake anything that could get in the way of or hinder growing in their relationship with the Jesus. The experience of seeking Jesus will bring us the satisfaction and fulfillment we seek in life and will also increase our hunger and thirst for Him. What we have begun can't stop after 50 days. We must engage in a lifestyle of pursuit.

The Christian life is meant to be an ongoing pursuit of God. To walk through the door of salvation and then stop, without seeking to draw closer to Him, is to miss the amazing treasures that are available in Christ. Those who set their heart to seek the Lord continually will discover that knowing Him is the greatest reward of all. Thank you for going on this journey with us.



**What do you need to do to make sure that you continue the journey you started and maintain your passion to seek and pursue greater intimacy and relationship with Jesus?**



Lord, I ask you to help me to continue what I have started. Give me the determination and desire to continue to passionately pursue You because You are the answer for every need and problem that I will face in life. You are the answer for our nation and world. Today, I choose to give my life and my time to You before anything else, because you are Worthy. Amen.



**What is the biggest thing God spoke to you about these last 50 days?**