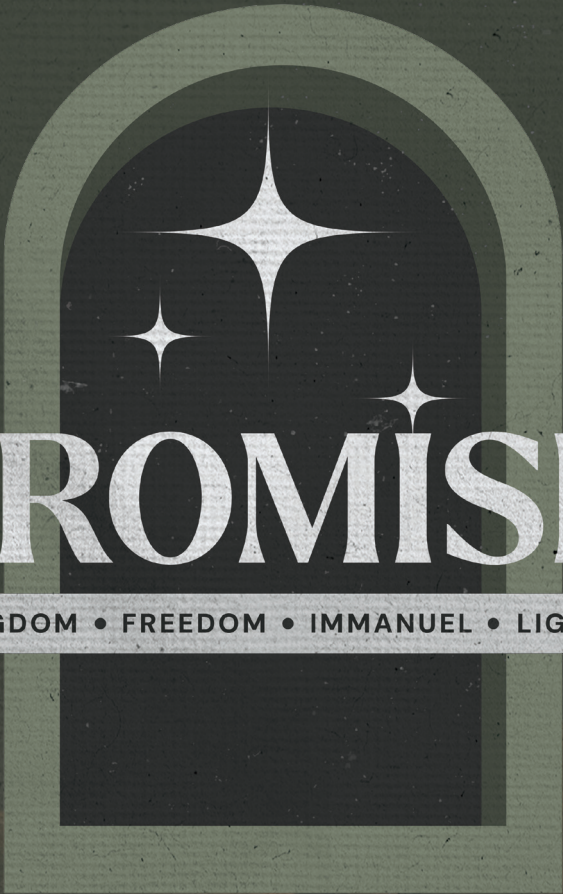




PROMISE

KINGDOM • FREEDOM • IMMANUEL • LIGHT

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New International Version® NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by Permission of Biblica, Inc.® All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004, 2007, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by Permission of Tyndale House Publishers, a Division of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*® NASB® Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by Permission of The Lockman Foundation, a Corporation Not for Profit, La Habra, CA. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (CSB) are taken from the *Christian Standard Bible*. Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by Permission of Holman Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are taken from the *Holy Bible*, English Standard Version® (ESV®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by Permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved.

Christmas has always been one of my favorite times of year. Not just because of the lights, the music, or even the time with family—though I love all that—but because Christmas reminds me that God always keeps His promises. From the very beginning, He’s been writing a story of hope, and every part of it points to Jesus.

This devotional will help us slow down and rediscover that story together. Over the next five weeks, we’ll walk through some of the great promises God made long before Jesus was born—promises that found their first fulfillment in His birth and will one day be completely fulfilled when He returns. Each week, you’ll see how every part of Scripture connects to God’s faithfulness through His Son.

My prayer is that these daily readings will help you pause in the middle of the busyness, reflect on God’s goodness, and remember that His promises are personal—they’re for you. Whatever you’re carrying into this season, the message of Christmas is clear: God hasn’t forgotten you. He’s with you. And He’s still writing His story of redemption in your life. This Christmas, make sure you’re keeping Jesus at the center.

So, grab a cup of coffee, open your Bible, and let’s journey together through *The Promise of Christmas*.

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

Bryan Jones, Senior Pastor

Devotional writings by:

Mike Garitty
Ryan Hendrick
Bryan Jones
Brantley Smith

Mark Taylor
J.C. Thompson

DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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

Matthew 6:9b (NLT)

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

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

Matthew 6:9c (NLT)

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

"May Your Kingdom come soon."

Matthew 6:10a (NLT)

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

"Give us today the food we need,"

Matthew 6:11 (NLT)

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

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

Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

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

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

Matthew 6:13a (NLT)

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

LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **Hebrews 11:8 (NIV)**

Today, let's hold on tightly to the precious promises of God as He leads us to new (and often unknown) places. He's not only a promise-maker, He's a promise-keeper.

Abraham's journey began with a promise. God told him to leave everything familiar and go to a land He would show him. What? That's hard to imagine. There was no map, no timeline—only a word from God and a heart willing to trust. The part that Abraham likely held onto was that God promised blessing, purpose and a future beyond imagination—everything else he had to leave behind.

There have been many times in my own life when God asked me to step into the unknown. Maybe you have too—leaving a job, moving to a new place, or releasing something you thought you couldn't live without. Like Abraham, I didn't have all the answers. But I've learned that faith often begins where clarity ends. When I took that step, unsure and afraid, God met me there. He didn't show me the whole plan, but He kept every promise to provide, guide and strengthen me.

Abraham waited years for God's word to come true. When it seemed impossible, he still believed. *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed...* (Romans 4:18a NIV). His story reminds us that God's promises don't always come as fast as we want, but they are never broken. Waiting is not wasted when we are waiting on a faithful God. Let us let go of what is holding onto us so we can feel the embrace of God. What God began in Abraham, He continues in us.

APPLICATION: What promise are you holding on to right now? Is there an area where God is asking you to trust Him without knowing how it will turn out? Like Abraham, take the next step in faith. God will meet you there.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that Your promises never fail. Help me to trust You even when the path is unclear. Strengthen my faith to believe that You are working, even in the waiting. I choose to follow You, resting in what You have promised. Amen.

BLURRY AT BEST

"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."

Isaiah 42:16 (NIV)

There are seasons in my life when the road ahead feels hidden. The future seems foggy, and no matter how hard I try, I just can't see what's next. Can you relate? Maybe it's a decision you're waiting on, a prayer that hasn't been answered, or a situation that doesn't make sense. Oftentimes, life is blurry at best.

Abraham knew what it was like to walk without seeing the full picture. God told him, "Go to the land I will show you" (see Genesis 12:1), but He didn't reveal where that land was. Still, Abraham obeyed. He trusted the voice of God more than the visibility of the path. Each step forward was an act of surrender, not sight.

God rarely shows us the entire journey. Instead, He gives us just enough light for the next step. His Word is a lamp to our feet, not a floodlight for the whole road. He invites us to walk close to Him, step by step, depending on His presence more than our plans.

I've had times where I prayed for clarity but received only peace. Looking back, I realized God wasn't asking me to see the whole path; He was asking me to trust His hand. Sometimes, not seeing ahead is a gift. It keeps us humble, dependent and in constant conversation with the One who does see the future.

APPLICATION: Is there an area of your life where you can't see what's next? What would it look like to trust God one step at a time? Remember, He's not just at the end of the road; He's walking beside you right now.

PRAYER: Lord, when I can't see what's ahead, help me to trust that You can. Teach me to walk by faith and not by sight. Light my path one step at a time and give me peace to rest in Your promises. Amen.

ALL IN GOD'S TIMING

He has made everything beautiful in its time. ... **Ecclesiastes 3:11a (NIV)**

But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in Your hands...
Psalms 31:14-15a (NIV)

Waiting is one of the hardest parts of life. We want answers now, change now, breakthrough now. But God's timing often looks very different from ours—and that's not because He's late, but because He's perfect.

Abraham and Sarah knew what it meant to wait. God promised them a child, but years passed with no sign of fulfillment. Their hope wavered, and they tried to make things happen in their own way. Yet even in their weakness, God's promise still held true. When the time was right, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, just as God said (see Genesis 21:2). God wasn't slow; He had a plan, and His plan had purpose. Sometimes God delays because He's developing something in us—patience, faith, endurance, trust. What feels like silence is often God's invitation to lean closer. His timing isn't about making us wait aimlessly; it's about making us ready.

Think of Joseph. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, unjustly imprisoned—he waited over a decade before stepping into the role God had prepared for him. Or David, anointed king as a teenager, but not crowned until many years later. Or the disciples, who rarely had any idea what was going on and had no idea the timing of much of anything.

In seasons of waiting, God is working. He's shaping our character, deepening our faith and aligning circumstances beyond what we can see. What feels like silence may actually be divine orchestration.

In my own life, I've seen that when I rush ahead, I often create confusion. But when I pause, pray and let God lead, His plan unfolds with peace. Looking back, I can see that His *not yet* was never a rejection—it was protection.

APPLICATION: What are you waiting for today? Can you believe that God is still working behind the scenes? Remember—delay is not denial. In His time, everything will come together beautifully.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to trust Your timing, even when I don't understand it. Teach me to rest instead of rush, and to wait with faith instead of fear. I believe You are working all things for my good—in Your perfect time. Amen.

THE PROMISED SEED

"And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed Me."
Genesis 22:18 (NIV)

When God called Abraham, He didn't just promise him land or descendants—He promised something far greater: a seed through whom the whole world would be blessed. That *promised seed* was more than Isaac; it pointed to Jesus, the Savior who would bring salvation to all people. God had the whole world in mind from the beginning.

Abraham waited years for Isaac to be born. It seemed impossible. After all, he was a hundred years old, and Sarah was far beyond childbearing age. Yet God kept His word. The birth of Isaac was a miracle, proof that God's promises never fail. But even then, God's plan stretched beyond Abraham's lifetime. Isaac's birth was only the beginning of a much bigger story—a story that would one day lead to the birth of Jesus. That's how seeds work. Planted now, they bear fruit later.

Paul explains it clearly: The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed...meaning one person, who is Christ (see Galatians 3:16). Jesus is the fulfillment of every promise God made to Abraham. Through Him, every nation and generation can experience the blessing of forgiveness, grace and eternal life.

When we put our faith in Christ, we become part of that same promise. We're adopted into God's family and made heirs of His covenant love (see Galatians 3:29). Just as Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness, we too are made right with God through faith in the promised seed—Jesus.

There are times when the answers to God's promises feel distant. We may wonder if they'll ever come true. But Abraham's story reminds us that God's timing is perfect, His plan is faithful, and His promises are eternal.

APPLICATION: Are you waiting on a promise from God? Remember that every promise finds its Yes in Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 1:20). The greatest promise has already been fulfilled—the gift of salvation through the promised Seed.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for sending Jesus, the promised Seed, to bring blessing and redemption to the world. Strengthen my faith like Abraham's, to trust that You always keep Your word. Help me live in the joy and confidence of Your fulfilled promises. Amen.

THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

From the very beginning, God promised redemption. When Adam and Eve sinned, the relationship between God and humanity was broken. But even then, God spoke a word of hope. He promised that one day, the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). That was the first glimpse of the promise of salvation—a Savior who would defeat sin and restore what was lost.

That promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, He conquered sin and opened the way for us to be reconciled to God. Salvation isn't something we earn; it's a gift we receive by faith. Like Abraham, who believed God's promise and was counted righteous (Genesis 15:6), we are made right with God by trusting in His Son. The cross is the ultimate expression of God's faithfulness—proof that He keeps His promises, even at the highest cost.

There was a time in my own life when I tried to earn God's approval—doing good things, striving to be enough. Maybe you can relate... it's exhausting trying to make God happy. But grace taught me that salvation isn't about what I can do; it's about what Jesus already did. The moment I surrendered, I found peace that striving could never give. Thank God.

God's promise of salvation means we're never beyond His reach. No matter our past, His mercy is greater. No matter our weakness, His grace is enough. Through Jesus, we are forgiven, restored and loved. Forever.

APPLICATION: Have you truly received the gift of salvation? If you have, take time to thank God for it. If not, know that His promise still stands. Jesus is ready to meet you with open arms. It's time to come home.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for fulfilling the promise of salvation. Thank You for dying in my place and rising again so I could have eternal life. Help me to live each day in gratitude, walking in the freedom and grace You've given me. Amen.

MORE THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, **Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)**

God delights in doing more than we can imagine. He's not holding back. His plans often stretch far beyond the borders of our imagination, not because we deserve it, but because His love is limitless. While we tend to think in terms of what seems possible, God thinks in terms of purpose... the things He has in mind as He writes our story. He sees the whole picture—the one we can't yet see.

Abraham's story is a perfect example. When God told him he would become the father of many nations, Abraham was old, and his wife, Sarah, was barren. From a human perspective, it was impossible. Yet God fulfilled His promise, not only by giving Abraham a son, Isaac, but by making him the father of faith for generations to come. God's plan was bigger than Abraham's prayer. God is in the business of doing more than we can ever imagine.

I've seen glimpses of that same truth in my own life. There have been moments when I prayed small prayers—just asking God to help me get through a situation. But He didn't just help me endure; He transformed me in the process. Looking back, I realize He was writing a story I couldn't have written for myself. Sometimes, His *no* was just making room for a way-better yes.

The reality is, though, God's *immeasurably more* doesn't always mean more comfort or success. Often, it means deeper peace, stronger faith, and unexpected joy in places we least expect. He's not only able to answer our prayers but to exceed them—in ways that change us forever.

When we trust God with our dreams, He can turn them into something eternal. When we surrender our limitations, His power works within us to accomplish what we never could on our own. Our imagination may have limits, but His power never does.

APPLICATION: What are you asking God for today? Are you willing to believe that He can do more—far more—than you can see or dream? Trust that His plans are greater than your expectations and that His timing is always perfect.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that You're able to do more than I could ever ask or imagine. Help me to trust Your plans even when I can't see the outcome. Expand my faith to believe that You're working for my good and for Your glory. Amen.

KINGDOM PAST

"He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for Me. And I will secure his throne forever. I will be his Father and he will be My Son. I will never take My favor from him as I took it from the one who ruled before you. I will confirm him as king over My house and My kingdom for all time, and his throne will be secure forever."

1 Chronicles 17:12-14 (NLT)

This is the message that God spoke to the prophet Nathan to deliver to King David, who had desired to build a temple as a dwelling place for the Lord and to house the Ark of the Covenant, the representation of the presence of God. Nathan initially affirmed David and his intent to build a temple for the Lord, but then God spoke and instructed Nathan to tell David that He had different plans, in that one of David's offspring (Solomon) would be the one to build the temple. Not only that, but also that God would secure an everlasting throne for His eternal kingdom through David and his offspring.

Essentially, God communicated to David that he (David) wouldn't be the one to build a house for Him, but that it would ultimately be God Himself who builds an eternal House and Kingdom through David's seed, and that throne will be secure forever! David could only devise a perishable plan, and Solomon could only build a perishable dwelling. Still, God's plan was to build an eternal Kingdom through His redeeming love and mercy that endures forever.

APPLICATION: Like King David, I can often come up with plans that really seem good, solid, well-motivated and godly. I can even receive affirmation for those plans from other reputable and godly people from whom I have sought counsel. But did I first seek God, ask Him and listen for His voice? Today, lay your life and plans down before God. Ask Him for His direction. Listen for His voice. Follow Him.

PRAYER: God, just like You revealed to the prophet Nathan and to King David, thank You that Your ways are far higher and Your plans are far better than I can even imagine. Grant me, O God, Your wisdom and Your strength to walk in Your way, the way of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

KINGDOM PRESENT

God promised this Good News long ago through His prophets in the holy Scriptures. The Good News is about His Son. In His earthly life He was born into King David's family line, and He was shown to be the Son of God when He was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 1:2-4 (NLT)

In the above salutation, the apostle Paul is addressing both the Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome, teaching and reminding them of God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises, given through the Law and the prophets, to secure an eternal Kingdom in the line of King David through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is our Savior and King, whose kingdom is the heart of man. You and I. And His Kingdom is now at hand! Take time now to reflect and worship Him through the song below!

APPLICATION: Read/listen to and reflect on the lyrics to the song *King of Kings* by Hillsong Worship.

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfill the law and prophets
To a virgin came the word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died

And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored

And the church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me

**Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, Three in One
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings**

CCLI Song # 7127647

Brooke Ligertwood | Jason Ingram | Scott Ligertwood

© 2019 Fellow Ships Music; So Essential Tunes; Hillsong Music Publishing Australia

For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](#).

All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank You for Your goodness and faithfulness to fulfill Your promises to establish Your eternal Kingdom through redeeming all who place their trust in Your Son, Jesus. Make my life a beacon of light that shines the truth and grace of the Gospel. Amen.

WEEK TWO • TUESDAY

KINGDOM FUTURE

He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout joyfully to the LORD all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.

Psalm 98:3-4 (NASB)

In 1719, Isaac Watts wrote the lyrics to the hymn that we know today as *Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come*. Many years later, in 1848, Lowell Mason put the lyrics to music with melodic influence from the musical oratorio of George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*, and the hymn became a very popular Christmas carol. The song's lyrical content however wasn't intended to be about the birth of Christ but was written to celebrate the second coming of Christ and stemmed from Watt's interpretation of Psalm 98 whose words echo the coming reign of Christ as in verse 9, *...for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.*

Reflect on the following verses from Isaac Watts' *Joy to the World*. What conditions and characteristics of Christ's second coming and future Kingdom do you notice:

Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing!

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns; Let men their songs employ; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy!

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found!

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love!

APPLICATION: Thank God this morning and throughout the day for His faithfulness and lovingkindness that endures forever! Thank Him for the future fulfillment of His promise to return and to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords!

PRAYER: Thank you, Jesus, for coming to this earth, first to serve, to seek and to save me! Thank You that You are coming again to establish Your forever Kingdom, to make all things new, and that we will dwell with You, in Your house, forever! Amen.

ULTIMATE POWER

But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Revelation 5:3-5 (NIV)

This passage reveals the ultimate power of God. When the apostle John penned this letter, he understood that Jesus is both the lion and the lamb. Jesus is our sacrifice, yet He holds the entire world in His hands! He is not only the earthly Jesus, but also the resurrected Jesus. God's power and authority are absolute, ruling over all creation with perfect wisdom and strength. Nothing can resist His will, and He has the authority to bring justice, protection and victory in every situation.

John saw a vision of a scroll that couldn't be opened. He wept. There is some debate on what the scroll actually was. My favorite definition is *God's will, His final settlement of the affairs of the universe*. It was customary in Roman culture to seal a scroll with seven seals, each from a witness who would validate the contents of the scroll. Then John sees the lion, not just the lamb. His eyes are drawn to the powerful and majestic Jesus, who is the only One who can open the scroll. There is no one like Him. The Son of Man! The holy One. The Lion from the tribe of Judah is mighty and victorious. If He can overcome all things, you can trust Him with whatever burdens you carry today. Nothing is beyond His power. Don't rely on your own strength to manage or fix situations. Lean fully on God, knowing His power is more than enough to sustain and carry you through every challenge.

APPLICATION: Put your trust in God's power today!

PRAYER: Almighty God, I thank You for Your mighty power that holds all things together. Right now, I lift my eyes to You and choose to rest in Your strength. Let every fear, worry and doubt melt away in the light of Your presence. Thank You, Lord, for Your unfailing power at work in my life. Amen.

DAILY APPOINTED

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...
Galatians 1:15-16a (NIV)

The moments of your life have been divinely appointed by God. He uniquely created you. There is no other you on the planet. You live at a unique time in history to fulfill a unique calling. He's big enough to run the galaxies, yet He's personal enough to divinely appoint the moments and seasons of your life. God placed you exactly where you are, and when you read this today, know and rest in the fact that He has hand-chosen the people and events in your life.

Paul was appointed to be set apart for the Gospel since the beginning of time. This was his unique calling. This may seem like a simple verse; however, it reveals that God has plans. Your life and the world may seem like they are spinning out of control, but God has plans. He divinely appointed or allowed every situation in your life, and He wants you to trust Him and walk with Him. Be faithful to do that today. Even Jesus was divinely appointed to come through the line of King David. When you *zoom out*, you see how big and powerful He is. And when you *zoom in*, you see how personally and intricately involved He is. The feeling of control is simply an illusion. Honestly, God is far better at managing our lives than we are. I'm realizing my job is to wake up each day and be faithful to serve God and live for Him. Just be faithful to be present in each divinely appointed moment. Whoever you pass on a walk, or bump into running an errand, or the time you're sitting at a stop light, all of it, big and small, is meant to be woven into the fabric of your life.

APPLICATION: Slow down and pay attention. Seek to be fully present wherever you are.

PRAYER: Lord, as I step into this day, help me to be mindful of You in every moment. Teach me to honor You in both the little things and the big things that come my way. Let my thoughts, words and actions reflect Your love and bring You glory throughout this day. Amen.

ALIGNED TO THE PROMISES OF GOD

“Your house and Your kingdom will endure forever before Me; Your throne will be established forever.”
2 Samuel 7:16 (NIV)

I’ve made many promises over the years, but it’s clear that there are many times I failed to follow through. *I promise I won’t forget. Or I promise I won’t say a word.* When someone makes a promise, consider the source. Who are they? What’s their track record? What’s the integrity of the person who’s given their word? God’s promises are true because of who He is.

As he’s getting up there in years, David is wondering what will happen to his kingdom. In today’s Scripture, God gives two promises. First, that his kingdom would carry on, which it did through his son Solomon and others for 400 years. The second promise is that Jesus would come through the line of David and reign supreme forever. It took almost 1000 years, but that promise came true because God is faithful to His Word.

The Bible is full of God’s promises. *And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19 NIV). *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28 NIV). These are outrageous promises—but consider the source. God promises that He will be faithful because of His great name. This is good news. I’m learning not to build my faith on my goodness, or my effort, or my commitment, but on the promises of God. He has proven faithful throughout history, throughout my life, and will continue to be faithful into eternity. You can bank your whole life on the promises of God. They are as solid as the ground you’re standing on. Trust Him. Be faithful to live and follow His direction. His promises are the key to life and joy in this life and beyond!

APPLICATION: Write down on a notecard one of God’s promises. Read that often today and rest in God.

PRAYER: Thank You, Jesus, for being faithful to Your promises. I’m grateful for every prayer You’ve already answered and for the ones You are still working out in Your perfect time. Help me to trust that Your promises never fail and that Your goodness is always at work in my life. Amen.

NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-2 (NIV)

Have you ever felt that gnawing sense of guilt, that heavy weight on your shoulders that whispers, *You'll never be good enough?* I know I have. It's that feeling after you've messed up and you're just so tired of your own failures. Maybe it's a sharp word you wish you could take back, a promise you broke, or a secret habit you're ashamed of. We've all been there, trapped in a cycle of trying harder, promising to do better, only to fall short.

That feeling, that heavy weight, is what the Bible calls condemnation. It's the just sentence we all feel we deserve for how we miss the mark. It's like living under a constant, critical verdict. But here's the game-changing truth that rewrites everything: for those who are in Christ Jesus, that verdict has been overturned.

When Jesus died on the cross, He took that condemnation upon Himself. He served the sentence for us. When He said, "It is finished," He meant it. The debt was paid in full. So now, God doesn't look at those who trust in His Son and see our failures and guilt. Instead, He sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus. He declares us *Not Guilty*.

This isn't a freedom to go and do whatever we want; that would just lead us back to the same old prison. This is a freedom *from* the power of that guilt to define us and control us. It's the freedom to finally breathe, to get back up after we fail without that crushing weight of shame, because our standing before God isn't based on our performance but on Christ's perfect work.

APPLICATION: The next time that old feeling of condemnation creeps in, when you feel that familiar shame, stop and speak this truth to your heart: *There is therefore now no condemnation for me. I am in Christ Jesus. His sacrifice is enough.* Live today not as a condemned prisoner, but as a pardoned child.

PRAYER: Father, thank You. Thank You for sending Your Son to take the condemnation I deserved. Help me to truly believe and live in this reality today. When I feel the weight of my failures, remind my heart that I am completely forgiven and fully accepted in Jesus. Help me to walk in the freedom and joy of Your grace. Amen.

THE TRUTH THAT MAKES YOU FREE

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." **John 8:34-36 (NIV)**

I used to think freedom meant being able to do whatever I wanted. No rules. No one to tell me no. But that kind of freedom is a trap. Every time I chose something I knew was wrong, it didn't feel like freedom at all. It felt like a chain. I'd promise myself *just this once*, only to find that *once* had turned into a habit I couldn't break. That's because Jesus tells us a hard but liberating truth. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

Think about that word. *Slave*. A slave doesn't get to choose. A slave obeys a master. When sin is your master, you do what it says even when you hate it. You feel stuck in the same patterns of anger, lust, gossip or envy. You want to change, but your willpower isn't enough. That's the bad news.

But here is the glorious, good news. Jesus didn't come just to forgive us. He came to free us. He said, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* This is a freedom that goes deeper than just pardon. It's a change of ownership. When we trust in Christ, we're not just forgiven slaves. We're adopted children. A slave lives in fear. A son lives in freedom and security. He has a permanent place in the family.

This means you're no longer obliged to obey your old master. The power of sin has been broken. You have a new nature and the Holy Spirit inside you, giving you the power to say *no* to sin and *yes* to righteousness. You're free to live as who you truly are—a son or daughter of God.

APPLICATION: Is there a sin pattern that feels like a slave master in your life? Bring it to Jesus today. Remind yourself, *I am not a slave. I am a child of God. The Son has set me free, so I am free indeed*. Rely on His Spirit, not your own willpower, to walk in that freedom.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for speaking the truth that confronts my chains. Thank You for not just forgiving me but for breaking sin's power over me. Help me to live today in the reality of my true identity as Your free child. Give me strength through Your Spirit to walk in the freedom You purchased for me. Amen.

CONFIDENT ACCESS TO GRACE

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

I remember a time I needed to ask my boss for a big favor. I paced outside their office, rehearsing what I would say. My palms were sweaty. I was so aware of everything I'd done wrong that month. I felt like I had no right to ask for anything. Maybe you've felt that way, too, before an important conversation where you felt small and insecure.

Now imagine being invited to walk right into the throne room of the Creator of the universe. Not as a stranger. Not as a servant who might be turned away. But as a dearly loved child. That's what this verse offers us. Because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, the barrier between us and God is gone. The curtain was torn in two.

God doesn't sit on a throne of judgment waiting to scold us. He invites us to His throne of grace. He knows we are weak. He knows we fail. He isn't surprised by our needs or our struggles. And He wants us to come to Him with confidence. Not because we are so good, but because Jesus is so good.

This means when we feel overwhelmed, we can come to Him. When we've messed up, we can come to Him. When we don't know what to do, we can come to Him. We don't have to clean ourselves up first. We don't have to rehearse our words. We can come just as we are and find exactly what we need.

APPLICATION: What need are you carrying today that you've been trying to handle on your own? Bring it to God's throne of grace right now. Talk to Him with the honesty and confidence of a child talking to a loving parent.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for welcoming me to Your throne of grace. Help me to remember I don't need to be afraid or ashamed to come to You. I come to You now in my time of need. Thank You for Your mercy and grace, which are always available to me. Amen.

LIBERATED FROM DEATH'S FEAR

Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NIV)

I'll never forget visiting a friend in the hospital during their final days. Though they were a believer, the room felt heavy with that unspoken fear we all tried to avoid. That visit made me realize how many people live with a low-grade anxiety about death. It's the ultimate unknown. We try to ignore it, make jokes about it, or distract ourselves from it, but it's always there in the background. The Bible calls this a form of slavery.

The amazing truth is that Jesus came to break this slavery. He didn't just come to teach us how to live. He became one of us, sharing in our flesh and blood so He could go through death Himself. But when He rose again, He shattered death's power forever. He proved that death is not the end. It's a doorway.

Think of it like this. The devil used to hold the power of death like a prison warden holding keys. He could threaten and intimidate us with it. But Jesus took those keys away. Death has been defeated. For those who trust in Christ, death is no longer a punishment to be feared. It's the beginning of eternal life with God.

This changes how we live right now. We don't have to live in fear of sickness, aging or the unknown. We can face medical diagnoses with hope. We can grieve with real hope when loved ones who knew Jesus pass away. We're free to live fully and boldly because we know how the story ends.

APPLICATION: What fears about death or suffering have been weighing on you? Bring them to Jesus today. Remind yourself that He has conquered death and holds the future in His hands.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You for facing death for me and breaking its power. Help me to live free from the fear of death. Give me boldness to live fully for You today, trusting that You hold eternity in Your hands. Amen.

CALLED TO SERVE IN LIBERTY

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery... You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Galatians 5:1, 13 (NIV)

I grew up thinking Christianity was about following a long list of rules. Do this. Don't do that. Try harder. Be better. It felt like wearing a heavy backpack that kept getting heavier. When I finally understood that Jesus offered freedom instead of rules, my first thought was *Great! Now I can do whatever I want!* But that's not real freedom either. That's just swapping one kind of slavery for another.

Real freedom is different. Imagine a fish being *freed* from the river and placed on the grass. That fish is free from water, but it's not free to be what it was made to be. Christ didn't set us free from rules just so we could chase every selfish desire. He set us free to finally become who we were created to be.

And what were we created for? To love. To serve. To live like Jesus. This is the beautiful mystery of Christian freedom. We're most free when we're serving others in love. Not because we have to, but because we get to. Not to earn God's favor, but because we already have it.

Using our freedom to serve is how we protect it. If we don't actively use our liberty to love others, we'll slowly slip back into slavery. Either slavery to selfishness or slavery to religious rules. Both will crush us. But when we serve one another humbly in love, we experience the joy and purpose we were made for.

APPLICATION: How can you use your freedom to serve someone this week? Maybe it's helping a neighbor, encouraging a coworker, or putting someone else's needs before your own. Look for one practical way to serve in love.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for setting me free through Christ. Help me to stand firm in this freedom and not return to any form of slavery. Show me how to use my liberty to serve others in love, just as Jesus served me. Amen.

THE GUARDED HEART

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

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

I was staring at my textbook at 2 am, my mind racing about an upcoming exam, a friendship that was struggling, and doubts about my future. That tightness in my chest made it hard to breathe. I felt completely alone with my worries, trapped in a cycle of *what-if* thoughts I couldn't escape. Maybe you've been there too. That place where anxiety becomes more than just worry, it becomes a prison of the mind.

This verse meets us right in that struggle. Notice that God doesn't begin by scolding us for worrying. He invites us to take every single anxious thought and hand it over to Him through prayer. It's like having access to the ultimate problem-solver, someone who actually has the power and wisdom to handle what's overwhelming us.

What strikes me most is the instruction to come *with thanksgiving*. At first, that seemed impossible when I was drowning in worries. How could I be thankful when everything felt wrong? Thanksgiving isn't about pretending everything is fine; it's about remembering who God is. It's recalling His past faithfulness, His character and His promises. When we thank God for who He is, it shifts our focus from our overwhelming problems to our all-powerful God.

The result isn't necessarily an immediate solution to our problems, but something even more precious, God's peace. This isn't just the absence of worry. This is a supernatural peace that acts like a security guard for our hearts and minds. It stands watch against the intrusive thoughts and fears that try to steal our joy and trust. This peace doesn't depend on circumstances changing; it depends on us remembering that we serve a God who is bigger than any problem we face.

APPLICATION: What anxiety is weighing heaviest on you today? Right now, pause and turn it into a simple prayer. Then thank God for one way He's been faithful in your past. Let that thanksgiving redirect your focus to His power rather than your problems.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I come to You with all my anxious thoughts and worries. I lay down [name your specific concern]. Thank You for being a God who cares about every detail of my life. Thank You for [name a past blessing]. I ask for Your supernatural peace to guard my heart and mind today. Help me to trust You more and worry less, remembering that You are always in control. Amen.

HE UNDERSTANDS ME

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin.
Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)

Have you ever felt like no one truly understands what you're going through? Have you looked around your people and thought, *No one gets me, no one understands?* It's one of the loneliest feelings. And yet, this verse brings a powerful truth: Jesus understands. He doesn't just sympathize from a distance; He empathizes up close. He gets it.

Jesus entered our world not only to rescue us but to relate to us. He walked dusty roads, felt hunger, battled exhaustion, faced rejection, and was even tempted by the very things that trip us up. And through it all, He remained sinless. That's what makes Him such a perfect high priest. He knows what it feels like to be human, *tempted in every way*.

There's great comfort in knowing Jesus doesn't look at our weaknesses with frustration or shame. He looks with compassion. When you're battling anxiety, disappointment, temptation or grief, you don't have to wonder if God gets it. He does. He's lived it. And He welcomes you to come boldly to Him with whatever you're carrying, not only because He is powerful, but because He knows exactly what you need.

Imagine sitting across from someone who fully understands you and your experience. That's what Jesus offers—not only understanding but also strength to help us in our weaknesses. He doesn't just say, *I know how you feel*, but also, *I'm here to help*.

That's the beauty of Christmas. God didn't stay far away. He came near. He came as one of us to truly understand us.

APPLICATION: Take a few moments to name a struggle you've been carrying silently. Share it with Jesus in prayer, knowing He understands. Listen for His insights. Let that truth give you peace today.

PRAYER: God, I ask that You would remind me today that I am not alone! I have a perfect High Priest, who has been tempted in every way, just as I have, yet He did not sin or give in. Allow me to draw on His strength today as I face my struggles. Amen.

HE ENTERED MY WORLD

Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him tightly in cloth and laid Him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Luke 2:7 (CSB)

I grew up in a town that hosted a yearly festival called *Goat Days*. Yes, you read that right. We had goat chariot races, a goat beauty contest, a goat barbecue competition, and—no joke—a pill-tossing contest (feel free to look that one up!). It was lively, weird and unforgettable. And oddly enough, every time I read the Christmas story, I think of Goat Days.

Why? Because Jesus didn't arrive in a polished palace. That's right, the King of all kings entered this world in an actual feeding trough for animals. He came into a world that was noisy, humble and full of livestock. The Savior of the world took His first breath in a place that probably smelled like hay and manure. That detail matters. It tells us that Jesus isn't afraid of our mess.

We often imagine God as far away or only showing up when we have it together. But the manger proves otherwise. Jesus showed up in the middle of it all: the smells, the sounds, the chaos. That's who He is. He doesn't wait for perfect conditions to come close. He's not waiting for you to clean things up or have it all together. He steps into our real, gritty lives.

I don't know if I would have invited Jesus to Goat Days, but Jesus would have shown up. The birth of Jesus reminds us that God chooses those who might feel overlooked or a little undone. He enters our world not to judge it from a distance but to redeem it from the inside.

So, wherever you find yourself this Christmas, busy, burdened or maybe surrounded by your own version of goats, remember: Jesus entered that kind of world on purpose to meet those He loves.

APPLICATION: Think of a part of your life that feels too messy or unspiritual for God. Today, imagine Jesus choosing to step right into that space. He's not waiting for you to tidy it up. He's already there.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You that You're not only willing, but sometimes interrupt our messy lives to get involved. Help me desire Your involvement more quickly, rather than waiting to get it together. I love You. Amen.

HE MOVED IN

"The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in His love He will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."
Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

While I'm writing this devotional, my family is in the process of moving homes. If you've ever moved into a new space, you know how personal it feels to unpack and settle in. It's not just about location or the materials used to build that house; it's about making this new spot your home. Taking your stuff is one part, but moving in and living in it is essential to know how to make it your home. That's the heart of Christmas: God didn't just visit the world; He moved in. Not temporarily, He came to stay.

Zephaniah reminds us of a God who is not only mighty and victorious but also present and affectionate. *The LORD your God is **with** you.* That one phrase alone is enough to steady a shaking soul. He delights in you. He sings over you. That's the kind of nearness that transforms how we see ourselves and how we face our circumstances.

Think about that for a moment. God doesn't just tolerate you. He doesn't simply put up with your faults or your failures. He *delights* in you. That means when God looks at you, His heart responds with joy. Not disappointment. Not irritation. But joy. That's nearly impossible to believe some days, but it's the truth. It's the kind of truth that brings peace into our daily lives.

This kind of love doesn't pack up when things get tough. God came to make His home first on this earth with the birth of the baby Jesus, and then, when you surrender to Him, to make His home in you.

Let that settle in. The Creator of the universe delights in you. He moved in. He's not leaving. And He brings joy that isn't dependent on our performance. His presence is based on His character and faithfulness to keep His Word.

APPLICATION: Sit in the truth for a moment that God is present right now, not far away. God is with you and delights in you. Take whatever thought you have of His feelings toward you and ask God to substitute that with His truth.

PRAYER: Jesus, You came to make Your home in me. Even praying that out loud to You feels overwhelming. Thank You that I'm not too messed up for You to get scared and leave. I can trust You.

HE STAYS CLOSE

The LORD is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18 (CSB)

Life doesn't give us warnings before it disappoints us. The bad news comes in a phone call. The relationship ends in a text. The fear sneaks in overnight. Sometimes it feels like the moment you let your guard down, life unravels, and, in those moments, it can feel like God has stepped away.

But He hasn't. Psalm 34:18 tells us exactly where God is in our heartbreak: close. He's not only aware of your pain; He draws near to it. While others may not know what to say or how to help, God's comfort isn't awkward or absent. He is near and present in your current situation.

The word *near* here actually speaks not only of emotional availability but also of a physical proximity. Think of someone leaning in, drawing near, not shying away from your tears or silence. That's God. He's not scared of your sorrow or put off by your questions. He's with you in the quiet. He saves those who are crushed in spirit, not by immediately fixing the problem, but often by simply sitting with us in it.

The truth is, Christmas can be joyful, but it can also be lonely. For many, it highlights what's missing: loved ones, peace, stability. And yet, this is the season where we remember Immanuel: God with us. That's the hope of the Gospel: we're never truly alone; God is with us.

So, if you're feeling broken this season, you don't have to fake joy or push through. Just remember that He is near and He is close. He's not leaving.

APPLICATION: Sit a moment and think about God being close to you physically. He is leaning into your life, not away from you. Ask Him to share any insight He might have about where you find yourself today.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for not running from my circumstances. I can't imagine doing this life without You. Help me not to run as You are leaning in to my life. Remind me of Your love today. Amen.

HE CAME TO RESCUE ME

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

There's something deeply reassuring about being pursued by a loving person. That's what Jesus does. He doesn't wait for us to find Him. He comes looking. His mission from the start wasn't to scold or shame the world, but to seek and to save.

That's a rescue story.

That is the story of Christmas. Christ entered our world. He came looking, not for someone else but for you. Jesus didn't just come for a good time or a great hang; He has a mission. Jesus comes to seek and to save.

We can only find Jesus because He came to find you. This verse is at the end of the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who was curious about this man Jesus. But when he found Him on the road, Jesus already knew Zacchaeus by name and had already decided to stay at his house. Jesus offered Zacchaeus grace and freedom from how he had been wronging people.

And here's the best part: He's still seeking. Still saving. Still stepping into our mess and lighting the way out. Whether you feel far from God or just numb inside, He hasn't stopped pursuing your heart.

So, if you feel unseen, stuck, or too far gone, I want you to hear this clearly: Jesus came for you. He won't stop seeking after your heart.

APPLICATION: Reflect on where you feel lost in your life. Just name it out loud. Ask Jesus to meet you there and show you that He knows the way forward.

PRAYER: Jesus. Thank You for coming to seek and to save the lost, including me. Help me to know that there is nothing beyond Your reach. Rescue me again today. I love You. Amen.

HE FIGHTS FOR ME

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

Romans 8:31-32 (NIV)

It's easy to feel like life is a battle, and sometimes, like we're losing. Whether it is circumstances pressing in, anxiety whispering lies, or disappointment piling up, we all face moments that make us wonder: Am I really going to make it through this?

Romans 8 responds with a thunderous yes. Not because of us, but because of *God for us*. God isn't just watching your life from the sidelines; He's willing and gracious to give us all the things.

Paul points to the ultimate proof: God gave His Son. If He would do that, how could we doubt He'll take care of us now? As a dad of two boys, this is more than just a little overwhelming. God and Jesus willingly offering Himself in our place.

When things feel overwhelming or you're just having trouble finding value in your life, remember the cross. Jesus stepped up and stepped in for you—not under compulsion but as a willing sacrifice. If God is willing to give us His Son, why would we doubt His love for us?

So, stand in that confidence. Not in yourself, but in the One who fights for you, with you and ahead of you.

APPLICATION: Name one thing that makes you feel like you are on your own. Speak the name of Jesus over that thing. *God is for me; who can be against me?* Marinate on the truth of that today.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for Your willingness to be for me. When I feel completely overwhelmed, help me to remember the cross and to rest in Your love. Remind me that I'm not alone, I have a loving Father here with me. Amen.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then He separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

Genesis 1:1-5a (NLT)

In the beginning...God. Nothing existed before God. Over the years, I've had people, especially children, ask how God could have existed forever. They rightly think there had to be a point of origin for life as we know it, and it's hard to wrap the mind around God, despite His infinite power, being a static force that stretches into infinity. Feel free to take my belief with a grain of salt, but I think the solution is simple: God created time.

Time as a concept requires a sequence of events creating past, present and future. Did these already exist in a reality with forward progression, or did that progression begin taking place when God established the sun, moon and stars? God created day and night cycles and told Adam and Eve to multiply (Genesis 1:28), so we know it existed in these verses at the latest.

Despite all this, we know God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8), because He's outside the need and inevitability of change. The Bible establishes this power and more as He draws the line between light and dark. The metaphor of light and dark representing right—i.e., the things that are of Him—and wrong—the things that are not—may have come after the Fall, but God, knowing all things at all times, knew how the story would progress.

The world can be a dark place. Thankfully, God wants to be our light. The same God who created everything and ordered reality wants to be the light that guides us home. That's a God worth celebrating.

APPLICATION: Praise God for His infinite genius, limitless creativity and overwhelming power in creating everything. As you go throughout your day, give Him glory for everything you see. Thank Him for the light that separates day and night. Thank Him for bringing you into this world and for providing Himself in the midst of the darkness.

PRAYER: Father God, You are incredible! No matter how I may marvel at Your world and praise You for its splendor, my praise pales in comparison to who You truly are. Be my light and guide me through Your creation today. Amen.

LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Him, and nothing was created except through Him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and His life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

John 1:1-5 (NLT)

In the beginning...Jesus. John's gospel begins with a bang: the man he traveled alongside for three years was God in the flesh, walking the earth. He spoke into existence on sandals, possible only through His ingenuity and speaking to the people He breathed into life. Why? Because we needed His rescue, whether we wanted it or not. To Jewish readers, this claim would be revolutionary, incredible, blasphemous, terrifying. The Messiah wasn't merely a great man—He was the Creator of mankind.

Few people who heard or read John's gospel would have known Jesus during His life before His horrific death (including us!). Most readers and hearers would either be aware of His death or had never heard of Him. Regardless of prior knowledge, the claim that a slain man had come back to life was preposterous; however, John brings the darkness of Jesus' *fate* into proper focus—darkness can't extinguish light.

Genesis 1:4 establishes that God separated the light from the darkness. Darkness may give the impression of winning, but this impression is an illusion, like a shadow puppet masquerading as something bigger than it really is. God drew the line at the beginning of creation, and everything, EVERYTHING, obeys His will—even the darkness encroaching on the light.

Jesus came, He saw, He conquered. He created everything, and He's the glue holding it all together (Colossians 1:15-17). No matter how dark things may be in the world or your life, they can't extinguish Jesus. He already defeated it. Live in that victory, that light, today.

APPLICATION: What darkness are you experiencing? Write two or three struggles down, then write in capital letters BUT JESUS. Read Colossians 1:15-17 and pray His power over those areas of your life. Ask Him to fill you with His light.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for creating all things. Thank You for condescending Yourself into the form of Your creation in order to defeat death and redeem us. Help me to live in Your power, Your victory today! Amen.

LIGHT OVERCOMES THE DARKNESS

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."
John 8:12 (NLT)

Let there be light (Genesis 1:3). According to the Genesis account, God separated the light from the darkness on the first day; however, He didn't create the sun, moon and stars until the fourth day. Where was the light when the sun had yet to be made? The logical conclusion is that the light was from God Himself. Similar to how man was made in God's image, the creation of light was a physical reflection of God's essence of clarity, illumination and glory.

With this in mind, the manifestation of Jesus provides a whole new perspective on verses such as Psalm 119:105. The verse reads, *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path*. It could also be *Your WORD is a lamp...* The Bible, God's law, provides light for our feet, but Jesus, the Word of God, is the personification of that light. The light in Psalm 119:105 lights each step on the path, but Jesus is a light we follow into a future of hope, purpose and life, an eternity only the hardened would want to miss.

Jesus has been providing light to the world since the beginning of everything (John 1:4). That's why He can rightly claim to be *the way, the truth and the life* (John 14:6). Life came into existence through Him, but death entered the scene with the Fall. Consequently, we only find life by circling back to its Source: Jesus.

Where else are we looking for the light and life we can only find through Jesus? The longer we travel our own way, the darker the path gets. In *The Case for Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says, *We all want progress. But progress means getting nearer to the place where you want to be. And if you have taken a wrong turning then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road.*

Walk to Jesus, the only path that leads to life.

APPLICATION: Where in your life are you walking closer to life, to Jesus? Take time to celebrate that progress and give Him the glory for the journey. Are you walking on your own path in some areas? Take time to turn that path over to Jesus and ask for His help in course correcting.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for being the light of the world. Thank You for sharing your light with me. Help me to follow You, experience Your life and lead others to You as well. Amen.

LIGHT REJECTS THE DARKNESS

Don't participate in the things these people do. For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.

Ephesians 5:7-10 (NLT)

Holiday food is one of the best things in the world. When discussing excitement over the holidays, people regularly highlight hanging out with family (hopefully) and food. If you're reading this devotional near its intended day, Christmas of 2025 is over. My hope and prayer for you is that you ate delicious food to your heart's content. There are few feelings as satisfying as being full.

Spiritually, we need to be careful about how we fill ourselves. In the preceding verses of Ephesians 5, Paul highlights some behavior that perpetuates darkness in us and the world: sexual impurity, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talk, ribaldry and idolatry. To practice these things is to be *full of darkness*. The fuller we are of something, the more it spills out, and the less of anything else can fit. Paul is adamant that these behaviors have no place in the life and the heart of a follower of Jesus.

To choose light, we must reject darkness. Unfortunately, the church is full of Christians who dabble in the light but regularly choose to fill themselves with darkness. In this scenario, people don't get an accurate view of who God is and the saving power He provides. Christians who dabble in the light look like the rest of the world.

God's power produces good, right and true things in us. God fills us with His light, with Himself, which allows good, right and true things to spill out of us. *So, live as people of light!*

APPLICATION: God wants to fill us with His light, but verse 10 shows that we need skin in the game: *Carefully determine what pleases the Lord*. Think back on today or the last few days. When have you made God smile? What acts of light have made Him proud of you? Praise and thank Him for those opportunities to share His light. If there are areas of darkness, take time to lift those things to Him, to reject the darkness and to ask Him to shine His light on them.

PRAYER: Lord of light, thank You for Your power. Fill me with Your goodness, Your rightness and Your truth so all these things will pour out of me. Help me to reject the dark through Your power. Amen.

LIGHT CLEANSES THE DARKNESS

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in Him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:5-7 (NLT)

We live in a polarized age. People in our culture seem to grow increasingly intolerant of beliefs and ideas that don't coincide with theirs. News sites cater to specific political beliefs and agendas. Social media algorithms tailor-pick ads, articles, memes and rage bait to better grab our attention, gain our engagement and, sometimes, provoke our ire. These factors give us greater freedom than before to insulate ourselves from potentially harmful beliefs and lies, but at what cost?

We can be ruthlessly selective about who we associate with, to the point of hating people for merely disagreeing with us. This hate may seem righteous when combating the demons we make people out to be in our heads, but how often have we had conversations that tear down our beliefs about who someone is? How many times have I thought someone was the scum of the earth, only to talk to them, get their perspective and realize there were pieces to the puzzle I was missing?

Sometimes we prefer to remain in the dark because of its comfortability and the sense of control it gives. This isn't how God designed us to live, though. God doesn't operate in the dark. He's a God of light. He isn't a God of isolation, but a God of community. The greatest spiritual darkness is enmity with God, but we as believers are still prone to returning to that darkness through our sin.

Thankfully, God in His infinite mercy casts a light on that darkness. Through the blood of Jesus, we can offer up our deepest, darkest thoughts, desires and sins, and God will cleanse them. God is in the light, so let's be children who reject the darkness and run to the light.

APPLICATION: Where may you be fostering hate, holding on to a grudge, demonizing someone in your mind or maybe choosing darkness over light? Take some time to offer those things to God and ask Him to expose them for what they are and cleanse them through the blood of Jesus.

PRAYER: Lord, You are a God of light, One who cleanses us of darkness. Expose anything in me that is hurting me or the people around me and cleanse it with the blood of Your Son. Thank You for Your mercy in loving me. Amen.

LIGHT REPELS THE DARKNESS

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

One of my favorite movie series is *The Lord of the Rings*. In *Return of the King*, the final film in the trilogy, characters are nervously preparing to defend a key city from a siege by the enemy. The hour is dark, hope is ebbing, and the city will fall unless allies reinforce it. Key characters have encouraged the city's leader to call for aid, but he refuses the need, and his courage is faltering. The key characters take it upon themselves to light a beacon at the height of the city, which starts a chain reaction of lit beacons that stretches for miles to inform allies of the city's need. Despite the leader's foolishness, the beacons are lit, hope is kindled, and the cry for help is communicated and does not go unanswered.

Jesus may not have had this exact image in mind when He spoke the words in Matthew 5:14-16, but He knows all things, so who knows! Regardless, the light on a hill can be seen for miles, a symbol of hope and salvation for those overtaken by the darkness. The night may seem like it's winning, but light repels darkness and morning is always coming.

This is the image Jesus wants to instill in His followers. God, in His infinite goodness and mercy, uses us as image-bearers, as reflections of His light and glory for a world shrouded in darkness. If you have read the preceding devotionals this week, you'll have seen the repeated need for us to be sources of light in this world. Today, let's come at this from a different angle: if you're a source of light, the darkness will hate you and try to extinguish your light in the world. If you're the light on a hill, the enemy also knows where you are.

If you're committed to being a light, pray for the strength and steadfastness to stand strong and be careful not to fall (2 Corinthians 10:12). Too many lights have repelled darkness, only to be extinguished due to pride, carelessness or a lack of conviction. Count the cost, pray for strength and remember that all the glory is meant for *your Father who is in heaven*.

APPLICATION: Think of areas where you've stood strong and been a light. Have you experienced victory over sin lately? Did you have a promising conversation with a family member who needs God? Have you repelled darkness by resisting evil? Take time to thank God for the opportunity, then pray for a double portion of strength and light to stand strong. Humble yourself, put on God's armor (Ephesians 6) and remember to give God the glory.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for using me to be a light in this world. Help me to stand strong and be careful not to fall. It's all for You, so help me to rest in Your power, Yours alone. Amen.

WEEK FIVE • SATURDAY



BROOKWOODchurch
LOVE GOD • LOVE PEOPLE

580 Brookwood Point Place • Simpsonville SC 29681
864.688.8200 • brookwoodchurch.org