

THE KING'S MEN DEVO

SONS SERVANTS SOLDIERS

BY PASTOR RON LANEY

**15 Day
Challenge**



**“for Christ
&
His Kingdom”**



**Pleasant
Grove**
CHURCH



We men have been given great opportunity and responsibility in the building of the Kingdom of God, the direction of our households and the development of our communities. These 15 devotions are designed to help you get a grip on 3 major roles we have been given by God.

- ♦ We are sons, sons of God, first and foremost. This truth lays the foundation for everything that flows out of our lives.
- ♦ We are servants of God. Jesus taught us that the greatest in the Kingdom is the one who serves. We are sons who serve with a grateful heart.
- ♦ We are soldiers who fight for our families, the weak, the hurting, the lost, the last and the least until we all taste the freedom given to us from Jesus.

These 3 roles shape structure of this devotional with 5 devos given to each. There is lots more to say about these things but this will be a good start. I hope this is a blessing to your life!

Grace & Peace!

Pastor Ron

All Scriptures are from the New King James Version of the Bible

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THE KING'S MEN

CREED

Sons • Servants • Soldiers

“for Christ & His Kingdom”

- ♦ **Because of King Jesus, I am a beloved son of God, I have nothing to prove. I am already loved.**
- ♦ **Following the example of King Jesus, I am a faithful servant.
I will lay down my life for those around me like King Jesus laid down His life for me.**
- ♦ **Because the Spirit of God lives in me, I am a courageous soldier.
I will not stand down. I will fight the good fight of faith.**

***With God's help I am becoming
a better son, a better servant, a better soldier!***

Amen!

ROLE # 1

SONS

Because of King Jesus, I am a beloved son of God.

I have nothing to prove. I am already loved.



DAY 1

Loved Before You Lift a Finger

Most men are running a race to earn a seat at a table that was set for them before they were ever born. We keep score with the things the world hands us. The paycheck. The job title. The truck in the driveway. The to-do list we finally checked off. Underneath, for most of us, is a quieter scoreboard, the one that started in our younger days with a Dad who was absent, hard on us, or just silent. A man learns early to perform for love. He figures that if he can just achieve enough, provide enough, and be strong enough, then maybe the verdict will finally come back “good enough.” The Gospel of Jesus Christ is meant to break this whole machine that drives us. Good news, before you lifted a finger, before you earned a dime, won a game or fixed that lawn mower, your Heavenly Father set His love on you and called you His own. It is a gift, given in Christ, with your name on it. You are not a slave or someone who has to earn your worth. You are a son of the Most High God!

SCRIPTURES

“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” **Romans 8:15**

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” **1 John 3:1**

THE STORY • Luke 15:1-32

The younger son cashed out his share of the estate, which in that culture was as good as wishing his father dead. He blew every dollar of it, hit rock-bottom in a pigpen. He came to himself and started the long walk home rehearsing a speech to demote himself down to a hired hand. He was going to earn his way back into his father’s good graces. But while he was still a great way off, his father saw him, which tells you he had been watching that road a long time. Then the father did the unthinkable for a Middle Eastern patriarch, he ran. Grown men of standing did not hike up their robes and sprint down a road. Some have suggested he ran to reach his boy before the village could shame him. Whatever the reason, he ran, he fell on his son’s neck, kissed him, embraced him. He cut the rehearsed speech off before the boy could ask for the demotion. The Father insisted: Robe. Ring. Sandals. Feast. The young man came home to be a servant. The father would not hear of it. The father instantly restored him to his rightful place as son. What a beautiful picture of the love of God over your life.

THE CHALLENGE

Tomorrow, before your feet hit the floor, before you attempt to accomplish one thing, say out loud, “I am a beloved son of God.” Make that the first word over your day. Good idea to make this a regular thing.

THE PRAYER

Father, before I do one thing today, thank You that I already belong to You, I am your son. Silence the voice in me that says I have to earn what You freely gave. Let me work today from the place of Your love and not for it. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

I am a beloved son of God. I was loved before I did anything, and I am loved still.

DAY 2

The Blessing Comes Before the Work

When the Father spoke over Jesus at the Jordan River, Jesus had not yet preached one sermon, healed one sick body, or performed one miracle. By every measure the world respects, His résumé was blank. And still the heavens tore open and the voice of the Father came booming, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Notice, the “well pleased” came at the front end, before the ministry, not as a paycheck handed out at the end for a job well done. Most men have it backward. We are out here grinding and sweating, trying to earn a “well done” that the Father is ready to speak over us before the work even starts. The blessing is not the prize at the finish line. It is the fuel at the starting line before we ever get going good. Then what came next? The Spirit led Jesus straight into the wilderness, and the first words out of the tempter’s mouth were, “If You are the Son of God...” The enemy always attacks your sonship first, because he knows that if he can get you doubting yourself and who you belong to, he drive you right into the ground. Receive the blessing Jesus gave His life for you to live in. Live in the blessing knowing it is a gift that flows out of the love God has for you. And pass on the blessing to those under your care.

SCRIPTURES

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” **Matthew 3:17**

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” **Numbers 6:24–26**

THE STORY • Matthew 3:13–17

Let’s go over this story again. Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized, and John tried to stop Him, saying it ought to be the other way around. But Jesus insisted, and when He came up out of the water, the heavens opened. The Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested on Him, and a voice from heaven declared Him the beloved Son. Look at the timing one more time. This blessing landed before the victory in the wilderness, before the miracles, before the crowds, before Gethsemane. The Father was not reacting to a performance. He was setting an identity for His Son to live in that would hold Him steady all His life. Every attack that came afterward was aimed at that one word, Son. That is still the word where the fight starts over you.

THE CHALLENGE

Speak the blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 out loud over yourself this week. Then tonight, lay your hand on each of your children, your wife or some you care for and bless them by name. If they are not present with you, call them or speak it over a photo. A lot of us never had a man do this for us. Be the man who starts and is determined to pass on the blessing.

THE PRAYER

Father, let Your face shine on me today. I receive Your blessing as a gift I did not earn and cannot lose. Make me a man who carries Your blessing and hands it down to everyone in my house. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

***My Heavenly Father loves me and is pleased with me before I produce a thing.
All because of Jesus. His blessing rests on me now, and it fuels everything I do.***

Nothing to Prove

There is a treadmill most men stay on, and the cruel thing about it is that it never powers down. We pull the extra shift to prove we matter. We keep the yard flawless to prove we have it together. We have to win every argument to prove we are not weak. We stay busy because busy feels like worth. We end up worn slap out, because a treadmill was never built to take you anywhere. It just keeps you running in place while it drains you dry. Then Jesus walks up with an invitation that almost sounds too good for a working man to trust. “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He is not offering a faster treadmill or a better system. He is offering rest to a racing mind. Hoping you realize there is nothing to prove to Him. Jesus came to prove God’s love for you in hopes you would stop it and finally rest. God’s grace is the end of the performance. You have nothing to prove to God. Just a gift to receive from Him. Once you are freed from the desperate need to earn your worth, you can finally live.

SCRIPTURES

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” **Matthew 11:28–29**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” **Ephesians 2:8–9**

THE STORY • Luke 10:38–42

Let’s learn something from a couple lady folks. Jesus came into a village, and Martha welcomed Him into her home and immediately got busy. She was distracted with much serving, and before long the busyness soured into resentment. She actually started fussing at the LORD and demanding He tell her sister to get up and help. Mary, meanwhile, just sat at Jesus’ feet and listened. When Martha pushed Jesus to take her side, Jesus answered her gently but firm. She was worried and troubled about many things. He said one thing was needed, and Mary had chosen it. Jesus did not rebuke serving. He corrected the striving, busy spirit that drives most of us. Make it a habit to just sit with Jesus and His Word. Stop striving and start receiving.

THE CHALLENGE

Name the one thing you do to prove yourself, hard work, spotless truck, the need to be right, etc. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you stop trying to prove yourself. Take some time to sit and chill with Jesus in silence for ten minutes or more. Just be a son.

THE PRAYER

Father, I am tired of trying to earn what You give for free. Today, I lay down my need to prove myself. Teach me to rest in the finished work of Jesus and to sit at Your feet like a son who knows he is welcome. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

I have nothing to prove. I am saved by grace and not by performance.

I am at rest because of what Jesus has done for me.

From Slave to Son

In the Roman world, adoption was a serious legal act, and it carried significant importance. When a Roman father formally adopted a son, that son's old debts were wiped clean, his old identity was erased, and he was granted full standing in the new family, with rights equal to or even greater than a natural-born child. He was not a charity case living on the edge of the household. He was an heir. Now hear what Paul says God has done for you. He did not merely forgive you and leave you standing outside as a grateful servant. He adopted you in His family as a son. Your debts are cancelled, your old name is erased, and you have been given full standing in the family of God as a legal heir, even a joint-heir with Christ. A slave and a son can live in the very same house and do the very same chores, yet they live out of two completely different destinies. The slave is always afraid of being sent away. The son knows he belongs. Jesus did not come to make you a better slave. He came to bring you into the Family as a beloved son.

SCRIPTURE

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:15-17

THE STORY • 2 Samuel 9

Mephibosheth was the crippled grandson of King Saul. He was hiding out in a town called Lo Debar, a name that means "no pasture," a dead, dry nowhere place. As the surviving heir of the former king, he had every reason to believe the new king, David, would hunt him down and kill him. But David was not looking to settle a score. He was looking to keep a promise he had made to his friend Jonathan. David sent for Mephibosheth to show him the kindness of God. When the crippled Mephibosheth was carried in, he fell on his face and called himself a "dead dog," certain his life was over. Instead, David restored to him all the land of Saul and said the words that changed Mephibosheth's story: you will eat at my table always, like one of the king's sons. Picture the king's table with family gathered. Mephibosheth had been brought from a bad place and now he was eating with the King. This is the Gospel in one scene. Once you were in Lo Debar, in a dead, dry nowhere place, and the King of kings sent for you, adopted you and promised to care for you all your days. Now we get to take our place at the King's table as one of His sons. That's some good new right there!

THE CHALLENGE

Take some extended time today to just be grateful for your place at The King's table. You have been adopted into the King's Family.

THE PRAYER

Father, thank You that You did not just forgive me and leave me at the door. You brought me all the way in and set a place for me at Your table. When I still feel like a dead dog from a nowhere place, remind me that You I am Your son. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

**I am no longer a slave. I am a son and an heir of God,
welcomed forever to sit at the King's table.**

Even When It Gets Tough

For many of us, “father” is a complicated word. Some of you had a good dad, thank God for him. But a lot of men reading this had a father who was absent, angry, cold, distracted or maybe even worse. The wound from this kind of experience is deep and can shape your life in all kinds of difficult ways. Here is what you have to know: God does not father you the way your earthly father did. Scripture calls Him a father to the fatherless, and He promises that even if your own mother and father forsake you, the LORD will take you up. Once you come into the family of God, you are in. You can breathe and finally just be. And no matter how difficult or strange the path ahead becomes, you are still a beloved son. Your sonship holds even when life turns hard, bad or dark. Look at Jesus in Gethsemane. On the worst night of His life, sweating drops of blood, heartbroken from betrayal, staring down the cross, what does He call God in that moment? He cries out, “Abba, Father.” Abba is an intimate word, the word a small child uses, closer to our word “Papa”. In His darkest hour, Jesus did not lose His grip on being a Son. He grabbed a hold of it. And the same Spirit that helped Him cry “Abba” in the darkness of the garden now lives in you. Learn a lesson from The Son about sonship. Don’t turn away when it’s hard. Lean into who you are, a son of God!

SCRIPTURES

“Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.” **Mark 14:36**

“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me.” **Psalms 27:10**

THE STORY • Mark 14:32–36

On the night before the cross, Jesus took Peter, James, and John into a garden called Gethsemane, and He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. He told them His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even to the point of death. Then He went a little farther, fell on the ground, and prayed. Of all the names He could have used for God in that crushing moment, He reached for the closest and most tender one He had.

“Abba, Father.” He was fully surrendered, praying not My will but Yours, and at the very same time He was clinging with everything in Him to the truth that He was a Son and God was His Father. That is the picture to carry with you. Surrender and sonship in the same breath, in the darkest hour, in the garden. What held Jesus together that night is the same thing that will hold you together.

THE CHALLENGE

Find a quiet place today and say out loud the words Jesus said in Gethsemane: “Abba, Father.” Say it slowly, more than once. If there is a wound from your own father, bring it to your Heavenly Father and ask Him to heal that place.

THE PRAYER

Abba, Father, I’m grateful you are my Father. Thank You that Your Spirit lets me call You by the closest name there is. Help me as a son when life is easy and when it is hard. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

**Because of King Jesus, I am a beloved son of God, so I have nothing to prove.
I am already loved.**

ROLE #2

SERVANTS

Following the example of King Jesus, I am a faithful servant.

**I will lay down my life for those around me
like King Jesus laid down His life for me.**



The Son Who Took the Towel

We just spent five days learning that we are sons, loved before we lift a finger, with nothing to prove. Now watch what a man does with that. He does not sit back and get comfortable. He picks up a towel. On the last night, John tells us that Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper and wrapped a towel around His waist. It was because Jesus was fully secure in who He was, that He was free to stoop to the lowest job in the room. A man who is unsure of his worth cannot really serve. He is too busy protecting his image, keeping score, and making sure he gets his due. But a son who knows he is loved has nothing left to prove, that is the man who can kneel down with a towel. In the Kingdom, we do not serve to become sons. We serve because we are sons. Sonship is what frees our hands to pick up the towel to wash someone else's dirty feet.

SCRIPTURES

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself.” John 13:3–4

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Jesus, Mark 10:45

THE STORY • John 13:1–17

The roads were dirt, sandals were open, and by the time a man walked across town, his feet were filthy. Washing feet was the lowest job in the house for the lowest servant. Luke tells us that this very evening the disciples had been arguing about which of them was the greatest. Into this room full of proud, competitive men, Jesus stood up, took off His outer robe, wrapped a towel around His waist like a common servant, and went man to man washing the dirt off their feet. He washed the feet of Judas, who was already set to betray Him. He washed the feet of Peter, who would deny Him before morning. When Jesus finished He said, if I your LORD and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. He handed them a picture they would never forget: greatness is achieved on its knees with a towel willing to serve others.

THE CHALLENGE

Do one hidden act of service today that nobody will see and nobody will applaud. Do the serving thing. Serve someone like Jesus did.

THE PRAYER

Father, thank You I am secure in Your love and I don't have to protect my ego. Let me serve today the way Jesus served. Lots of dirty feet around me. Help me help somebody. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

Because I am a secure son, my hands are free to serve. I take up my towel to serve like Jesus.

The Jesus Way to Greatness

Every man wants to be great at something. God put that drive in you, and He is not asking you to kill it. He is asking you to aim it in the opposite direction from where the world points. James and John came to Jesus hoping for the best two seats in the Kingdom, the one on His right and the one on His left. The other ten got hot about it, maybe because they wanted those seats themselves. Jesus, instead of shutting down their desire for greatness, redirected it. In the world, Jesus said, the big men throw their weight around and lord it over everybody. But it shall not be so among you. Among My people, the way up is down. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant, and whoever wants to be first must become the slave of all. Here is where your sonship changes things. The only reason a man claws and climbs for status is that he is trying to prove he matters. But listen, you already have the highest status in the universe — you are a son of God. You are not scratching to reach the table, you are already seated at it. A man who is secure in who he is can finally quit climbing over people and start serving and helping others. Take a lesson on greatness from The Greatest There's Ever Been.

SCRIPTURES

*“Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.
And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.”* **Jesus, Mark 10:43–44**

*“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind
let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only
for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”* **Philippians 2:3–4**

THE STORY • Mark 10:35–45

James and John came to Jesus with a bold request: grant us to sit at Your right hand and Your left in Your glory. When the other ten heard about it, they were angry, and you can guess why. So Jesus called them all together and drew the line clear. The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over their people, He said, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Then He put Himself forward as the pattern for the whole thing. Even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. The King Himself was heading for the lowest place of all, and He is calling His men to follow in His footsteps.

THE CHALLENGE

Find one person to serve this week. Make it someone who can do nothing for you in return, no advantage, no credit, no paybacks and serve them in some way. This is what Kingdom greatness looks like.

THE PRAYER

Father, You made me to want to be great, and today I surrender that desire to Your idea. Teach me that the way up in Your Kingdom is down. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

I do not have to climb to prove I matter. I am already seated as a son at Your table.

I am free to serve. In the Kingdom, the way up is down.

It Starts At Home

It is sometimes easier to want to be a servant out there, than it is in the ordinary grind of your home. But home is exactly where we must use our towel first. Paul tells husbands to love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. Not just love her when she is easy to love or you get something in return. But to give yourself for her, the way Jesus gave Himself for us. The man who is a hero at Church and a zero at home has missed the boat. All this serving business starts in your home. And to stay true to our flow of ideas, all this comes straight out of your sonship. A son who has received the Father's love has something real to pour out, and the first people who ought to feel it most are living right under your nose. If the love of God is going to be believable to anybody, it's got to start with our families and those closest to us.

SCRIPTURES

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."

Ephesians 5:25

"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." **Galatians 5:13**

THE STORY • John 19:25–27

Think about where Jesus was and what He was doing when He stopped to take care of a family need. He was nailed to a cross, in the middle of the greatest suffering in history, carrying the sin of the whole world on His shoulders. In that moment He looked down and saw His mother standing there, and beside her John. With what little breath He had, He made sure she would be provided for. "Woman, behold your son," He said to Mary, and to John, "behold your mother." From then on John took her into his own home. Even while laying down His life for the entire world, Jesus did not overlook the responsibility right in front of Him, the care of His own mother. Caring for family is of the utmost importance. We cannot force anyone to follow Jesus, but we can make sure they know they are loved.

THE CHALLENGE

Today, do some towel work at home first. Serve your wife and/or your family in a way that expresses your love for them in a tangible way. Love is a superpower when used right.

THE PRAYER

Father, keep me from being a hero everywhere but home. The people who share my name and life should be the first to feel Your love through me. Make me a servant under my own roof, laying my life down in the small, daily, unseen ways of day in, day out stuff. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

I will serve the people God set closest to me first. I lay down my life for my own household, the way King Jesus laid down His for me.

The Least of These

Our Heavenly Father has a tender heart bent toward a particular kind of person: the fatherless, the widow, the stranger, the poor, the overlooked. As sons of God, it's our hope to become more like our Father. So if you want to know where a son of God ought to be found, follow the Father's heart out to the edges, to the margins where people are hurting, overlooked and often stepped on. Jesus said something moving about all this— that there will come a time when King Jesus will look at the ones who fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited the prisoner, and He will say, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to Me. When you serve a forgotten person, you are not just doing a nice thing. You are serving the King Himself. Jesus takes all this very personally. Serving others brings the love of God to those who need it and it helps the world around us see the love of Christ in a tangible way.

SCRIPTURES

“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” **Jesus, Matthew 25:40**

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” **Galatians 6:10**

THE STORY • Luke 10:25–37

A lawyer wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus answered with a story: A man was beaten by robbers on the Jericho Road and left half dead. A priest came by, saw him, stepped over him and crossed to the other side. A Levite came through and did the very same thing. Both had very religious reasons to keep walking. Then a Samaritan came along, the kind of man the Jews despised, and he was the one who stopped to help. He bound up the wounds, poured on oil and wine, took him to a place where he could rest and recover, paid the bill out of his own pocket, and promised to cover further costs when he came back to town. According to Jesus, this is what “love your neighbor” looks like. His instruction for all of us is “Go and do likewise.”

THE CHALLENGE

This week, serve someone outside your normal circle who is in a situation Jesus called “the least of these.” Get your family involved, if possible—a meal for some struggling, time with someone at a nursing home, you get the idea. God will show you, be creative.

THE PRAYER

Father, You love the forgotten, so make me a man who loves them, too. Give me eyes to see the person I would normally walk past, the heart to help and the wisdom to know what to do. Let me serve the least of these as if I were serving You. In the name of King Jesus, amen.

THE DECLARATION

I serve the least, the last, the lost and the overlooked, because my Father loves them and my King is hiding among them. When I serve them, I serve Him.

Laying Down Your Life

A son who serves eventually comes to the greatest form of service there is, laying his life down. Jesus said there is no greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Then He went out and did exactly that. Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, and He said the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sake of His sheep. No one took it from Him. He gave it. Now for most of us, laying down our lives will not mean dying on a cross. It will mean something more gradual, but still sacrificial in nature. It will mean dying to your own comfort so others can flourish. It means giving up your time, your money, your agenda for the well-being of others. It will likely means a thousand small things that nobody throws a parade for and may not even acknowledge. But there is ONE who notices and He's the ONE who matters most of all. Let's be men who show this "greater love" for those around us.

SCRIPTURES

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Jesus, John 15:13

*"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.
And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* **1 John 3:16**

THE STORY • John 10:11–18

Jesus said plainly that He was the Good Shepherd, and that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired hand runs when the wolf comes, because the sheep are not his and he is only in it for himself. But the shepherd who owns the sheep will stand, protect and die for them, if necessary. Then Jesus proved every word of it. He was not a victim of the Cross. He used the Cross as the greatest expression of love the world has ever known. It was Jesus' sacrificial love that rescues us out of sin & death. Get the picture? The Good Shepherd, the towel at supper, the Cross. It's all come the fullest expression of love and service shown to us by King Jesus. Now, Jesus tells each of us to take up our Cross and follow Him. And that if we lose our life for His sake, we will find it. May you learn to receive and give this kind of love. Go serve, go love, go make a difference!

THE CHALLENGE

Find one specific way you can love someone in an act of service or kindness. Some kind of sacrifice of your time, your energy or your money, for the good of someone else. You are going to discover that it's more blessed to give than to receive.

THE PRAYER

King Jesus, You laid down Your life for me before I ever knew You. Because I am a son who has been loved like that, I give You back my life. Help me to bless others with who I am and what I have. Make me a man who is willing to love like You. In Your name, amen.

THE DECLARATION

Following the example of King Jesus, I am a faithful servant. I will lay down my life for those around me like King Jesus laid down His life for me.

ROLE #3

SOLDIERS

**Because the Spirit of God lives in me, I am a courageous soldier.
I will not stand down. I will fight the good fight of faith.**



You Fight From Victory, Not For It

Most men walk into their battles trying to win. A son of God walks in already knowing the war is won, even though there are still battles. That is not a small difference. It's a life-changing mindset. The soldier part of our creed does not start with your strength or your willpower. It starts with these words: "Because the Spirit of God lives in me..." That is the source of a Christian man's strength, wisdom, provision and courage. It is not that you are tougher than the enemy. It is that the One who lives inside you is greater than the one who is fighting against you. The decisive blow in this battle of good vs. evil has already landed. Jesus is the Victor and the Spirit of Jesus lives on the inside of you. So you are not fighting for a victory you hope to earn. You are enforcing a victory Christ already won. You don't have to fight scared because you fear the outcome. As a son of God, you fight with confidence and boldness because the victory has already been won. In Christ, we are already more than conquerors. This idea changes our approach and our mindset.

SCRIPTURES

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." **1 John 4:4**

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." **Romans 8:37**

THE STORY • 1 Samuel 17

For forty days the nine foot tall giant, Goliath, marched out and dared any Israelite to face him. The whole army of Israel shook in their boots. Then a shepherd boy, named David, showed up to serve his brothers. He heard the giant's booming voice echo across the valley. Fear entered everyone else, but a holy boldness entered into David. Notice what David did not do. He did not measure the giant against himself, because in that mathematical equation you lose every time. He measured the giant against God. Now, the giant didn't stand a chance. With a fierceness to honor the name of the LORD, David took a sling and stone and ran towards Goliath. The giant fell that day. Why? Where did David's strength and courage come from? Earlier in David's story we are told that he was anointed to be King and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. That's it, that's the answer, that's our answer, too. It was the Spirit of the LORD that made the difference for David and it is the Spirit of the LORD living on the inside of you that will help you and me overcome, too. And even more so, in the New Covenant, since Jesus gave His Spirit to all His people!

THE CHALLENGE

Name the giant you are facing right now. Speak to that giant like this, "Because the Spirit of God lives in me, I am a courageous soldier of the King. I will be victorious because the Greater One live in me." Win the battle in your faith and mind before you sling your stone!

THE PRAYER

Father, thank You that Your Holy Spirit lives in me. Give me the faith of a son who knows the outcome is settled. Please help be an overcomer. In the name of King Jesus, amen!

THE DECLARATION

Because the Spirit of God is in me, I do not fight FOR victory, I fight FROM the victory Jesus won.

The Battlefield of Your Mind

There is a war going inside the mind of every man. It's not just you. We all deal with the thoughts, insecurities, the worries. Then there are the fears of: not being enough, not having enough, losing it all. You know the struggle. Then there are the temptations that come our way. All these are not just bad moods or random ideas, it is enemy fire aimed directly at your thoughts. Paul speaks to this battle in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Sounds like a lot of work. You bet it is. But here is the truth, you will either do the hard work mentioned here or you will be doing the hard of constantly rebuilding your life from all the sin and destruction you did not fight off. I've had to do both and I can tell you that fighting the thoughts is far better than sorting through the carnage of terrible mistakes. Learn to fight right and win against the darkness. You do not win this fight by trying harder to think positive. You win it the way Jesus did, by answering every lie with the truth of God's Word until the lie has nowhere left to live inside your mind. "It is written..." is how Jesus won and it's got to be our strategy, too. Think like Jesus, fight like Jesus, win like Jesus!

SCRIPTURES

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." **Romans 12:2**

THE STORY • Matthew 4:1-11

Just after the Father called Jesus His beloved Son at the Jordan, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tested. Forty days without food, and then the tempter came. Listen to the tempter's opening attack: "if You are the Son of God..." He went straight for Jesus' identity first. This is a favorite tactic of his. If the enemy can get you to question who you are and who you belong to, well, then the rest is easy for him. How did Jesus fight back in all 3 attacks? He did not debate the devil, and He did not white-knuckle His way through his feelings. Each time Jesus answered the tempter with three words, "it is written" and then Jesus quoted a Scripture truth to fight off the attack. Jesus swung The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. The attacks, the lies had no ground to stand on against the truth, and the devil left Him. This is how a soldier wins the mind games.

THE CHALLENGE

Write down the lie you hear most often about yourself. Find one or two verses of Scripture that answers it head on, and memorize it this week. Every time the lie shows up, say the verse out loud.

THE PRAYER

Father, teach me to cast down attacks and take every thought captive. Teach me to fight so I can win my battles and live in freedom. In the name of King Jesus, amen!

THE DECLARATION

I take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The Word wins every time.

Dressed for Battle

A soldier does not stroll onto a battlefield in his pajamas. He puts on his gear first, because he knows he has got to be prepared for what's coming. Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the schemes of the devil. He reminds us who our real enemy is with these words: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers..." Your real enemy is not your boss, that co-worker, that high school rival, not your wife or ex, or any other person. Our real fight is against these spiritual forces of darkness we cannot see, but we know they are there. This matters, because if you think people are the enemy, you will spend your whole life aiming at the wrong targets while the real enemy walks right past your defenses. Don't make that mistake. Be fully dressed in the armor of God found in Ephesians 6. Put on truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and The Word. Learn the function and importance of each piece. Learn how to use each part of your armor. You need all of it. And by the way, if you stand fully decked out in the armor of God, guess who you look like to the enemy?

SCRIPTURE

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Ephesians 6:11-12

THE STORY • Nehemiah 4

When Nehemiah set out to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem, the work of God drew enemies out of the woodwork. Sanballat and Tobiah first mocked the builders, then plotted to attack them and stop the work by force. Nehemiah did two things: he prayed and he posted a guard. Nehemiah armed his workers. From that day on, half the men worked while the other half stood watch with spears and shields. The builders learned to work with one hand and carry a weapon in the other. Every man kept his sword ready even while he worked. They did not stop building, and they did not stop being ready. This is a great picture of a soldier's life. You go to your job, you raise your kids, you build what God gave you to build, but you keep your armor on the whole time, because the enemy always targets the good work of God that you are doing.

THE CHALLENGE

Start a morning armor habit this week. Before your feet carry you into the day, take sixty seconds and put on each piece of armor listed in Ephesians 6. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and The Word. Then walk into your day ready and geared up for what's ahead.

THE PRAYER

Father, I have been walking into battles unprepared and aiming at the wrong enemies. Help me put on the whole armor You gave me. Remind me my fight is not against people but against the darkness.

In the name of King Jesus, amen!

THE DECLARATION

I put on the full armor of God and stay dressed for battle. My fight is not against flesh and blood. I will fight right and win my battles.

I Will Not Stand Down

There comes a moment in every man's life when standing firm will cost him something. The pressure to just go along, to look the other way, to bend a little so it will all be easier, is big. In this section of our creed we have taken our stance against compromise and quitting with these five words: "I will not stand down." There has to be this kind of courage and determination in all of our hearts. Courage is not you just gritting your teeth and being tough. Courage is what happens when a son remembers he is not standing alone. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. The LORD is with you! This is our source of true courage. And you have brothers in Christ standing with you, too. When the culture says bow, when the crowd says compromise, when fear says you are not going to win, the King's men plant their feet, take their stance, draw their swords and refuse to bow, refuse to stand down, refuse to let the enemy claim our families, our Churches, our communities. We stand and we never stand alone!

SCRIPTURES

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong." **1 Corinthians 16:13**

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you."

Isaiah 43:2

THE STORY • Daniel 3

King Nebuchadnezzar built a golden image and commanded everyone to bow when the music played, or else be thrown into a blazing furnace. Three Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, would not bow. Dragged before the raging King, they said something every soldier of God should have carved in his mind: "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." Did you hear what faith and courage sounds like? So the furnace was heated seven times hotter, and they were thrown in. Then the king leaped up, stunned. He said, did we not throw three men in the fire? I see four, and the fourth is like the Son of God. They were all walking around in the fire unharmed. They came out without a burn, without a single singed hair, without even the smell of smoke on their clothes. They would not bow down, and the Son of God met them right in the middle of the flames. When we take our stand for Jesus, He will come and stand with us. Never alone!

THE CHALLENGE

Identify the one place you have been quietly compromising to avoid the heat. Draw the line today. Decide in advance, before the moment comes, that you will not bow. Then tell a brother what you have decided, so he can stand with you.

THE PRAYER

Father, give me the kind of commitment and courage to be a man who would rather walk into a furnace than bow to a lie. When the pressure comes to compromise, plant my feet. Remind me that I never stand alone. I will not stand down. In the name of King Jesus, amen!

THE DECLARATION

I will not stand down and I will not bow to any but Jesus. The same Spirit that raised Jesus lives in me, and the Son of God stands with me in the fire.

Finish Strong

A sprint can be done on adrenaline. A marathon is another thing entirely. A long race is grinding, and challenges every thing in you physically and mentally. Sprints are about bursts and speed. Long races are a test of endurance, grit and fortitude. To prep for a long race takes lots of training, discipline and tailoring your entire lifestyle to get yourself ready. Life is like this long race. We've got to train, commit and push ourselves to the brink to make it to the finish line. Perseverance and endurance are needed for you to be a success. Our last word in this devotional is about your endurance over the long haul. Do you have what it takes to stick it out through the good, the bad and the ugly. Are you in training or are you just hoping things go well? You know much of what needs to be done. Now let's get to it. When you get to your finish line I want you to be able to say the same thing Paul said about his life in 2 Timothy 4:7-8....*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."* Live strong, finish strong!

SCRIPTURES

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." **1 Timothy 6:12**

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." **2 Timothy 4:7**

THE STORY • Exodus 17:8–13

When Amalek came out to war against Israel, Moses sent Joshua down in the valley to fight. Moses then climbed up the hill with the staff of God in his hand to overlook the battlefield. A phenomenal thing began to happen. When Moses raised up his hands towards the heavens Israel prevailed in the battle. But over time, Moses got tired and his arms dropped. When this happened, the enemy began to prevail. Then something powerful took place. Aaron and Hur did something simple but it made all the difference. They rolled a stone under Moses so he could sit, and then they stood one on either side of Moses and held his hands up for him. And Israel won the battle that day. Because of God, yes! Because of Joshua and his soldiers, yes! Because of Moses, yes! Because of what Aaron & Hur, yes! See how it all works together? We all have to do our part for the battle to be won. But pay close attention to the actions of Aaron & Hur. There are lots of good leaders around us, men who get tired from time to time. It happens to all of us. Can you be the kind of brother than holds up the hands of another so the battle can be won? We all need this kind of encouragement!

THE CHALLENGE

Find a brother you can encourage and speak strength into. Everybody needs help from time to time.

THE PRAYER

Father, this fight is long, and some days my arms are heavy. Put brothers on my left and my right to help hold me up, and make me the kind of brother who holds others up. Help me fight the good fight and finish the race. In the name of King Jesus, amen!

THE DECLARATION

**Because the Spirit of God lives in me, I am a courageous soldier. I will not stand down.
I will fight the good fight of faith.**

I hope this has been a blessing to you!

Grace & Peace!

Pastor Ron

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