

NEXT STEPS

21 DAY DEVOTIONAL



NORTHPLACE

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21 Day Devotional

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Day 1 Awaken the Wonder

by Pastor Bryan Jarrett

There are moments in my life when I seemed to be more in “awe” of God than at others. As I look back over my journey with Jesus, I’ve tried to determine what made my heart more “full of wonder” in one season and less “full of wonder” in others. If I can determine a reason for the difference, perhaps I can awaken the wonder of God in my life.

While I may not be able to “work up” or manufacture a supernatural encounter, I can train myself to be more grateful. There is no recipe or five step process you can go through to awaken awe or recapture the wonder of God, but I am confident, if you can sustain a life of gratitude toward God for His goodness in your life, you will live in the awe and wonder of God.

There is a huge difference between an occasionally grateful act and BEING a genuinely grateful person. There is a difference between expressing gratitude a few days a year and sustaining a grateful heart. It is possible that you have the right manners – that you can say, “Thank you!” or “I appreciate that”, when etiquette says you should – and still not be a truly grateful person.

I want to mature to the place that I SUSTAIN a life of gratitude. I want to BECOME a genuinely grateful person. There’s a challenge in the Bible that appears in several different places, calling us to more than politeness or momentary displays of appreciation. Paul challenges us to BECOME grateful people.

(Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT | Ephesians 5:19-20 NLT | Colossians 3:15-17 NLT)
If we want to awaken the wonder in our hearts, we must train for gratitude. Get deliberate about maturing into a grateful person. Here are a few key principles to help you develop a heart of gratitude:

1. GRATITUDE FLOWS FROM PERSPECTIVE.

Stop seeing the wrong in everything and train your eyes to see the possibilities in every situation. The glass isn’t half empty. It’s half full.

2. GRATITUDE SHOWS IN HUMILITY.

You will never be in awe of God if your heart is so proud it doesn’t recognize His hand guiding your life. Listen to the prophet Hosea describe how Israel’s arrogance blinded them from seeing God’s work in their lives.

(Read Hosea 11:3 NLT)

3. GRATITUDE GROWS IN HARDSHIP.

We are always in danger of being thankful only when good things come our way. We become conditioned for ingratitude and we become ungrateful people. Being transformed by God means learning to see ways in which God is at work, even in bad situations and through difficult people.

(Read Romans 8:28)

Gratitude is the seed that grows the fruit of wonder and awe. If you want to stand in awe of God, stop and reflect on His goodness in your life. Grateful and full of wonder!

Day 2 The Wonder of His Miracles

by Pastor Danny De los Reyes

The year was 1940; there was guerrilla warfare in the rural areas of the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. The Mexican federal government alerted the people of the villages and communities to move into more populated cities for protection. One of the families traveling had a 7-year-old boy, Alfonso; but before leaving on their journey, Alfonso caught the flu.

Left untreated, the small flu took a turn for the worse. By the time they had arrived to their destination, Alfonso was already showing the awful symptoms of pneumonia. We're talking about the year 1940 in a rural part of Mexico where doctors were scarce. Contracting pneumonia was a death sentence.

Alfonso's family decided to take their son to a little church so they could pray for him. The little church was full of people with big faith who prayed for the boy. When the family was finally able to take the boy to a doctor, the doctor told them that the odds were not in Alfonso's favor. But even then, in the midst of what seemed impossible, that little church kept praying with even more fervor for his life.

A miracle happened! God healed Alfonso and re-stabilized his family. Not only that, but that little church was mobilized as their faith increased. Because of the miracle in Alfonso's life, the church was able to impact and reach their community, bringing many people to faith.

That little boy was my grandfather, Alfonso De los Reyes. My grandfather lived his life serving God as a pastor, theologian and Christian leader. He led the movement of the Assemblies of God in Mexico at the national level for over a decade. He passed away a couple of years ago at the age of 80 years old, but that encounter with the God of the miraculous when he was only 7 years old, led him to live a full life.

Are miracles real? Are there things that are above our understanding that can only be explained when you look at them through a heavenly lens?

His Wonderful ways are boggling to the mind; his miraculous ways are beyond our understanding. We often cannot wrap our minds around or explain why a miraculous act did or did not happen. A great example of this is found in the Bible in the Gospel of John 3:1-4:

Nicodemus had narrow insight; he was unable to understand the broader picture of the miracle working Jesus. But the evidence of His miracles was there; even Nicodemus tells him, "Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." He was agreeing that Jesus had the power to perform miracles, yet when it came to accepting a miracle in his own life – the miracle of being born again – he could not comprehend what Jesus was talking about. Maybe Nicodemus believed that the miracles Jesus was performing were for others, but not for him.

For many of us, it is easier to pray for a miracle in someone else's life and believe that God will do wonders for others, but it can be difficult to trust God to work wonders in us. If you are like Nicodemus and don't think God can do a miracle in your life, maybe it's time to ask Him for one today. Where can God do a miracle in your life? Maybe you need a miracle in your finances, in your marriage, in your body, or in your career. Believe that God can still perform miracles, because we serve a God who is more than able to perform wonders.

Day 3 Wonder Upon Wonder

by Pastor Shane Gore

Read Isaiah 29:14

If you are anything like me it is much easier to see God working in your life when you look back at your past hurts, successes, transitions, or experiences. When we think about the life we have lived, it is very easy to recognize His hand at work. For the most part, even when it isn't ideal, we are able to fit the pieces together and see why things happened the way they did or to understand how one decision or problem helped shape years to come.

For me, I get into trouble when I begin to try to use my own wisdom and my own intelligence to try and figure out what is coming next in my life. I often want God to show me the right decision to make or to just lay out his full plan for the rest of my life.

Over the last 15 years, Kara and I have had the opportunity to be group leaders with college students. Based on my own college experience, I believe that it is in those years that we try to figure out "God's will" for our lives. We are looking for the perfect career, the perfect spouse, and the perfect place to live, just to name a few. I've had many students at this age tell me that they wish God would just somehow show them His full plan for their life. They wish that somehow He would write it on the wall in their dorm room and show them the right decisions to make now and in the future. In these moments, I encourage them to simply trust God. First of all, at the age of 21 had God showed me all the things that would happen in my life – good and bad – I think it would have scared me to death. But more than that, I believe the reason God doesn't work this way is because He is teaching us about trust. He is the God of wonder and we must trust Him.

I turned 40 in 2016 and yes, it is easy to look at the last 20 years and see how God has been at work in my life and in my family's life. I can also see how quickly our world is now changing. Morality has drastically changed in the last 20 years. But, I can honestly say that when I read these words, "Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder;" I become more excited about the future than I am about the successes of the past. Even in the world we live in, I can't wait to see how God will move in this time in history. In spite of us and our wisdom and understanding, we serve a God that will break in and show us His wonder.

Humanity is more educated right now than in the history of the world and we have more conveniences at our fingertips than ever before, but our world is tearing apart at the seams. Day after day, you can watch the news and see the carnality of the world, but God says, "once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish." Man's education and supposed wisdom is nothing compared to our God. When we as individuals humble ourselves and learn to trust Him, we are setting ourselves up for the miraculous.

It's easy to become consumed with the cares of this world and to look around and think that God has turned his face away from humanity, but let me encourage you to trust in Him. Trust Him to know that he is a sovereign God and know that He is still on the throne. He loves each and every person that is on planet earth and He is still performing the miraculous.

Day 4 The Wonder of God's Set Up

by Pastor Bryan Jarrett

In 1978, Bernie Marcus was fired from a small "do-it-yourself" hardware retailer in New Jersey, called Handy Dan. The devastation from losing his job sent Marcus on a search that resulted in his partnership with Arthur Blank. In 1979, this partnership resulted in the opening of the first Home Depot store in Atlanta, Georgia. What had appeared to be a "set-back" for Bernie Marcus was actually a "set-up." Today, The Home Depot is an international operation with over 2200 stores in North America employing 400,000 people.

God has revealed His nature time and again in His word. The Scriptures are crammed with biblical illustrations that closely compare to this contemporary story of obstacle becoming opportunity, tragedy becoming triumph, and adversity becoming advantage. God often picks those who have been voted the "least likely to succeed" to do his bidding. He seems to choose the most unlikely people, unlikely places, and unlikely methods to declare His glory. Take the nation of Israel for instance. Less than 1% of the world's population lives within its borders. A simple thumbtack could cover it on a map and yet, its people own more than one-fifth of all Nobel Prizes and have continually been in the forefront of fields as diverse as the military, economics, industry, science, culture, music, drama, and comedy. The only feasible answer to Israel's success is God. Israel was not chosen because the people were special, but they were special because they were chosen.

Look at people throughout history that God has chosen to use: Moses stuttered; Solomon didn't practice what he preached; Jeremiah was an alarmist; Hosea's family life was in shambles; John the Baptist lacked tact, dressed like a hippie and would stick out like a sore thumb at a church potluck; and think about Jesus! Jesus often offended the religious crowd, and His claims were not even accepted by His own people. Furthermore, God took the most unlikely place, Golgotha, the most unlikely person, Jesus, and used the most unlikely method, crucifixion, to do the most amazing thing: open the way for sinful man to have a relationship with a holy God. It was a divine set-up!

Your external circumstances may be more reminiscent of failure than success. Remember, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (I Corinthians 1:27). God could very well be "setting you up" to experience the greatest triumph of your life. Instead of expecting defeat, expect victory. Instead of being a victim, be a survivor. In just one moment, God can turn your sorrow into celebration. Hang on! This could be a set-up!

Becoming by Beholding

by Pastor David Oliver

YOU BECOME WHAT YOU BEHOLD.

Scripture says in 2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

I know this passage can seem confusing at first glance. What does all this stuff about “veils & glory” mean for me? Simply put, the glory of God is His presence, His power, His radiance, and His holiness. Before Jesus came, we couldn’t really see it or understand it fully. But after Jesus, it’s like our faces have had a veil removed and now we can see and know His glory through the beautiful person of His Son, Jesus. How amazing is that? YOU have the ability, through prayer and the Word and community, to see the glory and wonder of God in Jesus.

That’s a powerful message, but it’s not even really the part I want to focus on. I think it makes sense to most of us that as I come into relationship with Jesus and know Him more, my life should change. The danger for many of us is that over time, we abandon the message of the Gospel of grace and we make following Jesus simply about “doing the right things.” We try to pray harder, read longer, worship louder, and attend more frequently. Here’s the thing though: simply doing the right things is never enough. The right actions aren’t what achieved salvation for you in the first place, and they’re not what will transform you now.

So then how do we become more like Jesus? How do we let Him change and impact our life? How do we let His love revolutionize the way we live? I want you to look at that first part one more time:

2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

Christianity isn’t about trying harder. It’s about looking more. The more we behold His glory, the more we look at Jesus, the more we seek to know Him and see Him, the more we are transformed into the same image. You become what you behold. You look like what you look at. I encourage you today to take your eyes off of your sin, your efforts, and your pursuits. Turn your eyes to Jesus and His glory; because the more you do, the more it will change you to look like Him.

Day 6 Updraft: They Will Soar On Wings Like Eagles

by Pastor Bryan Jarrett

Daily Reading: Isaiah 40:28-31 NLT

This passage is infused with the riches of hope and inspiration. It has been the foundation of thousands of sermons and hundreds of songs. In different seasons of my life, certain phrases and promises stood out more than others. In this season, out of all the powerful imagery in this passage of Scripture, the one that has grasped my attention the most is the image of an eagle with its wings outstretched soaring on an updraft.

Among the crevices and cliffs of mountainous peaks, hot air rises. Those rising air pockets are often called thermals and it's on these rising updrafts of warm air that the eagle seems most majestic. It's here riding a thermal that eagles don't strive to fly; they simply spread their expansive wings and coast. They rise altitude and soar effortlessly.

In this passage, Isaiah paints this vivid picture of a person or people, who have given all they can. They are physically, spiritually, and emotionally drained in every way, but in their desperation the Prophet gives a promise: If we put our trust in the Lord we will find a supernatural strength. It's a strength that comes from outside us...beyond us...underneath us. The point: It's not us. It's not natural. It's the supernatural updraft of divine grace.

Through this supernatural grace, we will run and not fatigue; we will walk the long distance faith requires and not faint. If we sell out and trust him completely, there is a supernatural supply of grace to move us from...struggling to surviving to soaring on divine provision.

There are moments in life when you're exhausted underneath the burden of trials, circumstances, heartache, and delay. There are also times when we are wearied from the consequences of our own sin and stupid mistakes. Regardless of the cause of our weariness and exhaustion, the prophet promises the sufficiency of supernatural grace. It will rise beneath us and carry us if we can only trust Him enough to spread our wings.

So many of us have tried it on our own. We look more like a humming bird than an eagle. We flap our wings faster than the eye can see as if surviving this season is up to our efforts. We flap and flap and flap, but we still aren't getting anywhere. In Isaiah 40, God says I'm going to do something in your life that you don't even have to flap your wings to achieve; you simply have to stretch out and soar. He is challenging you to trust Him. It's not in trying but in trusting. It's not in running but in resting.

Isaiah 40:31 NLT

But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles.

Lord Jesus, would you posture my heart toward a new place of surrender? I want to want you more. Stir my affections for you. Rekindle the devotion of my heart. Bring me to the place of humility, brokenness, and trust. I want to see from a different perspective as you lift me to new heights under the updraft of your grace.

Day 7 Expect The Unexpected

by Pastor John Cruz

At the beginning of 2017, I felt the word God gave me for the year was the word “joy”. I thought, “What a great year this is going to be! Joy! That is awesome!” Then, ten people connected to us passed away in the first 10 months of the year.

I thought, “At this rate, no one is going to want to hang out with us.” Then, two hurricanes devastated areas where our family and friends live. Two earthquakes hit Mexico, affecting the family and loved ones of people in our church and in our community. Monsoon rains came to India, devastating areas in the north of India where we have done ministry for the last five years. We had two kids in college. We transitioned to empty nesters (that didn’t last long, my mother-in-law moved in with us). We had changes in ministry roles. For us, it was a difficult year; a year of change, a year of loss, a year of tragedy. A difficult season to believe, to trust and to pray. A year when things didn’t go as planned. I felt like our faith was being tested and our beliefs shaken to the core.

Many times, it is so hard to believe in the promises of God when things don’t turn out the way you expect them to.

It is hard to dream when you have lost your job or you are overlooked and don’t get that promotion. It is hard to hope when you find yourself in the middle of a divorce. It is hard to expect when you have been single for a while and there are no good prospects in sight. It is so hard to believe when your children are not making the right decisions. When retirement does not turn out to be what you thought it would be. When you don’t know how you will get out debt or how you will pay next month’s rent. How difficult it is to declare freedom when the addiction that nobody knows about is killing you inside. How difficult it is to pray and believe for healing when your body is afflicted with a long-term illness. How difficult it is to declare that the Lord is your banner when you don’t know what decision to make. How difficult it is to hope when your world seems to be falling apart. How difficult it is to believe when your dreams seem dead.

But God knew we would have moments like these in which it would be hard to believe and difficult to hope. Moments where we would become so aware of our dependence on God and our need of an updraft of grace.

In Romans 4:17-25, Paul gives us an example of what to do to get into that updraft of grace. He recounts part of Abraham’s story. “As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.” Paul is saying an updraft comes when, against all odds, you choose to believe in the God that gives life to the dead and calls into being things that are not; that God that makes something out of nothing.

Paul gives us another cue to get into the updraft. He says, “believe against all hope”. Romans 4:18 says “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed.” This doesn’t mean deny your physical reality. It just means that you are fully persuaded that God has the power to intervene in your situation. You position yourself in that place of belief that doesn’t deny reality, yet stubbornly trusts God.

For all of us, there are moments when things don’t turn out the way you expected them to. So, make the decision beforehand; be prepared with your response. Say, “When things don’t go my way, I choose to believe in the God that gives life to the dead and makes something out of nothing. Yes, this is how I will act!”

You may be facing adversity today and there may be a big impossibility in front of you, but God says hope, trust, and believe against all odds.

Day 8 Born Again

by Pastor David McAtee

Often, you hear stories of people on the verge of death or tragedy who make drastic promises to God. In a way of asking for help they cry out to God and say, "If you will just get me out of this situation, I will do whatever you want me to do for the rest of my life." Sometimes, the situation takes a turn for the better and these people make good on their promise to God. They end up submitting to God and changing the world. Other times, life simply goes on. In both instances, the moment of crying out to God often represents a time of deep despair. Sometimes, even the need for a second chance.

Spiritually speaking, every single one of us have encountered a moment like this. Whether we know it or not, all of us are born with a desperate need for a second chance. For you, maybe your need for a fresh start has been obvious – you have lived a life of deception and disobedience. Or, perhaps far less obvious – you have lived what many would consider a "good" life and have a sound moral compass. No matter what side of the equation you fall on, the desperate need for a second chance at life is still pertinent. Why? Because of the pervasiveness of sin.

Chances are, you have heard of the verse John 3:16. You know, "For God so loved the world..." If you don't know it, you've probably at least seen a sign with it being referenced. However, what is far less known is the prerequisite to the eternal life promised in John 3:16. How do you gain eternal life? You must be born again. Yes – I know it sounds crazy, but if you are reading this devotional, chances are that you have stepped across the line of faith and given your life to Jesus. Thus, you have been born again.

Jesus says in John 3:3 - "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

To be "born again" is an interesting concept. Actually, not just interesting – impossible. To be born twice of the "flesh" (John 3:6) cannot be done. However, what Jesus describes is to be born both of the flesh and of the spirit (John 3:6-8). When you decided to follow Jesus, you were "born again" of the Spirit. Like someone on the verge of tragedy who cried out to God for a second chance, you too received a second chance when you said yes to Jesus. This, however, is more than an athlete's second wind. To be born again is greater than just a fresh start, it is the beginning of a new life with eternal purposes.

NEW LIFE

Ephesians 2:1,4-5

"Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins... But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead."

ETERNAL PURPOSES

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

If no one has done it yet, let me be the first to congratulate you on not just a new lease on life, but a new life. Live it for Jesus and the eternal purposes He has set out before you.

Day 9 God Gives Strength to the Weary

by Pastor John Cruz

Isaiah 40:31 New Living Translation (NLT)

31 But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles.

They will run and not grow weary.

They will walk and not faint.

When your confidence in God is shaken by circumstances, the choices of others, disappointment or unanswered prayers; when under affliction and pain our unbelief and distrust of God grow and lead us to confusion, despondency, and loss of hope; when rough patches come; when life is thorny and complex; when we are nonplussed, confused and bewildered; when the world around doesn't seem to make sense, let us not forget our story, which is the story of God's relationship with us and with the rest of the world.

In all honesty, His faithfulness alone should be sufficient to silence all the fears and distrust. Remember that because you have a history, you will also have a future. God has not disregarded you and He does care about your fate, your daily walk and your pain. While pain may loom large and fatigue may overtake you, today is the day to regain a clearer perception of God.

He is himself an almighty God. He is everlasting God, He was from eternity and He will be to eternity. Therefore, with Him there is no deficiency or decay. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with Him there is no change. He is also the Creator of the whole earth and all that is in it from end to end. He is the rightful owner and ruler of all and has absolute power over all and an all-sufficiency to help His people in their greatest need. He has wisdom to solve the most convoluted of situations, and that wisdom is never at a loss. He has power to bring about salvation, and that power is never exhausted; He faints not, nor is weary; He upholds the whole creation, governs all the creatures, and is never tired nor overworked. Therefore, no doubt, He has power to relieve your needs without weakness or weariness.

He gives strength and power to His people, and helps them by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God is your strength. He can help the weak, He gives power to the faint, He increases strength. When we are weak in ourselves, then and only then we are strong in the Lord. He will help the willing and those who, in a humble dependence upon Him, help themselves.

You may have grown tired and weary in your condition, but be reminded that God will give you the needed strength in abundant supply. May you receive sufficient grace today. I pray your strength is renewed as the work of your hands is renewed. May His grace cover you in every situation; may you be anointed and may God be your strength every moment of this day. May you recover and your strength be renewed. May you have strength to labor, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to abide in Him. May you soar upward towards God. May you trust God, for He is always good.

Day 10 The Lord of Hosts is With Us

by Pastor Bryan Jarrett

Imagine living within a walled city that is under siege by an invading foreign army. Soldiers are walking around on all four sides of your city strategizing about an attack. They have cut off your food and water supplies. You stare at the prospect of death at worst or becoming their slaves at best.

When they launch their attack, you and your family will be subject to untold evil. Impending doom has consumed the minds of the entire city, but all you can do is sit and wait. You are forced, by circumstances, to be on the defensive. Your fate lies outside of your control. Can you outlast the enemy?

While we don't know the exact historical details surrounding the 46th Psalm, they were written to those of us under siege. This is a Psalm of comfort to those under siege in a war torn part of the world or those under siege from disastrous personal circumstances or those in an emotional nightmare that shows no hint of going away.

The psalm opens with a blast of light into the doom and despair of our situation:

Psalm 46:1 NLT

God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.

During the siege of Vienna in 1529, this Psalm is what inspired Martin Luther to write his immortal Reformation hymn A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. We may be "in" trouble, but we are not outside His care. Our resources may not last, but His strength will.

The message in vs 4-7 parallels with John's vision of heaven recorded in the book of Revelation.

Above the tumult of earth's desperate conflicts, is a pristine city. Our world may be chaotic, but not His. This psalm lifts our attention from what is under siege toward the eternal city of God and our ultimate hope of home.

Psalm 46:4-7 NLT

*4 A river brings joy to the city of our God,
the sacred home of the Most High.*

*5 God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.
From the very break of day, God will protect it.*

*6 The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!*

*God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!*

*7 The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel is our fortress.*

This seventh verse should calibrate our hearts regardless of what is under siege in our lives. The Lord is with us! And with his presence comes the host of heavens armies. Your Heavenly Father is leveraging all heavenly resources to fight on your behalf. Run to Him. He is your refuge. He is also your very capable defender and protector.

Lord, in this season, my soul wants to do everything but be still. It feels as if so much of my life is under siege. But I have hope today because of your constant presence in my life. I find safety in the refuge of your presence. I find security and strength in your shelter and defense. Today, I choose to rest in you.

Day 11 When life throws you a curve ball

by Pastor Tasha Overall

As Christians we're supposed to have it "all together", right? I know I used to think so. I grew up in a Christian home in a fairly small town in Arkansas. I learned right from wrong, the bible basics, and could recite my Sunday school memory verses, well, most weeks anyway. I felt like life was meant to be lived as a good Christian, follow the rules, and make my mama proud.

So, what do we do when life throws us a curve ball? There were several years of my life that were just plain hard. You know what I mean, you lose someone you love, or get real sick, or lose a job, or friends leave, or love seems like it will never happen for you. Or maybe, like for me, life just didn't turn out as you had planned. Things go wrong, we make mistakes, bad choices, others hurt us.

What now? Where do we go when we "follow the rules" or even ask for forgiveness when we mess up and things still seem hard and just don't work out. We feel lost or out of control. "I'm a Christian, my story is supposed to be a good one". It's not supposed to be this way once I say yes to Jesus, right?

Let me just say, being a Christian was never meant to be easy, but it sure is worth the pain. I'd like to share a few things God has shown me through my journey.

First, "I got this"- That's God, not me. And yes, He most definitely speaks to me just like that. I pray and pray and the words that keep rolling around in my head are "I got this". HE has THIS, the thing, the one you are thinking of now, and probably constantly. He's got it!

(Isaiah 46:4- "I am your God and will take care of you until you are old and your hair is grey. I made you and will care for you; I will give you help and rescue you.")

Second, let tomorrow worry about itself. It's SO easy to get lost in worries that we forget to stop, take a deep breath, go ahead, inhale... exhale... and leave it to Him!

(Mathew 6:34- "So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.")

The last thing, and maybe the most important in this season we are in, rest! Commandment #4 is "remember the sabbath". That can be a tough one for us, our society says don't be lazy. God says take a day off, He even lived out this example in the creation of the whole world. He thought it was so important it even made His top 10 list. The same list with "do not murder" in it!

Day 12 If God Is For Us, Who Can Be Against Us?

by Pastor Derrill Sharp

Daily Reading: Romans 8:31

God is for you? Is He really? Are you sure? Paul's answer to the Romans can help to erase fear, doubts and questions.

Value - of a sparrow

"Are not two sparrows sold for a cent (penny)?" Mt. 10:29

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God." Lu. 12:6

Think with me about their value. Two sparrows sold for a penny. Luke's statement about a sparrow's value adds to the understanding of God's measurement of value: "What is the price of five sparrows – two pennies."

In Jesus' day, much like today, but even more so, sparrows were considered extremely limited in value. In fact, sometimes an extra sparrow (the fifth one) was added at no extra charge. There wasn't a big sign reading BOGO – buy one get one free. It was more like, "This one is not any good to me, I'll just throw it in." As we do the math and consider the value of that fifth sparrow – it was so insignificant to the seller that it was "worthless." It had no value.

Value - God's measurement

"And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart (separated) from your Father..." Mt 10:29

The fifth sparrow, though worthless to the seller and to society, is an object of the Father's watchfulness. He is concerned about and fully aware of all its needs (food – Mt. 6:26) and even of its fall. "God does not forget a single one of them..."

Your value to God

Both Matthew and Luke record, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered...you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows." God's detailed knowledge of us is far beyond our concern for ourselves. When was the last time you counted the hairs on your head, even though it might be becoming more doable as the years pass? There is no one that is worthless to God, not even a "fifth sparrow", the throw-away sparrow. Here's Jesus' value statement, "...you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows." Jesus didn't come to die for sparrows! He came and died for you!

As Rom. 8:34 says, *"The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us."* Rom. 8:34

A prayer thought

Lord, I find peace, comfort, strength and confidence in my walk today knowing that nothing can separate, sever me from your love and care. Thank you for the joy and hope I receive as I accept your word and am again aware of the depth of your love for me. Thank you, I am more valuable to you than a flock of sparrows. Jesus, I worship you for proving your love for me by dying on Calvary and demonstrating your power to stand with me by raising from the dead. I declare that nothing can separate me from your love.

Day 13 Renewed Strength

by Pastor Shane Gore

When I hear the phrase “renewed strength” the first thing that comes to mind is that in most cases, when we are needing our strength renewed, it seems completely impossible because our world doesn’t stop. In other words, when stress or trials come, or even exciting and new opportunities come our way, we can’t drop everything else around us, crawl under a rock and ignore the world as our strength is renewed. We can’t push a pause button on life and just sit and wait until we feel like we are ready to go on. To function in life, we must walk day to day with a firm understanding of where our strength and help comes from.

Several years ago, I completed my master’s degree. The program I was enrolled in consisted of 2 years of classes with a short break in between semesters and included a summer semester each year. It seemed that the assigned reading and papers would never end. I was working on all of this while trying to be a good husband, father to three kids, and a good employee and pastor at Northplace.

Several times, during those 2 years, I felt like I wasn’t succeeding in any of those roles. The school work was behind or I couldn’t get caught up at work or the date nights with my kids and my wife weren’t happening. I remember thinking that it would be nice to just push stop on one or even a couple of those responsibilities, just for a short time, to catch up, but because of the way life is, there was no way to make that happen.

So, what did I do? I prayed. I trusted God. I persevered. I looked toward the finish line of that degree. I prioritized. I prayed some more. I wish I could tell you it was in that order, but like most of us, prayer and trust usually came when I was at my wits end or the night before some deadline. Yes, I knew that God had called me to be a Godly husband and father and to be my best at my job and to further my education, but there were times that I forgot that He was there. I forgot that He was my source, that He was the one that would give me strength when I felt like I needed the world to stop for a moment.

Isaiah 40:29 NIV

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”

Day 14 Strength is For Service, Not Status

by Pastor Danny De los Reyes

Today's title springs up from Romans 15:1-2 (MSG)

1-2 Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"

If you've read up until this point in this devotional, you've noticed a pattern of asking the Lord about renewing your strength. So the logical next step is asking, what must I do after I receive strength from the Lord?

When the Lord touches us and renews our strength, it is never to just sit in contempt about our condition. We don't receive strength to just feel good about ourselves or our relationship with God compared to others. The answer in this passage is simple, as the text points out: strength is for service, not status. Those who are strong must serve those who need strength.

What I like most about this command is its paradoxical nature. The kingdom of God is one full of paradoxes; it has been described as the kingdom of the reverse, where to be rich you must give it all away, those who are last will be first, and the greatest among you shall be the least of you.

In the natural kingdom, those who possess strength are more likely to seek to find status. Yet, in the kingdom of God, where our strength comes from the Lord, we are reminded one more time that we must use our strength for service. Our strength must be used for the good of others, to not focus on our needs, but instead on the needs of our neighbor; *to lend a hand to those who falter.*

This can be the start of spiritual, emotional and physical renewal. May it bring a renewed commitment to others; to do good even when bad could be justifiable. Seek to serve and love your neighbor just as Jesus did.

Today our prayer is simple: Lord, help us to be selfless.

Day 15 The Master of the Wind

by Pastor Bryan Jarrett

Psalm 135 is known as a Psalm of Adoration, but it's so more. In Hebrew culture, the Jews would sing a specific selection of psalms in a specific order as they made their ascent toward the temple to worship in their regular pilgrimages. The 15 "psalms of ascent" are Psalms 120-134. They reflect the struggle and difficulty of our upward climb in life. As you read these psalms, imagine them being sung in this order by ancient Jewish pilgrims on the journey toward the temple with Psalm 134 being sung as you arrive at the temple. This places Psalm 135 in its proper context. It's the first psalm after the "songs of ascent". It's as though Psalm 135 is there to remind us that when God has delivered us from all our adversities, the appropriate response is for us to intentionally stop and give him the praise he is due.

As a result, unlike many psalms, this one contains no hint of trial and sorrow. The battles have been fought and won. God's work is complete, and his ways have been found perfect. Maybe you're not there. You haven't crossed the finish line of your battle. So, how can you sing this psalm? This is the place for what we call "costly" praise. The bible calls it a "sacrifice of praise". It's in these moments when you bring adoration to God based on his character, not the positive nature of your current circumstances. That's why a Psalm like this can be so helpful. When you don't have words of your own; when you don't feel like saying anything; when your gratitude reservoir is on empty—you can fall back on the written text of Scripture and these Spirit-inspired words. Let the Holy Spirit lift you out of your personal world of concern into the broad universe of everlasting truth and that truth is this: God is still in control!

I encourage you to read the entirety of Psalm 135 but for now I highlight verse 7:

*7 He causes the clouds to rise over the whole earth.
He sends the lightning with the rain
and releases the wind from his storehouses.*

He is the Master of the Wind. He is in control. He's got the whole world in the palm of his hands. Could he have really lost control over the events of your life?

As a preteen in church, there was a gospel song that made its rounds during that time. My mom was often a soloist in our small church and I have fond memories of her singing this particular song. Our personal lives were very chaotic in that season, but I remember the words of this song giving me a deep sense that God was in control. Here is small sample of those lyrics:

*I know the Master of the wind, I know the Maker of the rain
He can calm the storm, Make the sun shine again
I know the Master of the wind*

Psalm 135:7 is the scriptural foundation of the song she would often sing. The promise of that old song and the promise of the ancient Psalm brings comfort to my heart today as much as it did then. I pray it does yours. The Master of the Wind and the Maker of the Rain is in control of your life!

Lord, let the adoration of the pilgrims who had arrived in your presence, inspire me while I still journey toward home. Let their words of adoration fill me with praise when my heart is empty from the burdens of the present. I know that even when I don't "feel" the truth, it doesn't make it less true. You are good. You are God. You are in control. Today this is the confession of my mouth and the declaration of my life. I choose to worship you.

Day 16 All Things Work Together For The Good For Those Who Love God

by Pastor Shane Gore

Over the years, Kara and I have had several opportunities to lead small groups for youth and young adults. During our times of teaching, there are several themes or questions that always seem to come up. One of those is how do I make it through this life when things get hard or when we don't understand why things happen. It is an honest question that I think we all face from time to time. We go from highs to lows and we tend to place more emphasis on the valleys that we go through than we do when we are on the mountaintop.

If you have been around Northplace for the last year or so you are aware that 2017 was an incredibly tough year for our church. It was a year that caused us to completely rely on God and His strength because of the trials that we faced. However, 2017 was also one of, if not the most, successful year of ministry Northplace has experienced in its 97 years. We experienced numerical growth, financial growth and more importantly, we reached more people for His kingdom, through the ministries of this church, than any previous year.

So how does one reconcile the valleys with the mountains of life? How do we celebrate the victories in our lives when we know that we have just come through tough trials?

Romans 8:28 – “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

I want to make sure you see something in the scripture above that we have all heard many times. The verse does not say that all things are good. It would be foolish to think that all of the trials in our lives are good and that they come from God. It says that, “God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God.” He and He alone is able to take the bad things that happen in our lives and somehow weave them into the other parts of our lives and bring healing and hope as we go forward.

Years ago I read an article from the Billy Graham Association on this topic and in that article it used table salt as an object lesson. Table salt is chemically made up of Sodium and Chloride. Both of these chemicals on their own are poisonous, but when they are put together, in the right formula, it is used to season our food and to help us maintain a healthy chemical balance in our bodies. Our bodies need a certain amount of salt to stay healthy and to function. The combination of what could be hazardous to our health, if taken separately, is actually needed to help us remain healthy.

Think about that in the context of our lives. We will all have major trials in this life, but God is able to use those trials along with the victories and bring healing and hope to each of us. Take a moment today to pray and ask God to continue to work on your behalf. Take courage in knowing that God sees and understands the trials you may be facing and that you can trust Him to use those trials for good. It may seem impossible to you at this moment, but you can trust in His faithfulness.

Day 17 The Christian Life of Concrete Love

Pastor Cadyn Jarrett

I used to recite this phrase in high school, “be love.” It was intended to spur me on to live a life that was modeled after Christ. I had always heard that “God is love,” and I wanted to live that out. I thought that Christians needed to become love. The heart behind the statement was great, but if we’re being honest, I never fully understood what that meant. And if you’re anything like me then you have no idea what that means either.

I was attempting to convey a message that challenges us to love each other through anything. Love people through their sin, pain, illnesses, arguments, etc. I wanted to love people through their issues. The Bible teaches that the Christian life is not one of ease, but it can be a fulfilled life when it’s lived the way God intended.

Read Galatians 6:1-10

Galatians 6:1-10 is one biblical model for living the way God intended. One of my study Bibles refers to this passage as “A Christian Life of Concrete Love.” I can’t help but be enamored with this description of the Christian life. The Christian life can so easily be challenging, but it’s just as fulfilling and complete when seen through the view of concrete love.

Here are a few ways that we can live the Christian Life of Concrete Love:

1. Bear One Another’s Burdens

This kind of life, however, can only happen within the context of community. We are asked to bear one another’s burdens. To bear one another’s burdens is the ultimate imitation of Jesus because Jesus ultimately took on the burden of all our sin. We live in a very broken world. We will face many transgressions and disappointments, believer or not. We are asked to bear these things with one another and ultimately point one another back to Jesus.

2. Sow Carefully

The Bible often teaches the principle of sowing and reaping. Many people throughout scripture were farmers or understood the seasons of planting and harvesting. I am not what many would call a “prosperity teacher.” But I do believe in the concept of sowing and reaping. We must sow our resources into the things that will reap eternal life: finances, time, attention, etc. If we possess it then we should use it to glorify God and love other people.

3. Do Good in Every Season

The passage closes with the phrase, “let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” Our ultimate reward is eternity with Jesus, but while we wait let us not tire from doing good works. Let us love one another, especially fellow believers, and lift each other up. Let us give to the poor, feed the hungry, and support one another.

Living the Christian life of concrete love is not complicated, but it does require intentionality. Let us not just “be love” but consistently live rooted in the love that Jesus provides.

Day 18 A Living Sacrifice

by Pastor Claudia Oliver

As a Worship Pastor, I often get asked what the meaning of worship is. The time we spend singing together on Sunday mornings is such a small fragment of what worship is about. In fact, music and singing has very little to do with it. In the book of Romans, we are given a very specific definition for what worship truly looks like:

Romans 12:1

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."

Websters Dictionary defines sacrifice as "an act of offering to a deity or something precious." God is not asking us to bring anything particular to Him. He is not asking for perfection or asking us to be a certain way. He is simply asking that we come to him whole-heartedly as we are. As we are offering our lives and our hearts to Jesus, we recognize that He is God.

So, if worship is more than singing a song, what is it? In Romans 12, the Greek word for worship is "proskuneo", which means "to kiss" (as in to kiss the hand of a superior). This concept is often associated with bowing down and demonstrates deep reverence and submission. That is exactly what worship is. It is recognizing who God is in our lives, acknowledging that He is holy, and deciding that He is worthy of all we can bring.

The way you are with your family is an act of worship. How you are at work and how well you do your job is an act of worship. The time you spend doing your devotionals is an act of worship. Coming together on Sunday mornings to sing songs about God and who He is can be an act of worship. Attending a small group where you are engaging in conversations with people who are growing in their faith is an act of worship. We have the opportunity to make every part of our lives a living sacrifice to God by recognizing who He is and giving Him the authority over our lives. Every part of our lives should be holy and pleasing unto Him. Every part of my life should reflect who Jesus is, what He has done for me, and how my life has changed because of it.

I challenge you to ask yourself, how can I offer my body as a living sacrifice in the daily parts of my life? How can every part of my life be an honoring act of worship to God?

The beauty of worship is recognizing the gift that we have in Jesus in every single aspect of our lives. The songs we sing are simply giving us words to express our adoration towards Him but my prayer for you is that worship would become much more than a song, but a beautiful act of surrendering your life.

Day 19 He is Enough

by Pastor Roberta Pereira

It was the day before Thanksgiving in 2011, we received a phone call that would shape the rest of our lives. One of our company trucks was involved in a serious car accident that resulted in multiple fatalities. To this day, it is hard to put into words all the emotions that we faced that season.

The years that followed were filled with legal worry, a financial strain that drained us of everything we had, multiple bankruptcies, a lot of stress that led to a marriage that was on the verge of a divorce, depression and a lot of questions and uncertainties.

On the other hand, looking back on it now, we can see God's powerful hand in every single detail. Romans 8:28 became so real to us and there were facets of God that we would not see if we had not lived through this experience.

The lessons we learned during this season and since then are wonderfully written in Lamentations 3:22-24, which says: "The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is His faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in Him!"

1. God's faithfulness is unfailing. Live your life with the certainty that God's love, goodness, and faithfulness will never cease, give up on us or fail. This is not because we deserve it, or earn it, or are good enough, but it is because He is a good and graceful Father. When faced with the toughest hardships, with pain and suffering, rest in the assurance that you are never alone and that you have a loving Father who is for you!

2. The Lord is my portion. The Lord is all we need. Whatever we are faced with, whatever the future holds, whatever we inherit, God is more than enough. He is all that we need to find healing, comfort, peace, freedom, and an abundant life.

3. My hope is in the Lord. Do not put your trust in people, things, accomplishments, or false securities; put your trust on the One who willingly paid the price for my life and yours, with His own.

I wasn't ready for the tragedy and heartache I faced. I didn't want to experience the loss and the pain I did. However, going through this season gave me the opportunity to "taste and see the goodness of God." I thought that the accident was the event that would shape the rest of our lives. Yet, it was seeing, experiencing, and becoming living testimonies of the faithfulness of God that changed every fiber of my being. He is enough, He is all we need!

Day 20 If She Only Knew

by Pastor Susan Neyra

I am complete in Him. Colossian 2:10

I've never been good with photo albums. Instead, I've opted to store our photographs in a tote. When the tote would fill up, I'd just go buy a bigger one until I eventually ended up with one of those heavy-duty black totes large enough to take up about half the closet in our guest room. It had been my goal for several years to take the photos to one of those places to have them digitized for each of our children, but the task had not been a priority.

Until one day.

One day, while straightening up the guest room following a visit from one of our daughters, I had a burst of energy. I dragged the humongous container of photos out of the closet and began to sort the memories. I was amazed at the precious family memories it held.

Photos of the children's younger years, flag football games, the girls in pee-wee drill and cheerleading, along with us hanging out on my grandfather's farm. So many good times and priceless memories were held there.

But there were hard times too. As I continued to sort the mountain of pictures, I came across one family photo taken in the 80's. The photo caught me a little off guard. I had completely forgotten about the young woman in the photo. As I reached for the photo, memories of her came flooding back. The insecurities she struggled with thoughts of never measuring up. Never being enough. As I continued to stare at the photo, I reflected on the difficult times she would face, domestic abuse, several failed relationships— even a period of time in prison. Oh, how I wished I could go back in time and whisper in her ear, “Hang on, girl. Don't give up. You're going to go through some struggles - some self-inflicted, some caused by others - but never give up! God's word is true; He works all things to His good” Romans 8:32. Your life is going to turn out pretty good. You'll go on to do great things for God's Kingdom.

I wished I could tell that young woman that she must not lose heart. That on the other side of the pain and the sorrow is a rainbow so vibrant and beautiful, she would one day understand God's plan for her life.

I cannot go back in time and tell her these things, but I can share them with you...

You might now know it now, but God has a plan, plans to prosper you and not harm you (Jeremiah 29:11). His love is unconditional.

Cling to Jesus, like the faith-filled woman in Mark 5:21-34 who sought Jesus in a crowd and touched his robe. When you're hanging by a thread, cling to Jesus.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And do not lean on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). And never ever give up.

Day 21 God Looks at the Heart

by Pastor Oscar Padilla

Growing up, I was not an avid reader. It wasn't that I had trouble reading; I just believed the idea that it was better to watch the movie than read the book!

Because of my aversion to reading, I was the kid in the school library that chose his book by how cool the cover looked. If my teacher was forcing me to read this, I needed to be convinced that the book would be good. If the book's cover looked cool, the words inside had to match!

The first king of Israel was a king who had all the physical attributes of a king, but his heart was perverse to the point that he offended God and God had to remove him from office. It was painful for God to remove a man from such an important position, but he did it because he cared that the person leading His people was of a pure heart.

God sends the prophet Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint the next king of Israel. One of Jesse's sons will be the next king. When Samuel sees the eldest son, he sees his majestic appearance and towering height and imagines that he will be the perfect candidate to be king. He estimates that the young man's outward appearance is enough to credit him being a good monarch and leader of God's people.

He was so far from the truth! God immediately admonishes him.

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at the way he looks on the outside or how tall he is, because I have not chosen him. For the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. A man looks at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7 NLT)

God does not look at a person's outward appearance as a qualifier; He looks at people's hearts. He knows every person's heart and understands how they feel, their desires, and their intentions. Samuel ends up anointing the youngest brother, David, a short, young, skinny boy and a shepherd, not a man of war. When we study David's history and reign, we find he is known as the greatest king of Israel because he had the heart of a servant leader, which is precisely what God desires.

In the same way, having Jesus in our hearts and the Spirit of God in our lives, we are qualified to be servant leaders who reflect the heart of God. God wants to use all of us to share His love with others regardless of what we look like on the outside, what our past tells about us, or even how much we have failed in our lives. We can all be servant leaders leading our own lives, in our homes with our families, and extending to our community and the people who surround us. With Jesus, we have the power to advance His kingdom and honor Him.

It is not by rank or inheritance but by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that is in us that God can use us significantly to be people of purpose.



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