



ARVADA
COVENANT
CHURCH

FROM THIS POINT ON

THREE WEEK DEVOTIONAL
JANUARY 2026



Be with Jesus.
Journey Together.
Restore the World Around You.

WEEK ONE | DAY ONE



INTRODUCTION

The God who created you has called you by name! And no matter your situation, He is constantly inviting you to take part in the plans He has for you.

This should be exciting, but when life gets overwhelming and problems keep mounting, it's easy to start doubting if we can be the people God created us to be. When this happens, one of the best things we can do is intentionally slow down and seek God's heart.

By cultivating honest conversations with Him, we create space for God to refresh our souls and speak to us in a new way. So over the next seven days, let's draw near to God through prayer. Let's spend time in His presence, because He alone is able to prepare us for new seasons and fresh starts.

A PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

God,

You know my heart. You understand my deepest wants and needs, and You know my every intention. You know me better than I know myself. There is nowhere I could run to escape Your presence, and nothing I could hide from You!

You alone are worthy of my praise.

I don't always know what to ask for when I pray. My soul is weary and I am tired. I often worry about making the right decision—but I want to live a life that honors You.

Even though I may feel like I can't move forward or see what's ahead—You see me. And You know me. So please guide me. Show me the paths that lead to abundant life, and draw me near when I am tempted to stray from You.

I will place my hope in You at all times because You know all things, and You hold my life in Your hands. You are my strength in times of need, and You are my salvation.

So hold me close, Lord, and teach me to walk in a manner worthy of the calling You have given me. Direct my steps as You guard my life, because I want to glorify You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ISAIAH 43:1

¹ But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name;
you are mine.

PROVERBS 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

ACTION STEP

Over the next seven days, spend a few minutes each day in silent reflection. Ask God to show you how He is guiding you into a new season, and what areas of your life you need to continue to trust Him with.



A PRAYER OF SURRENDER

God,

You give me the strength I need to overcome any obstacles I face. You take away my arrogant thoughts and You focus my eyes away from the things I cannot control. You alone have the power to turn my weaknesses into windows through which Your glory can shine through.

You hold my future, and You invite me to take part in the plans You have for Your Kingdom. So help me to lay down my uncertainties for the future and my unmet expectations from the past.

When I feel weak, help me to remember that You are strong. When I feel discouraged, remind me of the confident hope I have in You. Please calm and quiet my soul.

Today and every day, give me the confident assurance I need to lay aside anything that might hinder me so that I can walk in a manner worthy of my calling. And as You do that, I will choose not to be anxious about anything because I know that You comfort and protect me. I will surrender my fears and trust in You for breakthrough.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP

Re-read this prayer and then make a list of the areas in your life that you need to surrender. Picture putting those things in a box and then visualize handing that box to Jesus. Use this exercise to make space in your heart for the plans that God wants to reveal to you.

PSALMS 131:1-3

¹ My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.² But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.

³ Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

NOTES

WEEK ONE | DAY THREE



A PRAYER FOR CALLING

God,

You know my heart better than anyone. You know the dreams I have for the future, and the silent prayers I've prayed for years. You know what I am longing for, searching for, and waiting for.

You know my dreams, but You have a plan. You make all things beautiful in their proper timing. You are faithful to keep Your promises. But so often, I forget this and grow discouraged when my situations don't seem to change. In those moments, it's easy to forget that You are not done working.

As I prepare for a new season, remind me of the promises You have for me, the gifts You've given me, and the hope that I have in You. Search me, and know my heart. Try me and test my anxious thoughts. See if there is anything within me that grieves You.

You are the one who establishes my steps. So in this new season, I am choosing to trust You with the unknown. I am choosing to be faith-filled because You are faithful.

Through Your Holy Spirit, please change the way I think and behave. Transform my mind so that I can discover Your perfect will. Allow me to become the person You created me to be so that I can fulfill the calling You've placed on my life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP

Think about the gifts and talents God has given you. Look for any areas where your passion and skills intersect. Then, spend some time intentionally dreaming with God about how you can use those passions and skills for His glory.

ROMANS 12:1-2

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

EPHESIANS 4:1-2

⁴ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

NOTES

WEEK ONE | DAY FOUR



A PRAYER AGAINST FEAR

God,

Too often, I find myself overwhelmed by circumstances that are beyond my control. Too often, I am easily distracted by things that don't matter. Please forgive me for not consistently placing my trust in You.

I know that as I step into a new season I will face obstacles that make me want to give up. When this happens, give me the faith I need to cling to the truth: that Your peace and protection aren't based on my feelings or circumstances but on Your character and faithfulness.

Because You are faithful, You will guard me and establish me. You will rescue me from trouble and deliver me from the evil one. You will make a way where there is no way. If You can bring dry bones to life and make a river in a desert, then You can do a new thing in me regardless of what's going on around me.

Nothing is too hard for You. You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with shouts of deliverance. As I look for the ways You are calling me to start fresh, help me to remember Your truth. And as I remember Your truth, help me to step boldly forward into the plans You have prepared for me.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP

Visualize something that is currently making you anxious. Take a deep breath in, and then give that fear to God as you breathe out. Repeat this exercise as needed before meditating on today's Scripture passages.

EZEKIEL 37:4-10

⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' ⁵ This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶ I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'" ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

ROMANS 8:31-39

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

WEEK ONE | DAY FIVE



A PRAYER FOR COURAGE

God,

You are my protector—in You I have all I need. But when trials come my way it's easy to forget that You are still in control. Sometimes when I look at the world around me, I grow discouraged, and my thoughts start to spiral. I need You to make me strong and courageous.

So as I step into the plans You have for me, please give me the courage I need to trust in You. Remind me that You are with me, and that You will continue to instruct and guide me.

Show me that You are near.

Encourage me when I feel worn out, and renew my strength when I'm overwhelmed. Give me rest when I need it, and remind me of Your promises. Help me to take every thought captive as I give You my concerns.

Your thoughts are higher than my thoughts, and Your ways are better than mine. You give hope to the hopeless, and strength to the weak. You alone can renew my mind and remind me of my purpose.

Counsel me as I reflect on Your Word, and help me to apply Your truths to my life. Give me the courage I need to do what is right, and help me to pursue You above all else—always.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP

Reflect on some of the truths God has shown you this week. What next steps do you need to boldly take in order to faithfully pursue God's calling on your life? Spend a few minutes talking to God about this before continuing.

NOTES

JOSHUA 1:9

⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

PSALM 23:4

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

ISAIAH 55: 8-9

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.



A PRAYER FOR REFRESHMENT

God,

I want to step into all that You have for me with boldness and confidence. But if I'm being honest, I'm uncertain of what the future will hold—and that can feel unsettling.

Search me, God, and refresh my heart.

Right now, please help me to surrender my expectations, and transform my mind as I draw near to You.

Search me, God, and align my heart with Yours.

As I pursue the plans You have for me, let me remember what You've already helped me overcome. You have already made a way for me to know You. You have already made a way for me to experience eternal life with You. Nothing is too hard for You!

Search me, God, and heal my heart.

Whatever the future holds, I know You hold me. Nothing is impossible for You.

Restore me, God, and make me new.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP

Re-read this prayer out loud. After you read each **bold statement**, spend 30 seconds in complete silence. During that time, pay attention to any words, ideas, or pictures that God gives you.

PSALM 139: 23-24

²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

PSALM 147:3

³ He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

NOTES

WEEK ONE | DAY SEVEN



A PRAYER FOR PEACE

God,

Thank You for making it possible for me to experience peace at all times. Because You gave us Your Son, I always have a way to know and experience You. There is nothing that can separate me from Your loving presence. God, I know this, but sometimes I struggle to believe You could love someone like me.

When I don't feel Your peace, please help me to rest in the confident assurance that You are still in control. And because You are still in control, I can approach each new day with joy and thankfulness.

There is nothing that is too hard for You to do. There is nothing broken that You cannot make new. So please help me to see the new things You are doing in this season. Let my trust in You deepen and my faith in You flourish. For as my faith grows, so does my awareness of Your perfect love. And when Your love consumes me, there is no room for fear.

So transform me by Your love so that my life becomes an example of Your peace that surpasses understanding.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP

As you continue to seek after God's heart in this season, make a list of some of the things He's revealed to you so far. Turn these things into action statements that you can review each day. Allow the truths that God has revealed to you to transform the way you think in this fresh season.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

ISAIAH 26:3

³ You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

1 JOHN 4:18

¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

NOTES

WEEK TWO | DAY ONE



LOVE ONE ANOTHER, BY GLENN PETERSON

In a world that prioritizes self—self-sufficiency, self-preservation, selfadvancement—today’s texts confront us with a different vision. This is not optional. It is a “must.” It is integrity—defining reality for followers of Jesus and Christian community. The love of Jesus is not theory—it is lived sacrifice. Jesus did not just talk about love; he demonstrated it through blood, sweat, tears, and sacrifice. And then he turns to us and says, “Do the same. Love one another.” Father God, help us to see your Son as evidence of your love. What does it look like to live this command as a spouse, parent friend, pastor, and leader in our self-absorbed, competitive, cynical world? What does “love one another” look like for me today? Jesus, help me to hear your voice. Jesus said that the mark of his disciples is love—not inspiring sermons, not social media platforms, not cultural influence, not the existence of churches or the act of attending them. Love. Without it, we have nothing. But if we do—if we embody cruciform love—it will cut through the noise. It stands out, self-evident in the face of ambition and achievement. Spirit of God, move among your people and free us to love one another. Empower us to love the world. This kind of love is costly. This kind of love interrupts plans and challenges our pride. It may even break your heart. Yet this is the way of Jesus. This is discipleship. Failing to love—and thus failing to follow—is also costly

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you sense the Spirit speaking to you?
- Who is God calling you to love today?
- How might God be speaking to your community? Who is your community being called to love?

PRAYER

Triune God of love, help me—help your people—resist superficial, easy answers. May the overflow of your love be evident in the way your body, the Church, loves one another and the world. Forgive us as individuals and as communities for the ways we have failed to love or chosen not to love one another. In days marked by division, fragmentation, isolation, and hate, renew your church to be a countercultural presence for good. May your Word come alive in us. Amen

1 JOHN 3:16

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

JOHN 13:34

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

NOTES

WEEK TWO | DAY TWO



SERVE ONE ANOTHER, BY TONY DEGRUY

Success is often measured by how much we accomplish, accumulate, or achieve individually, but Scripture consistently redirects us to a higher calling: a life centered on love expressed through service. In times of stress, change, or uncertainty, this call becomes even more vital. When we serve others, we reflect the grace of God, embody the heart of Jesus, and participate in the interconnected body of Christ.

Galatians 5:13 reminds us that we are called to freedom—not a freedom that indulges the self, but one that expresses itself through loving service. Similarly, 1 Peter 4:10 speaks of living wisely and generously in the light of God's grace, using our gifts to serve one another as faithful stewards.

Let us pause today to reflect on what it means to serve and how our acts of service bring God's kingdom into view. Freedom is a powerful thing. Through Christ, we have been made free from the burden of sin, condemnation, and striving to earn God's favor. Yet Paul, writing to the Galatians, warns us not to confuse this freedom with self-indulgence. In Christ, we are not free to do whatever we please; we are free to love and serve others.

Serving others is not limited to Sunday mornings or mission trips. We serve through our everyday choices—offering a listening ear, encouraging a friend, bringing a meal to someone who's struggling, extending forgiveness when it's undeserved. Each time we choose another's welfare over our own, we live out the gospel.

Peter adds a crucial perspective: our acts of service aren't merely kind gestures; they're sacred stewardship. God has entrusted each of us with unique gifts, and we use those gifts to strengthen others. Service is a spiritual responsibility, which is integral to our walk with Christ.

Notice how both passages emphasize love and grace. Paul calls us to serve "humbly in love." Peter says to serve as "faithful stewards of God's grace." It is only by God's love and grace that we can pour ourselves out. Service rooted in obligation leads to burnout. But service rooted in grace leads to joy, renewal, and the visible outworking of God's presence through God's people.

Let your freedom in Christ find fulfillment in greater love. And let your service today reflect your deep gratitude for the one who first served you.

NOTES

GALATIANS 5:13

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

1 PETER 4:10

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Is there a gift or resource you have neglected to offer others?
- Who is the Spirit prompting you to serve so that they can experience God's love through you?

PRAYER

Lord God, thank you for the freedom you have given us through Christ. Help us not to take it for granted or use it selfishly. Teach us to serve others with humility, love, and joy. May every gift you have given us be used to bring glory to you and grace to others.
Amen.

WEEK TWO | DAY THREE



SHARE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, BY TAMMY LONG

In recent years I've found myself traveling a lot—at least for me. One positive thing about that is I've become fairly adept at packing lighter using my bright red carry-on suitcase and silver backpack. The backpack, though, is still a bit much; with my laptop, journal, and books I hope to read on the plane, it's heavy!

I've learned to manage by shifting it from shoulder to shoulder, letting it ride on my carry-on, and gratefully setting it down with a thud whenever I sit. I'd gotten so used to carrying it that I didn't realize just how much of a burden it was until a recent trip with my husband. He had checked his luggage, so as we made our way to the gate, he offered to carry my backpack. The relief was immediate and my energy renewed. Simply having someone help carry the weight made the journey so much easier!

This is a small glimpse of Paul's encouragement in Galatians 6:2. In the previous verses Paul urges believers to live by and keep in step with the Spirit. So sharing one another's burdens is not merely being "helpful." It's a Spirit-empowered expression of love, patience, kindness, and gentleness, just like all the "one anothers."

Paul encouraged mature believers to come alongside sisters or brothers caught in sin and to share that burden, moving toward restoration, handled gently, humbly, and with care, and avoiding both pride and falling into the same temptation.

Paul then expands this truth into a kingdom principle. We are to share one another's burdens, thus fulfilling Christ's command to love one another. Burdens can be emotional, financial, physical, or relational—anything too heavy for one person to carry alone. In short, to share someone's burden is to put love into action.

Further, as a "one another" command, we are mutual burden-sharers. That means we are to step in when the weight is overwhelming for someone, and we must be willing to let someone step in for us too. Self-centeredness and pride can keep us from both. We may want to avoid the messiness of someone else's struggle, or we may refuse help we need because we want to look strong. But Paul was clear. Jesus followers are to share one another's burdens with the love of Christ in the power of the Spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Whose burden is God inviting you to share?
- Who has God placed in your life to help carry your burdens?

GALATIANS 6:1–5

⁶ Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. ⁴ Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, ⁵ for each one should carry their own load.

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the people you have placed in my life. Help me to be willing to step in and share what may be too heavy for them alone. Give me grace to receive the help I need to carry my burdens with 10 gratitude. Amen.

NOTES



FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER, BY BERNADETTE MOORE

Jake shifted his glance from the flowers blooming just outside his window back to the orange pill he was holding in the palm of his hand. Besides the similarity in color, the two things seemed like polar opposites. He loved staring at the annuals he had planted and hated the sight of that oval-shaped pill. Thoughts of the blooms filled him with joy, but thoughts of the pill filled him with dread. The blossoms saturated his nostrils with a sweet scent when he entered or exited the front door. That pill, however, left a bitter aftertaste in his mouth, and it will likely send him into either a spell of uncontrollable vomiting or diarrhea. How he hates taking that pill! But that dreaded pill cures what ails him. It stops his gastrointestinal flare-ups and minimizes the permanent damage they could cause. It also reduces the pain that accompanies the flare-ups—and less pain makes him much nicer to be around. So whenever Jake recognizes the signs of a flare-up, he must choose whether to take the bitter pill.

Like Jake, many of us experience flare-ups, but ours can be not physical but emotional. They may erupt when we are mistreated, misunderstood, demeaned, undervalued, or excluded, and the bitter pill prescribed by Scripture is forgiveness. The Greek word *χαρίζομαι* used in both these passages (and many others in the New Testament) means “forgive,” and it includes a sense of forgiving graciously!

We may struggle to swallow the bitter pill of forgiveness because of its side effects, which may include humbling ourselves, temporarily surrendering our rights, or allowing someone to think they got the better of us. But the pill of forgiveness will also minimize permanent damage to your soul (and possibly your body) from bitterness, longterm anger, and resentment. When you take repeated doses of forgiveness (i.e., mentally forgive the one who offended or hurt you every time you remember what they did), your emotional flare-ups will subside, your body will hold less trauma, and with less pain, you will indeed be much nicer to be around.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What signs help you to recognize when your emotions are flaring up due to having been wounded or mistreated?
- When forgiveness feels difficult or even too bitter to swallow, what helps you choose to take a step toward forgiveness anyway?
- How have you experienced God’s gift of forgiveness protecting you from the long-term damage of holding onto anger or resentment?

NOTES

EPHESIANS 4:29–32

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

COLOSSIANS 3:13

¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, whenever I am offended, wounded, or mistreated, help me choose to take your prescribed medicine of forgiveness as often as necessary, just as you constantly forgive me in Christ. Amen.



ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER, BY NANCY SUGIKAWA

Just after college I attended a Christian workshop where we were asked to draw a picture of our future “dream home,” the place we would love to live one day. We were told to assume we had access to all the resources we needed, so many of us drew large, beautiful homes at the top of a hill, far away from the city. A few homes were on a private island, while many were surrounded by acres of trees, mountains, and rivers. After taping up all the pictures we had drawn, we noticed that each of us had created an ideal life that was totally isolated from other people, as well as from the chaos and struggles of ordinary life. But was this really the kind of life Jesus called us to live as Christ-followers?

In his letter to the church in Thessalonica, Paul writes to young believers who have been experiencing trials and persecution because of their faith. He assures them of the power and presence of Jesus and exhorts them to “encourage one another and build each other up.” Similarly, the author of the book of Hebrews writes to those being pressured to revert to their old beliefs, imploring these new believers to encourage one another. The author tells them not to give up meeting together, but to stay connected and “spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

Neither author writes about escaping from the pressures of life and faith or withdrawing from places of pain or confusion. Instead, they exhort their readers to draw close to one other, communing regularly, providing comfort, and challenging each other to remain faithful to Jesus.

The key to encouragement is proximity—physical, emotional, and spiritual closeness. We need to be close enough to share our fears and doubts and to remind each other of God’s promises. We need to be close enough to know we are not alone, that someone understands and will walk beside us.

A member of our church, David, volunteered to lead a new Bible study for some disconnected young adults. Those who joined the group came from diverse backgrounds and seemed more comfortable on their electronic devices than sharing their feelings, hopes, or concerns. Many were introverts, so David struggled to build a sense of mutuality and cohesion.

Then one day David discovered that he had cancer and needed both surgery and radiation therapy. He decided to tell the group about his illness even as he was processing his own grief and fears. The news shook up the group as everyone expressed their concerns, determined to bring meals and provide rides for him. One person suggested they lay hands on David to pray for him. Everyone broke down and cried.

As David recovered from his surgery and radiation, the group continued to meet to study Scripture, pray, and coordinate meals and rides for him. Soon each member began to share their own needs, fears, and joys as well. When David returned to the group, he was amazed to see how close and how strong the faith of the group members had become. He had felt called to encourage them, but now he was overwhelmed by how much they encouraged him.

Drawing close enough to experience encouragement takes intentionality and sacrifice. We sacrifice comfort, our own agenda, and even our own dreams so we can be fully present with one another.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1–11

HEBREWS 10:19–25

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How might God be calling you to come near to someone who needs encouragement today?
- How might you invite those who are disconnected to draw closer in Christian community so they can encourage others and be encouraged themselves?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give us courage to draw near to you and to one another even when it feels scary, costly, or inconvenient. Help us resist the temptation to isolate ourselves or think we are self-sufficient. Instead, help us overcome fear and pride, and intentionally invite intimacy and interdependence. As we encourage 14 others toward faith and faithfulness, may we be encouraged ourselves. Amen.

NOTES

WEEK TWO | DAY SIX



PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER, BY IEISHA HAWLEY

In a world that can often feel divided and chaotic, the invitation to pray for one another serves as a reminder of the beautiful connection we share as believers. James writes that when we bring each other's burdens before God, healing and hope flow not only to those we're praying for but also back to us.

Lately I've been reflecting on the importance of vulnerability among believers. Sharing our struggles, doubts, and failures can be daunting, yet in moments of transparency we encounter Christ's love reflected to us by our community. By opening our hearts, we create space for others to walk alongside us, pray with us, and reinforce the truth that we are never alone.

There is power in declaring to those with whom we share our burdens that we trust them and that we believe God is present with us. Together we find the courage to face our challenges, inviting God into our struggles.

James emphasizes the transformative power of being united in prayer. When we present our struggles to one another, we initiate a process of healing for ourselves and for those we pray for. We find strength in confessing our imperfections and challenges. This vulnerability creates opportunities to experience the magnitude of Christ's love, strengthens our bonds within the community, and reminds us that we can always lean on one another.

James reminds us of Elijah, a person just like us, whose earnest prayers altered natural events. The miraculous results were not due to his own greatness but to the greatness of God. That same divine power remains accessible to us today. At times we may hesitate to pray because we feel unworthy or unsure. Yet James encourages us to pray earnestly and intentionally because God works through our humble willingness.

So if someone comes to mind—a friend battling illness, a loved one facing emotional struggles, or anyone navigating a major life transition—don't put it off. Lift them up in prayer in that very moment. Your intercession could be the lifeline they need to remember that they are not alone and that God is always near.

Let's strive to be a community that consistently lifts one another up in prayer, trusting that God hears us and responds. Together, we can embody the love and support our world so desperately needs.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of community and the power of prayer. Help us to be obedient to your command to confess our struggles and pray for one another. May we grow in vulnerability and strength as we support each other in fellowship. Ignite a fervor within us to intercede for others and may our prayers lead to healing and transformation. We trust you to work in and through us. In Jesus's name, Amen.

JAMES 5:13-18

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who in your life needs prayer right now? How can you reach out to support them?
- Have you ever shared a personal struggle with someone in your community? What was the outcome?
- How can increasing the amount you pray for others enhance your own spiritual journey?

NOTES



TEACH ONE ANOTHER, BY PETE SUTTON

My college friend Ryan and I had little in common. I was an athlete; he was a musician. I was suburban; he was country. I was outgoing; he was reserved. He was also blind. He navigated campus with a cane, guided by a wall-sized relief map his mother crafted of cardboard, felt, and sandpaper. Ryan loved jokes and playful pranks. Of all the remarkable traits in Ryan, the one that I admired most was his joy. The joy of the Lord compelled Ryan to burst out in worship anytime and anywhere. Whether we were crossing a road, sitting in the cafeteria, or lounging by the lake, Ryan would spontaneously launch into a song—often well-known but sometimes original—loudly. He had a marvelous voice, perfect pitch, and was never content to sing alone. He invited everyone around to join him, and his joy was so irresistible that even the most tone-deaf friends sang along.

I think of Ryan when I read Colossians 3:15–17. Paul instructs the church to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” and “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” This indwelling should result in “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” that teach and admonish one another with thankful hearts.

Three things stand out in this instruction:

- **We can’t share what we don’t possess.** The peace and message of Christ must dwell within us if it is to affect those around us. The command is to surrender to the indwelling of Christ and his Word. This leads to a complete transformation of who we are and what we do. It’s the continuation of Paul’s earlier instruction to take off the old self and be clothed with Christ-likeness. This is only possible because of the indwelling of Christ.
- **The peace and message of Christ are meant to be shared.** Like my friend Ryan, if the peace and message of Christ dwell within us, we can’t just sing in the shower or quietly hum to ourselves. We must belt it out! This spontaneous exuberance is a defining mark of God’s family. Are you bubbling over with joy and gratitude? You must be a child of God!
- **Teaching is the implication, not the command.** According to Paul, teaching and admonishing are a natural result of Christ’s peace and message dwelling within us. Paul is commanding us to so fully embody Christ’s words that our lives become a form of instruction for those around us.

Ryan’s spontaneous singing was a testament to the joy dwelling within him. He wasn’t trying to lecture us on music; he was simply overflowing with Jesus! Similarly, the joy and peace we have in Christ should be so abundant that it naturally spills out, drawing others in. This is not about being a perfect evangelist, but about living a life so transformed by Christ’s presence that others can’t help but join the song.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who in your life has been an example of overflowing joy, gratitude, and the peace of Christ?
- How might God be inviting you to experience and embody joy, gratitude, and peace?

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

COLOSSIANS 3:15–17

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, empty me of myself and fill me with your presence. May the peace of Christ dwell richly within me and transform me inside and out. May the joy of Jesus grow within me and burst out in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, instructing and inspiring others to love and follow Jesus. And may the Holy Spirit empower me in word and deed to be grateful for and generous with all that I’ve been given. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

WEEK THREE | DAY ONE



INTRODUCTION

When you look at the life of Jesus—His habits, His words, and His actions—you will see that the Way of Jesus is to become a servant. Jesus says in Matthew 20:28, **“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

Jesus wasn’t just all talk. He showed us what it was like to be a servant. Moments before the crucifixion, Jesus knew that all of His twelve disciples were about to fail Him. In the coming hours, they would become a collection of betrayers, deniers, and cowards. Knowing this, He still willingly lowered Himself to the humiliating task of washing the feet of His twelve disciples. He then tells them in John 13:14-15, **“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set for you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”**

Jesus loved us by serving us. He served those twelve disciples not just by cleaning their dirty feet but in the coming days, He would lower himself to become obedient to death on the cross. Jesus would sacrifice His own life so that others could have eternal life. He offers us the opportunity of a lifetime to follow after Him and to embrace the Way, which He taught through His words and lived through His actions.

The enemy’s weapons are burnout, exhaustion, anger, unhappiness, disunity, loneliness, and anxiety. It’s time to turn the enemy’s weapons against him and fight back. But the way we fight isn’t with a sword; it’s with a basin and a towel.

Throughout these next days, you will study the Christ Hymn, Philippians 2:5-11. As you repeatedly read the same passages, know it’s not an accident! Those verses describe Jesus’s journey of servanthood. We need to understand them if we will be servants in this world. As we explore these verses we will be challenged to practice the five aspects of serving like Jesus.

You were made for more than just believing and existing until you die. You were made to serve. To serve for Jesus. To serve with Jesus. To serve like Jesus.

CHALLENGE

Invite someone to journey with you in this plan. After finding an ally, identify specifics, such as how often you will check in with one another and what questions you will ask each other at those check-ins.

MATTHEW 20:28

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

JOHN 13:14-15

¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

NOTES

WEEK THREE | DAY TWO



SERVING LIKE JESUS: YOUR ATTITUDE

In my high school years, I remember going on mission trips with my youth group. Many times throughout the day, our youth pastor would say, “Attitude check,” and we would all respond, “Praise the Lord!”

Of course, our first attitude check would be when he woke us up too early in the morning! Our “Praise the Lords” weren’t quite as energetic in those early hours. Regardless of when his attitude checks came, he was helping us remember that as we serve, it’s important that our serving comes from the right place. If we want to serve like Jesus, we must begin by looking at Christ’s attitude toward us.

In Philippians 2:5-11, the Apostle Paul begins: **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”**

Paul calls us to have the same mindset as Jesus—although other translations use the word “attitude.” And where do we learn about this mindset? From Jesus, of course.

It’s impossible to have a mindset like Jesus without having your mind set on Jesus.

What do we see when we look at Jesus? Nowhere in the Gospels do we find Jesus stomping around, acting grumpy, and needing the approval of others for doing a “favor” for us. Instead, He willingly lowers Himself to serve us.

Too many people have a paradigm of God that views Him as being perpetually angry with them. However, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we can see that it’s far more common that He is not mad but madly in love with us. He will do everything possible to show us this love so that we might receive it, including the sacrifice of His own Son. God doesn’t wait for us to clean up our lives to love us, either. He sent Jesus to come to us while we were still a mess and bring His love to us.

We serve because we were first served. We love because we were first loved. Christ’s love, His grace working in us, compels us to be the best servants we can be in this world. We don’t serve because we have to. We serve because we want to.

CHALLENGE

Review the following mindsets that God has toward you. Which one is the easiest to accept, and which is the hardest to bear? If you are able, elaborate on your answers.

1. Jesus desires a relationship with you.
2. Jesus loves you.
3. Jesus really likes you.
4. Jesus believes you are valuable.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 PETER 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

NOTES

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WEEK THREE | DAY FOUR



SERVING LIKE JESUS: YOUR ACTION

The construction of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1933 was a spectacular feat of engineering. But the job turned out to be quite costly for many workers. In the first several months, eleven of them fell to their death. Every time this occurred, the crew would work slower for fear that it could happen to any of them. Because of this, the crew fell behind on their deadlines.

Chief Engineer Joseph Strauss assessed the situation and decided to suspend work on the bridge until the workers could work safely. Strauss made the site the first in America to have a safety net suspended underneath it. The decision was a costly one at \$130,000, but it worked. The net saved the lives of nineteen falling workers.

In addition to saving lives, the safety net sped up the work. After the net was in place, suddenly, the crew worked faster and more efficiently. They wound up finishing before the initial deadline, bringing the entire construction of the bridge under budget.

Safety nets allow us to go for things, knowing it's okay if we fail.

We don't need to worry about how it will all work out, for we can trust in the promises of God that it will end well. All each one of us can do is continue to take steps of action.

We have the ultimate safety net. His name is Jesus. Colossians 1:17 says, **"He is before all things, and in him all things hold together."** **You are held by the One who has all things together!**

If God has invited you into a vision, go for it! And if you fail, the good news is that God is our safety net. His grace picks you right back up. You don't have to be perfect. You have to be obedient.

Even if you fail, God can use the failures of your past in some way to help someone else in the future. 1 John 4:18 reminds us that **"Perfect love drives out fear."** Our faith in a perfect God and His love for us at some point allows us to still move forward, even in our fear. As we continue to take steps, faith arises, and fear subsides.

So, whatever God has called you to do, lay the brick, write the words, put the reps in, and know that God is your safety net.

CHALLENGE

What have you been afraid of acting on, even though you know you ought to do it? Take action on that thing today to help you overcome this fear.

DEUTERONOMY 31:6,

⁶ Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

PSALM 56:3-4

³ When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.⁴ In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

WEEK THREE | DAY FIVE



SERVING LIKE JESUS: YOUR ABILITY

A recent study claimed that 75 percent of Millennials are unsure of the purpose of their lives. Jesus came to earth with a purpose: to rescue us and, therefore, to make us right before God. Jesus's daring rescue mission sadly cost Him His life. The next stanza of the Christ Hymn from Philippians 2 includes these words:

By becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

Before He stepped foot on this planet, Jesus knew that to give us life, He would have to give up His life by dying on the cross. At the time, they didn't even have a word to describe the pain and torture experienced in this kind of death. Later, the Romans created the word “excruciating” to capture this kind of suffering. In Latin, the prefix “-ex” means “out of,” and the word “cruX” means “cross.” Put together, and it becomes “out of the cross,” an adjective to describe “extremely painful.”

As dark as the death of Jesus was, darkness would not get the last word. Jesus knew from the onset that He was a Savior. Because He lived a perfect life, only Jesus could make us righteous before God. Our sins had separated us from God. We owed a debt to God that we could never repay. So, God came down into the flesh and died in our place. When we believe that Jesus did this for us on our behalf, we receive eternal life in the presence of our God and are invited into a life of following Jesus as the Way.

Do you know what you are here in this world for? Do you know why God created you?

As we serve best in this world, it's important to know who we are in Jesus, how we are uniquely made, and in what ways God calls each of us to serve to the best of our ability.

When we commit to follow Jesus, we continue God's rescue mission. God has now entrusted us with this Good News. As we live out our callings, we play a major role in bringing others to faith in Jesus. While we are not called to pay for the entire world's sins like Jesus, we live with purpose.

CHALLENGE

Your challenge today is to find your top three spiritual gifts. Share those with a friend, mentor, or pastor. Then use a spiritual gift to serve someone else today.

★ Take a Spiritual Gifts Assessment: <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don't need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don't need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 PETER 4:10

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

WEEK THREE | DAY SIX



SERVING LIKE JESUS: YOUR AMBITION

When my family visits a new place, we often take selfies to remember the occasion. But lately, I've learned selfies are more than a harmless memory maker. The number of people who have fallen off cliffs, bridges, and steep edges to their deaths attempting to take selfies is rising. One news outlet claims the number of selfie-related deaths tripled in 2021 compared to 2020. But selfies are not just dangerous for our bodies; they can hurt our souls too.

The selfie reveals a human desire to feel noticed and appreciated. You will always have that desire. But, rather than looking to others for approval or acceptance, I want you to see today that God notices you. God loves you so much that He would give up His life for you.

Jesus would preach to a crowd and say in Matthew 11:11: **"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."**

But when John the Baptist was alive, the last thing he cared about was being great. In John 3:30, he said, **"He must become greater; I must become less."** The He that John was talking about was Jesus. John the Baptist understood his role.

If we are not careful, we will get swept up into what is normal. Marketing and digital strategists harp on self-promotion and building your platform. If we continually think of ourselves in "selfie" mode, we will miss out on what's most important. Be aware that the world won't understand you when you flip the camera lens off of yourself and onto God.

The secret of life, the mystery of joy, is to get outside yourself and stare at someone better than you. The best thing you can do is to get over yourself and gaze instead on Jesus! When we flip off of selfie mode and live un-selfie, not only do we experience joy, but we help others see Jesus. What the world needs to see more than anything else is not a beautiful selfie of someone dangling their legs off a cliff. They need to see the full expression of Jesus.

So, which mode will you live in, selfie or un-selfie?

When you live for the cause of Jesus, namely serving others, you will find more fulfillment than you ever thought possible!

CHALLENGE

Make two columns named 'selfie' and 'others.' Write down the last ten things you have done. Are there more things under the selfie column or the others column?

MATTHEW 11:11

¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

MATTHEW 20:16

¹⁶ "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

ACTS 20:35

³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

NOTES

WEEK THREE | DAY SEVEN



The scary thing about being in church and around church people long enough is the temptation to assume that the good life you have in Christ was as a result of something you did. When this type of prideful thinking creeps in, it can be hard to see in yourself. Here are some signs you're beginning to slip into that mentality: Suddenly your time is more important than others, so serving becomes less necessary in your mind. You begin to think people earlier on in their walk with Christ know less than you and have to start by 'earning their stripes' and serving, or you just attend church less and less.

If there were anyone that would've had the right to be prideful and to have others serve Him, it would've been Jesus.

He lived a perfect life. He didn't need to be saved from His sins, and He certainly didn't deserve the treatment He received on earth (from the very people He was there to save, no less!). Here's a prayer that may be helpful to pray every morning: "I am the servant of all. No task is too small or insignificant for me to do for Christ. No task is too big or too much of an ask for me to do for Christ. He gave His all, so today, I'll give mine."

This is why we serve.

MATTHEW 6:25-34

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

JAMES 4:6

⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

JAMES 4:10

¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.