

*Fresh
Start*

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Fresh
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FRESH START
2011 DEVOTIONAL

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"I HEAR THE LORD SAYING
THAT IT'S TIME TO GET
READY. 2011 WILL BE THE
YEAR OF FRESH STARTS."

—PASTOR DAN STALLBAUM

JANUARY 2011



ONE OF THE TRULY GREAT THINGS ABOUT GOD AND LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THAT EVERY SINGLE DAY CAN BE A FRESH START FOR US. GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY ARE FRESHLY PREPARED FOR US EACH AND EVERY MORNING. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ENOUGH - ENOUGH GRACE, ENOUGH JOY, ENOUGH FAITH, ENOUGH HOPE, ENOUGH LOVE FOR ANYTHING YOU ARE GOING TO FACE TODAY.

* LAMENTATIONS 3:21-24 (NKJV) SAYS THIS:
THIS I RECALL TO MY MIND, THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE.
THROUGH THE LORD'S MERCIES WE ARE NOT CONSUMED,
BECAUSE HIS COMPASSIONS FAIL NOT. THEY ARE NEW
EVERY MORNING; GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS
"THE LORD IS MY PORTION," SAYS MY SOUL
"THEREFORE I HOPE IN HIM!"

NEW YEAR'S IS ONE OF THOSE TIMES WHEN PEOPLE START THINKING ABOUT A FRESH START. WHETHER IT IS A NEW YEAR OR A NEW DAY, GOD HAS PLACED THINGS BEFORE YOU AND ORDAINED YOU TO WALK IN THEM. OUR LIVES CAN BE DESCRIBED AS A CHALKBOARD OR A WHITEBOARD THAT HAS SEEN A LOT OF HEAVY USE. AFTER A WHILE, IT BECOMES CLOUDY AND THE RESIDUE OF ALL THE MARKS MAKES IT LOOK UNATTRACTIVE AND DIRTY. IN ORDER TO WIPE IT CLEAN, WE NEED TO USE THAT SPECIAL SOLUTION OR THAT WET RAG TO MAKE IT LOOK FRESH AND NEW. JOHN THE BAPTIST GIVES US A GOOD PICTURE OF THIS IN JOHN 1:31 (TMS6):

"I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT WHO HE WAS - ONLY THIS: THAT MY TASK HAS BEEN TO GET ISRAEL READY TO RECOGNIZE HIM AS THE GOD-REVEALER. THAT IS WHY I CAME HERE BAPTIZING WITH WATER, GIVING YOU A GOOD BATH AND SCRUBBING SINS FROM YOUR LIFE SO YOU CAN GET A FRESH START WITH GOD."

THE WORLD AND EVEN LIFE ITSELF CAN STAIN US, CLOUD OUR THINKING, DESTROY OUR HOPE AND HINDER OUR FAITH. EVERYONE NEEDS A FRESH START IN ONE AREA OR ANOTHER, SOMETIMES MORE THAN ONE A DAY! GOD HAS PROVIDED A SPECIAL SOLUTION THAT CLEANSSES US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS - HIS BLOOD - AND HE WASHES US WITH THE WATER OF HIS WORD.

* PSALM 19:13 (TMS6) SAYS THIS:
CLEAN THE SLATE, GOD, SO WE CAN START THE DAY FRESH! KEEP ME FROM STUPID SINS, FROM THINKING I CAN TAKE OVER YOUR WORK; THEN I CAN START THIS DAY SUN-WASHED, SCRUBBED CLEAN OF THE GRIME OF SIN.

IN THIS NEW YEAR'S SEASON, WE ARE TAKING SOME TIME APART TO SEE WHERE GOD MIGHT WANT TO SEE A FRESH START IN US. WE ARE MAKING TIME FOR GOD TO CLEANSE US BY GETTING INTO THE WORD, FASTING AND PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR THIS TIME OF SEEKING. WE WILL BE STARTING THESE DEVOTIONS ON JANUARY 3RD. A TIME OF FASTING WILL LAST FROM JANUARY 10TH THROUGH THE 31ST. WE WILL ALSO BE PRAYING, PRESSING IN TO THE SERVICES, WATCHING INSPIRATIONAL VIDEOS, AND SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY. WE WILL BE FOCUSING ON CHRIST, CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN HIS BODY AND MOVING OUT WITH COMPASSION FOR OUR NEIGHBORS.

HAVE YOU BEEN AWAY FROM GOD FOR A WHILE OR AWAY FROM THE CHURCH? USE THIS TIME TO COME BACK AND GET A FRESH START IN YOUR LIFE. WE LOVE YOU AND GOD LOVES YOU SO MUCH MORE!

* LAMENTATIONS 5:21 (TMS6)
SAYS, "BRING US BACK TO
YOU, GOD - WE'RE READY
TO COME BACK. GIVE US A
FRESH START."



I HEAR THE LORD SAYING THAT IT'S TIME TO GET READY. 2011 WILL BE THE YEAR OF FRESH STARTS. HE SAID IT THIS WAY IN ISAIAH 43:18-19 (NKJV):

"DO NOT REMEMBER THE FORMER THINGS,
NOR CONSIDER THE THINGS OF OLD.

BEHOLD, I WILL DO A NEW THING,
NOW IT SHALL SPRING FORTH;
SHALL YOU NOT KNOW IT?

I WILL EVEN MAKE A ROAD IN THE WILDERNESS
AND RIVERS IN THE DESERT."

ON YOUR MARK - GET SET - GO! LET'S ALL JOIN TOGETHER AND PRESS IN TO HIS PRESENCE WITH A FRESH SENSE OF URGENCY AND PASSION AS WE START OFF THIS NEW YEAR WITH A FRESH START!

* 1 CORINTHIANS 1:30 (TMS6)
EVERYTHING THAT WE HAVE - RIGHT THINKING AND RIGHT LIVING, A CLEAN SLATE AND A FRESH START - COMES FROM GOD BY WAY OF JESUS CHRIST.

PASTOR DAN STALLBAUM

How to Use This Devotional

Pray and ask for God's guidance. He will open your spiritual eyes so that you will have a clear understanding of what you read.

Read the entire chapter to get a better understanding of the key verse.

Knowing the context in which the verse was written will give insight into the meaning of the scripture and what the author meant when he wrote it.

Re-read the key verse and ask questions. Train yourself to observe exactly what the text is saying by asking these questions:

who is speaking and what do they believe?
what is the context of the key verse?
what is happening before and after?
when was the verse said or done?
How is it going to happen?

The answers to these questions will bring revelation. Deuteronomy 29:29 promises, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Commit the key verse to memory, if possible. Joshua 1:8 explains the importance of knowing the word by memory: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Determine the application the chapter has for your life. The word of God is powerful and in order to experience its power, you must act on it. As you ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of the text, think about what you've observed in your reading and what it means. As you meditate on those truths, think about their place in your life and how they apply to you, personally. Do not let your study become an intellectual pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Consider each verse for your own personal life. That's where application comes in.

Be a doer of the word, not just a hearer. As you read the word daily and apply it to your life, your life will start to change. You will become a living epistle, known and read by all men (2 Corinthians 3:2). This type of study is a habit that can be formed in your life.



Here are some online resources to help you study the word:

WWW.BIBLEGATEWAY.COM

WWW.BLUELETTERBIBLE.COM

WWW.BIBLIOS.COM

WWW.YOUVERSION.COM

Fasting Guidelines

step 1 / Know the Purpose of Fasting

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, guidance or healing? Perhaps you need a fresh start or a breakthrough in a specific area of your life, financial freedom, or grace to handle a difficult problem. Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify your personal goals for fasting.

step 2 / Make a Commitment

Matthew 6:16 says, "Moreover, when you fast..." The wording of His instructions implies that Jesus intended for all believers to fast. It says when you fast, not if you fast. Before you start, decide these things:

- How long will you fast?
- What type of fast should you follow?
- What physical or social habits will you leave out during this time?
- How much time will you spend in the word and prayer?

step 3 / Prepare Yourself Spiritually

Prepare yourself spiritually through true repentance by taking these steps:

- Ask God to reveal your sin to you.
- Confess every sin specifically that the Holy Spirit shows you.
- Ask forgiveness of those whom you have sinned against.
- Make restitution.
- Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.
- Meditate on God's character.
- Believe in faith for results.
- Expect and prepare yourself to overcome any opposition.

step 4 / Prepare Yourself Physically

Take reasonable precautions. Consult a physician if you have any health concerns or are on medication. Do not gorge yourself just before you start. If your daily caffeine intake is high, start tapering down prior to beginning your fast. Also, get plenty of rest. It is important for your body to have rest during this transition time. If you exercise, don't over exert yourself. Exercise moderately. Prepare yourself for some discomfort, headaches, weakness or crankiness. Remember that the first two to three days of fasting are the hardest, but do not lose hope or feel discouraged.

step 5 / Stay on the Plan

Commit to seeing it through and staying the course. Make the following a core part of your fast:

- 
- Pray.
 - Read the chapter.
 - Answer the questions in the devotion.
 - Take walks at lunchtime and pray.
 - Meditate on the key verses.
 - Reread the chapter at night before bed.
 - Come to all the church services you can and partner with others who are fasting.

step 6 / Gradually Return to Normal Eating

Do not throw aside the spiritual and physical disciplines gained during this time with regard to food and its role in your life. Slowly reintroduce foods you want to begin eating again so that your body can readjust to digesting them.

step 7 / Expect Results

Expect results in your heart, in your home, in your church, and in the world around you. Below are some scriptures and things to expect during and after your fast.

- BREAKTHROUGH / Daniel 9:20-23
- INSIGHT / Daniel 1:7-20
- HEALTH / Daniel 1:14-16
- FAVOR / Daniel 1:9
- PROMOTION / Daniel 2:46-49
- CHALLENGE / Daniel 3:13-23
- DELIVERANCE / Daniel 3:24-30
- MATURITY / Daniel 5:17
- UNCOVER THE ENEMY'S PLOT / Daniel 6:4
- DELIVERANCE / Daniel 6:16-23
- HEAR FROM GOD / Daniel 7:1
- HELP FROM HEAVEN / Daniel 9:20-23
- OVERCOME STRONGHOLDS / Daniel 10:10-14
- STRENGTH / Daniel 10:19-21

A Daniel Fast is based on the following scriptures: Daniel 1:3-8, Daniel 1:11-13, and Daniel 10:2.

A Daniel Fast

specifically, Daniel 1:12 says, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink." The word "pulse" is translated as "vegetables." Pulse comes from the Hebrew word "Zeroa," which is something sown, like seeds to grow vegetables for food.

Daniel ate only what grew from the ground. He avoided meat for 2 reasons: it was dedicated to idols and would defile the person who ate it knowing it was dedicated to idols (Daniel 1:8), and he was abstaining from this food to seek the Lord.

Daniel avoided sweets, desserts, and sugar. He purposed in his heart to find his joy and fulfillment in God, not in food. Daniel 10:3 says, "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." In Hebrew, "pleasant bread" translated comes from "chemdah lechem," which is delightful food, food that one eats for pleasure rather than the purpose of nourishment.

so what do we eat? Keep it simple and follow the leading of the Lord. The purpose of a fast is to seek God, not just go on a diet. If you would like to lose weight while doing this fast, you can cut out dairy, as well.

A suggested meal plan is as follows:

Breakfast - eat only fruit until noon.

Lunch - eat a large salad with vegetables.

Dinner - eat beans and rice, vegetables or salad.

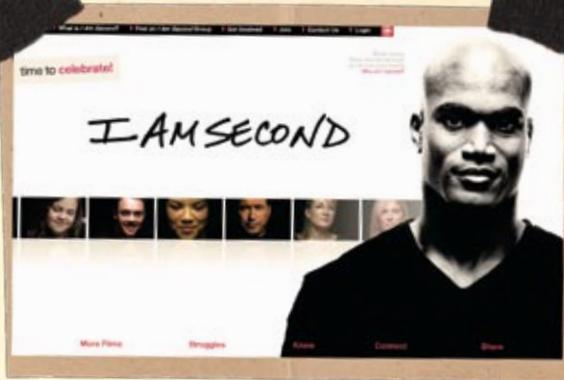
Here are some online resources to help you plan meals according to the Daniel Fast:

www.danielfast.wordpress.com

www.danielfastcookbook.com

what would it feel like to help your friends be set free?

I Am Second is a revolutionary ministry tool that engages christians to introduce christ to their friends naturally and effectively. Through a cool website and relevant testimonies, ordinary people see extraordinary life change. It is meant to inspire people of all kinds to live for God and for others.



Actors.
Athletes.
Musicians.
Business Leaders.
Drug Addicts.
Your next-door neighbor.
People like you.

The authentic stories on www.iamsecond.com provide insight into dealing with typical struggles of everyday living. These are stories that give hope to the lonely and the hurting, help from destructive lifestyles, and inspiration to the unfulfilled. You'll discover people who've tried to go it alone and have failed. Find the hope, peace, and fulfillment they found. Be second.

Each day, one or two testimony videos from www.iamsecond.com will be featured in that day's devotion. Type that link into your web browser and watch the video. After watching it, think of one person whose life could be impacted by that testimony and send the link to them. By the end of this devotional book, twenty-eight of your friends will have come into contact with a story of how Jesus christ changed a person's life. Let these testimonies influence your life as well and show your friends how becoming second can be the best decision they've ever made.



READY - SET - GO!

WEEK 1

- #1 Living the Spirit-Filled Life
- #2 Fresh Habits
- #3 Compassion
- #4 Breaking the Power of a Hard Heart
- #5 C25k
- #6 Devoted
- #7 Cemented and Rooted

Fresh Start

Living the
spirit-filled life
chapter: Galatians 5

DAY #1

Monday, Jan. 3rd, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL. AGAINST SUCH THERE IS NO LAW. AND THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST'S HAVE CRUCIFIED THE FLESH WITH ITS PASSIONS AND DESIRES. IF WE LIVE IN THE SPIRIT, LET US ALSO WALK IN THE SPIRIT. (GALATIANS 5: 22-25)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE? WHAT DOES A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE LOOK LIKE? IS IT ALWAYS SMOOTH AND EASY? LIKE BUDDY IN THE MOVIE, ELF, DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS IN THE CANDY CANE FOREST AND SAIL ON THE SEA OF SWIRLY TWIRLY GUM DROPS? NOT EXACTLY. WE WILL STILL BE CHALLENGED WITH THE TEMPTATIONS OF THIS WORLD JUST AS JESUS WAS, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE TO FACE THEM ALONE. THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES IN US TO LEAD AND GUIDE US INTO ALL TRUTH.

HOW DOES ONE LIVE IN THE SPIRIT? FOR MOST OF US, IT IS A MATTER OF QUIETING OUR MINDS LONG ENOUGH TO LISTEN TO WHAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS SAYING. WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS, IT WILL ALWAYS LINE UP WITH THE WORD OF GOD. SPENDING TIME READING THE BIBLE AND LISTENING TO TEACHING WILL HELP US GROW IN THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE.

GOD IS SUPERNATURAL AND WE ARE MADE IN HIS IMAGE. EVERY ONE OF US HAS THE DEEP-SEATED CRAVING TO FULFILL OUR PURPOSE AND DISCOVER THE REASON WHY WE WERE CREATED. THE ENEMY HAS THE ASSIGNMENT OF TRYING TO DISTRACT YOU FROM YOUR GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE OF LIVING YOUR LIFE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. WE HAVE ALL THE POWER OVER THE ENEMY AND AS LONG AS WE ARE NOT OFFERING HIM AN OPENING OR ROUTE OF ACCESS HE HAS ABSOLUTELY NO POWER OVER US! (PROVERBS 26:2) YOU ARE AN OVERCOMER AND HAVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD LIVING INSIDE OF YOU.

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD CAN MAKE YOU BETTER IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE. AS A FATHER, GOD HAS SPOKEN TO ME IN MY HEART ABOUT MY CHILDREN. AS A HUSBAND, GOD HAS GIVEN ME SONGS OF VICTORY TO SING TO MY WIFE. AS A BUSINESSMAN, HE HAS GIVEN ME IDEAS THAT HAVE MADE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. AS A FRIEND, HE HAS GIVEN ME INSIGHT THAT HAS ENCOURAGED FRIENDS TO GO HIGHER AND FURTHER, TO NOT GIVE UP. AS A PASTOR, HE HAS GIVEN ME PLANS AND REVELATIONS THAT HAVE SAVED MANY LIVES WHEN FOLLOWED THROUGH. THE ONLY WAY TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOU IS TO BE IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

DO IT: APPLICATION

WE HAVE AN INTERCESSOR LIVING INSIDE OF US THAT IS HERE TO COMFORT, CONSOLE AND COUNSEL US AND STANDS AS OUR ADVOCATE - OUR DEFENDER AND VINDICATOR BEFORE HEAVEN AND HELL! WHERE DO YOU TURN WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO OR EVEN WHAT TO PRAY FOR? GIVE YOUR PRAYER LIFE A FRESH START. TURN LOOSE THE COMFORTER AND PRAY IN THE SPIRIT. ROMANS 8:26-27 SAYS THAT EVEN WHEN WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT TO PRAY FOR, HE DOES! WHEN WE LET HIM PRAY THROUGH US, GOOD THINGS HAPPEN. I CHALLENGE YOU TO SET ASIDE TIME EACH DAY DURING OUR TIME OF PRAYER AND FASTING TO PRAY IN THE SPIRIT.

 I Am Second: Joe Gibbs
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Joe_Gibbs/

NOTES:

Fresh Habits

chapter: Habakkuk 2

DAY #2

Tuesday, Jan. 4th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

Then the Lord answered me and said:

"Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Thought it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

Social networking is the biggest trend to hit our culture in the past decade. People are communicating through technology using websites such as Facebook and Twitter. You can create an entirely new identity and persona with the stroke of a key. God asks us to do a similar thing, believe it or not, with our lives. We all have a God-given vision for our lives and when we've discovered it, God asks us to write it down and make it plain so we can have clear direction to run with it when the time comes.

In Habakkuk 2:1, we find the prophet climbing a watchtower so he can hear what God wants to say to him. He climbed the watchtower to get away from anything or anyone else that might distract him from hearing the voice of God. We need to do the same thing. In order to truly learn the vision God has for us, we need to separate ourselves from the things that might get in the way and get rid of old habits that might be hindering us. This is the only way we can fully devote ourselves to being on watch for the direction of the Lord.

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

In 1979, interviewers asked this question to new graduates from Harvard's MBA program "Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?"

This is how the graduates responded:

84% had no specific goals at all.

13% had goals, but they were not written on paper.

3% had clear, written goals and plans to accomplish them.

In 1989, the interviewers caught up with the graduates to see how they were doing. This is what they found.

The 13% of the class who had goals were earning, on average, twice as much as the 84% who had no goals at all. Even more staggering, the 3% who had clear, written goals were earning, on average, ten times as much as the other 97% put together!

The problem with starting new habits is knowing which ones will provide the desired outcome. Writing down your goals gives you a direction to go with an end in mind. By following the instructions in Habakkuk 2, you can write down a clear God-given vision for your life and by seeking Him further, you can know the steps you need to take to achieve that vision.

DO IT: APPLICATION

1. Take some time right now to write down God's vision for your life in one sentence or less. _____

2. After that sentence, describe the vision in two paragraphs.

3. Write down a list of new habits that will help you achieve that vision.

 I Am Second: Brian Welch
[www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Brian_Welch/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Brian_Welch/)

Compassion

chapter: Matthew 28

DAY #3

Wednesday, Jan. 5th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

AND JESUS CAME AND SPOKE TO THEM, SAYING, "ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE." AMEN. (MATTHEW 28:18-20)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF EVERYONE FOLLOWED THE GREAT COMMISSION? WOULD THIS BE A GOOD THING FOR EVERY MEMBER OF OUR CHURCH AND FOR ECCC AS A WHOLE? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE INVESTED IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND INVITED NONBELIEVERS TO CHURCH? WOULD IT CHANGE OUR LIVES, OUR CHURCH, OUR COMMUNITY? THINK ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAVE AT WORK, SCHOOL, WHERE YOU SHOP, AND WHERE YOU PLAY. WHAT IF, AFTER YOU INVESTED, LOVED, AND SHARED, YOU INVITED THEM TO A CHURCH SERVICE OR CHURCH EVENT?

AT ECCC, WE CALL IT "WINNING A WITNESS." YOU WIN A WITNESS BY INVESTING IN YOUR FRIENDS' LIVES. QUANTITIES OF TIME CREATE QUALITY TIME. YOU CAN'T RUSH QUALITY MOMENTS. IT WILL TAKE INTENTIONALITY, PURPOSE, AND YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE AN EFFORT. IT REQUIRES YOU TO DO SOMETHING THAT WILL OPEN THEIR HEART TO YOU SO THEY WILL RESPOND TO YOUR INVITATION. SHOULDN'T WE BE WILLING TO INVEST, NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES? INVESTING MUST TAKE PLACE BEFORE AN INVITATION. I BELIEVE GOD WANTS US TO INVEST STRATEGICALLY IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE AROUND US SO WE CAN INVITE THEM TO CHURCH.

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

FOR MANY YEARS, WE HAD PROBLEMS IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS AROUND OUR CHURCH. THE WORST TROUBLEMAKERS WERE THE TEENAGE BOYS FOR THE PETTY CRIME AND THE 20-YEAR-OLDS INVOLVED

IN DRUGS. WE DEALT WITH VANDALISM, NOISE, AND CARS BEING BROKEN INTO DURING SERVICES. HOW DO YOU HANDLE PROBLEMS LIKE THIS? JOHN 4:35 SAYS, "LIFT UP YOUR EYES, AND LOOK ON THE FIELDS; FOR THEY ARE WHITE, ALREADY FOR HARVEST." THE TROUBLEMAKERS - THEY ARE OUR HARVEST. WHY DOES JESUS SAY TO LIFT UP YOUR EYES? THE HARVEST IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU, BUT YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE IT. WE NEED TO FIND THE OVERLOOKED AND THE UNNOTICED. THESE KIDS, THEIR GRANDMAS AND MOMS STARTED COMING TO EAST COAST AFTER WE PUT IN FIVE BASKETBALL COURTS AND STARTED A 3-ON-3 BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT. WE HOSTED THE TOURNAMENT FOR 14 YEARS IN A ROW. BECAUSE WE INVESTED TIME INTO OUR COMMUNITY, WE NOW HAVE A CHURCH THAT LOOKS MORE LIKE HEAVEN AND A NEIGHBORHOOD THAT IS MORE PLEASANT TO LIVE IN.

DO IT: APPLICATION

WHO IS GOD TELLING YOU TO SPEND TIME WITH? YOU WILL FIND THAT WHILE SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH PEOPLE, YOU WILL BEGIN TO TRULY LOVE THEM, CARE FOR THEM AND HAVE COMPASSION FOR THEM IN THEIR SITUATION. DURING TRANSITION OR TENSION IN THEIR LIVES, THERE WILL BE SPIRITUAL SENSITIVITY AND THEY WILL BE MORE ACCEPTING TO YOUR INVITATION. IF YOU DON'T INVEST IN REALLY GETTING TO KNOW THEM, YOU WON'T KNOW WHEN THOSE TIMES ARE. PRAY AND ASK THE FATHER WHO HE WANTS YOU TO INVEST IN SO THAT YOU CAN INVITE THEM TO CHURCH AND POINT THEM TO CHRIST.

* PRAY THIS PRAYER WITH ME:

GIVE ME EYES TO SEE AND THE COURAGE TO INVEST IN THEM. LORD, HELP ME SEE THE MOMENT WHEN THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY RECEPTIVE AND GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO INVITE THEM. IN JESUS NAME, AMEN.

 I Am Second: Colt McCoy
www.iamsecond.com/#/
[seconds/Colt_McCoy/](https://www.instagram.com/seconds/Colt_McCoy/)

Breaking the Power
of a Hard Heart
chapter: Mark 6

DAY #4

Thursday, Jan. 6th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

AND HE WENT UP UNTO THEM INTO THE SHIP; AND THE WIND CEASED: AND THEY WERE SORE AMAZED IN THEMSELVES BEYOND MEASURE, AND WONDERED. FOR THEY CONSIDERED NOT THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES FOR THEIR HEART WAS HARDENED.
(MARK 6:51-52)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

YOUR HEART BECOMES SENSITIVE TO WHATEVER YOU CONSIDER. IF YOU FAIL TO CONSIDER SOMETHING, YOUR HEART BECOMES HARDENED TO IT. SET YOUR MIND AND AFFECTIONS ON THE LORD AND YOU WILL BE SENSITIVE TO HIM. FAIL TO CONSIDER HIM, AND YOU WILL BECOME HARDENED TO THE LORD AND HIS SPIRIT.

THE WORD, "CONSIDER," MEANS "TO STUDY, PONDER, DELIBERATE, EXAMINE, OR MEDITATE ON." THIS ISN'T SPEAKING ONLY OF KNOWLEDGE. IT'S ALSO SPEAKING ABOUT FOCUS. MANY PEOPLE HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND HIS WAYS BUT THEY FAIL TO CONSIDER OR FOCUS ON THE THINGS OF THE LORD AS THEY SHOULD. THEY LET LIFE GET IN THE WAY. THE RESULT IS A HARDENED HEART FULL OF UNBELIEF (HEBREWS 3:12-13).

TAKE, FOR INSTANCE, THE DISCIPLES IN MARK 6. THEY HAD JUST PARTICIPATED IN THE FEEDING OF THE 5,000. YET, IN THE STORM, THEIR ATTENTION WAS DRAWN AWAY FROM THE MIRACLE JESUS HAD JUST PERFORMED AND THEY BECAME PREOCCUPIED WITH SAVING THEIR OWN LIVES. THERE ISN'T ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT IN ITSELF, BUT THEY WERE IN A SITUATION THAT WAS BEYOND THEIR ABILITY. THEY NEEDED THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF GOD, YET THEY WERE SOLELY FOCUSED ON THE NATURAL.

LIFE DOES DEMAND OUR ATTENTION, BUT JESUS HAD ALREADY TOLD THEM TO GO TO THE OTHER SIDE (MARK 6:45). HE DIDN'T TELL THEM TO GO HALFWAY AND DROWN. WE CAN'T LET THE PRESSURES OF THIS LIFE TAKE OUR ATTENTION OFF WHAT GOD HAS SAID. IF THEY HAD BEEN FOCUSED ON THE MIRACULOUS MULTIPLICATION OF THE FISH AND BREAD, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SURPRISED TO SEE JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER (MARK 6:49-50). THEY WOULD HAVE EXPECTED HIM.

IT WASN'T PORNOGRAPHY OR LOVE OF MONEY THAT GRABBED THEIR ATTENTION. THEY WERE STRUGGLING JUST TO STAY

ALIVE. IT WAS THE CARES OF THIS LIFE THAT HARDENED THEIR HEARTS BY GRABBING THEIR ATTENTION COMPLETELY.

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

AT ONE POINT IN MY LIFE, THE MINISTRY ACTUALLY HARDENED MY HEART. I KNOW THAT SOUNDS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT ANYTHING THAT TOTALLY DOMINATES YOUR ATTENTION CAN HARDEN YOUR HEART TOWARDS THE LORD. I REMEMBER A TIME I HAD BEEN MINISTERING THREE TIMES A DAY FOR WEEKS. I HAD BEEN SO BUSY MINISTERING TO OTHERS THAT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY TIME FOR THE LORD TO MINISTER TO ME.

I WAS PREACHING IN MESA, ARIZONA AND I WAS BURNED OUT. IF I HADN'T BEEN THE ONE TEACHING, I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN UP AND WALKED OUT OF MY OWN MEETING. MY HEART HAD BECOME HARDENED, BUT IT WASN'T MADE THAT WAY BY SIN. I WAS SO BUSY WITH MINISTRY THAT I WASN'T FOCUSED ON THE LORD. IF THAT CAN HAPPEN WITH BEING DOMINATED BY MINISTRY THEN IT CAN HAPPEN BY BEING TOTALLY CONSUMED WITH ANYTHING ELSE. YOU HAVE TO DELIBERATELY FOCUS ON THE LORD AND KEEP LIFE SECONDARY.

DO IT: APPLICATION

GRAB A NOTEBOOK TO CARRY WITH YOU TODAY, OR EVEN FOR THE REST OF THE WEEK. HONESTLY EVALUATE HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME. YOU MAY BE DOING GOOD THINGS OR THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE, BUT HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU SPEND FOCUSED ON THE LORD AND HIS WORD? DO YOU GIVE A TITHE OF YOUR WAKING HOURS TO THE LORD? EVERY TIME YOU MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO MEDITATE ON THE LORD, WRITE IT DOWN IN YOUR NOTEBOOK, WHAT IT WAS AND FOR HOW LONG. AT THE END OF THE DAY, LOOK TO SEE HOW MUCH OF YOUR TIME WAS SPENT WITH THE LORD AND DETERMINE TO INCREASE THAT TIME IN THE FUTURE. IF YOUR HEART HAS BEEN HARDENED BY SOMETHING OR SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE, THIS PROCESS WILL HELP YOU UNDO IT AND PREVENT IT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN. GIVE YOURSELF A FRESH START AND TAKE THESE STEPS TO BREAK THE POWER OF A HARDENED HEART.

-ANDREW WOMMACK
ANDREW WOMMACK MINISTRIES,
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

 I Am Second: Karen Green
www.iamsecond.com/#/
[seconds/karen_green/](https://www.instagram.com/seconds/karen_green/)

C25K

chapter: Proverbs 3

DAY #5

Friday, Jan. 7th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health; your very bones will vibrate with life! (Proverbs 3:7-8)

Hear It: Revelation

"Don't assume you know it all," the scripture says. It's not like turning fifty makes you a know-it-all, but there are some things that are hard to avoid. I hear it everywhere. Friends, media and so many other sources are constantly telling me, "Things will really change for you physically when you turn fifty." It seems like everyone has a horror story about turning fifty. The part that anyone failed to mention was that without changing any of my eating habits, an extra ten pounds appeared and settled comfortably at my mid-section. Seeing any kind of downward movement on the scale seemed almost impossible. When asked, "How much do you exercise?" I would give a good, middle of the road answer - "Moderately." I don't lie in bed all day and we have stairs in the house. That counts for something, doesn't it? I realized I had a decision to make. Am I going to do listen to God and His Word or am I going to listen to what the world says about turning fifty? It is the decision we have to make every day about many facets of our lives. Proverbs 3:8 says that when we run to God and away from evil, something happens. It says my body will glow with health and my very bones will vibrate with life!

See It: Illustration

When I evaluated the situation, I realized that I have a full-time desk job, run errands after work, make dinner for the family and afterwards, in a semi-exhausted state, hit the couch and fall asleep watching television. I have friends and family who go to the gym, run, golf, play basketball, do mu jitsu, zumba and water aerobics. I, on the other hand, enjoy watching football, basketball and other sports on TV. I realized while they were improving physically, I, with cheeseburger, root beer and pompoms in hand, am happy to cheer them on from the couch. I realized I had to change some things, but how? I knew the church was planning a 5K run in February and some of my family and friends were

planning to run in it. My plan was, with trusty pompoms in hand, to stand on the sideline and cheer them on. While in a planning meeting for this devotional, God gave me the answer to my question.

Do It: Application

The answer was a website called C25K, which stands for "Couch to 5K." It is a program to help a person go from sitting on the couch to running a 5K in a nine week time frame. By the time you read this, my nine week training will be complete and I will be looking forward to the 5K run; or in my case, jog. This website may be the fresh start you have been looking for, maybe not. However, I would encourage you to put the pompoms down, turn off the TV and find something to keep you physically active. I did, and it has made my body glow with health, and my very bones vibrate with life! I hope to see you jogging with me in the upcoming February 5K!

 I Am Second: Sam Bradford
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Sam_Bradford/

Notes:

Devoted

chapter: Mark 12

DAY #6

Saturday, Jan. 8th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

"`And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31)

Hear It: Revelation

The focus of Jesus' message to humanity was centered on the subject of love. This passage of Scriptures takes place when Jesus was questioned by several of the Pharisees, the religious leaders of that time. They were testing Him and waiting for Him to say something wrong. I think it would be difficult to respond the way Jesus did in the midst of this opposition. Instead of coming back at the Pharisees with a response that would completely blow them away, Jesus discovers one particular Pharisee who is hungry for the truth and shows him love by encouraging him.

Jesus was devoted to sharing the truth and showing love to others. Even in the midst of extreme adversity, He found an opportunity to show love to someone else.

See It: Illustration

You'll never question your devotion to something unless someone else challenges you in that area. In those situations when all eyes are on you, showing love to someone else is probably the furthest thing from your mind. We've all been mistreated by our friends, coworkers, strangers, family, bosses...the list goes on and on. In all those times, it feels that we are justified to fire back or give someone a cold shoulder for the way they treated us. We feel that way because we're human!

This is why the story of Jesus' love is so amazing. In the midst of being tested by the very people who would send Him to the cross, Jesus denies Himself the opportunity to prove Himself and instead shows His devotion to love by encouraging one of the Pharisees in the group. This is the example we need to be following. Loving other people is not always easy, but it should be something we are completely devoted to doing. Love God, love others, and when your devotion to love is challenged, do as Jesus did - love more.

Do It: Application

Take an opportunity today to show love where it is hard to give. Remember the story of Mark 12 and how Jesus responded in the midst of adversity.

**Mark 12:29b-31 (The Message)*

"'The Lord Your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these."

**MAKE LOVE THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT IN
YOUR LIFE TODAY!**

**I Am Second: Baron Batch
www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Baron-Batch/*

NOTES:

Cemented & Rooted

chapter: Ephesians 6

DAY #7

Sunday, Jan. 9th, 2011

Key verse(s):

... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love. . .
(Ephesians 3:16-17)

Hear IT: Revelation

There's a lot of value placed on physical strength in our culture. If you turned on your TV right now, at least one channel would be running an infomercial telling you how to "strengthen your core," "build lean muscle," or how to get your "beach body." I am all about taking care of my "Earth Suit" and conditioning my body for God's glory, but I think it's time for Christians to check themselves in our present culture.

While many of us strive to strengthen the exterior version of ourselves, the "inner man" of our soul is looking rather weak and malnourished like an 80-pound weakling buried beneath an emotional weight too large for his frame and begging for a spotter. That's a pretty strong visual, but when I look at how we as Christians carry ourselves in our mind, will, and emotions, I am moved to say something about it.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 reflects the will of God for us that we would be STRONG on the inside! Look at the powerful language used here words like "strengthened," "might," "rooted" and "grounded." He even uses the most powerful word of all, "love."

God desires that His people be constantly focused on His love, that the knowledge of His love in our hearts be so prevailing that our soul would throw down mighty roots into the unshakeable soil of His eternal truth. It simply means

that our nourishment should come from His love and approval rather than man's. Paul also writes that we need to be "grounded," which translates into, "to lay the foundation; to establish." God's love not only gives us roots by which our souls can be strong and healthy, but it also gives us the sturdiness of a rock-solid foundation, cemented on the Rock of Ages. I believe that whenever someone tells us that we are ugly, worthless, not useable for God, unlovable, undesirable or any other nasty lie from the evil one, we will stand strong upon God's love and not crack or falter. Our foundation is built on what He has declared over us.

God says that He loves us eternally, unconditionally, and without measure! It is time for the people of God to look to His love so we can be strong in Him, healthy in our souls and full of love for others. We ought to be strong and secure enough in Christ that we are able to love the person He has created us to be. We are, after all, His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10), created in Christ Jesus for good works which have been mapped out for us since the beginning. We are His loved invention!

See IT: Illustration

I love these lyrics from Joel Age's song, "Invention."

"you're a loved invention,
A creation from the heart;
A supernatural intention,
A cherished piece of art."

Do IT: Application

Spend 10 minutes today memorizing Ephesians 3:16-17. Once you have it down, pray it over yourself. Every time you feel emotionally weak or unloved, pray this verse and watch as your roots go down deep and cement themselves in God's immovable love!

I Am Second: Christine Petric
[www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Christine_Petric/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Christine_Petric/)



WEEK 2

*Fresh
Start*

- #8 Time to Invest
- #9 Bring God up!
- #10 Hearing God's voice
- #11 Let's Take a
walk
- #12 Freedom from
Addiction
- #13 obedience of Faith
- #14 Beauty Isn't only
skin Deep

Time to Invest

chapter: Genesis 8

DAY #8

Monday, Jan. 10th, 2011

Key verse(s):

"While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22)

Hear It: Revelation

Time is an amazing thing. It's something we can invest but never get back. It has been said that time, "keeps on slippin, slippin, slippin into the future," (Steve Miller, "Fly Like An Eagle"), but I believe it's something that can be used to change your future as well! It seems like time is a capsule, a nugget, and a container that encompasses so much. Memories are made in time and without the advancement of time, they wouldn't be worthwhile at all. Some things become more valuable over time. They become classics, a heritage, and a legacy. The scripture above shows the purpose that God set in place with the time system. It's built with potential to bring harvest, cold and heat, the seasons, and the newness of days. Let's consider today where our times goes and look at its potential.

See It: Illustration

Seedtime and harvest, wow! We could discuss the impact of these few words for a long time. The gap between seedtime and harvest is dependant on so many factors, yet scripture says God has set it in place as long as the earth remains. The principle here is one that we could apply to our time management skills. Wherever your time is planted, it will bear fruit. If you are struggling with life slipping by too quickly, I'd ask you where you are placing quiet, still time in your schedule. You might even say you don't have time for it! If we want to find peace, quiet, and abundance of time, we need to seed it into our schedules. Don't you think Jesus had a hectic schedule?

In verse 35 of the 1st chapter of Mark, we are told, "in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there." Jesus made it a priority to get away, even though His abilities were constantly being pulled on. He had abilities to do great things all the time, but the

greatest thing He valued was doing what He saw His Father doing. How do we know which of our daily activities is the greatest, most impacting thing we could be doing? I believe we discover the answer when we find the will of God, hear His voice, and act accordingly. Often in the busy, hectic, and not so peaceful times, we aren't listening and miss divine appointments. It starts with spending time in His presence, hearing His voice, and acting on what you've heard. Your schedule is so much more than just time. Time is a tool to be used for God's glory! The legacy you leave on earth has everything to do with how you invest your time.

Do It: Application

In this season of fresh starts, let's take a look at how we're spending our time and how we could better set a value system in place. You will see what you value very quickly when you look at your weekly schedule. Take a few moments today to reflect on how you are investing your time. What can you do to bring priority to your quiet time this year? Do you need to put up some boundaries?

Notes:

I Am Second: Tim Ross
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Tim_Ross/



Bring God Up!

chapter: Acts 16

DAY #9

Tuesday, Jan. 11th, 2011

Key verse(s):

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30b-31)

Hear It: Revelation

This scripture is pretty amazing. Here we have a jailor in charge of the prison holding Paul and Silas, who, after a bit of chaos, falls to his face and asks what he must do to be saved!

Last year, Pastor Dan shared that 2010 was the year for "Positioning for Breakthrough." The jailor here was in no position for breakthrough in the natural, but as the chapter finishes we find him and his family being born again. Talk about breakthrough! Little did he know, when he was put in charge of monitoring Paul and Silas that night, his life was going to change forever. You see, the jailor's breakthrough was tied to Paul and Silas' preparation for it. Scripture says in verse 25 of the same chapter that Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns when a huge earthquake shook the jail. Because of the earthquake, the walls came down around him, meaning the detainees would be running free and his job would be lost. God, however, had other plans in mind.

See It: Illustration

When was the last time someone asked you what they have to do to be saved? In my life it's not everyday someone comes running up to me with that question. It's more likely that in the midst of living life, someone will begin to see that there is something great in me. They may also see how a supernatural God would be the only way certain things could possibly be occurring. In those moments of question, I hope you're willing to bring God up. You see, when the jailor asked the \$64,000 question, Paul and Silas could have said something like, "Wow that was a big earthquake!" They could have changed the subject out of fear that he might ask a question too deep for them to answer, but instead they didn't and a man and his family were saved.

We often find ourselves in God-ordained moments with people we have lived our lives next to for moments, hours, days, or several years. Questions sometimes come up that would open the door perfectly for you to bring God up, yet sometimes we shy back. In 2 Timothy 4:2, scripture says to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." Are you ready?

Do It: Application

I believe we prepare for moments like these all our lives. God is setting us up in places to preach the Word. It might be in our actions more frequently than with words, but you need to purpose to bring God up. Just be reminded that even when someone asks a simple question like, "How was your weekend?", it's an opportunity to bring God up. You can easily use that as an opportunity to tell them about the life-changing message you heard at ECC that weekend. When you are asked how you have so much joy, bring God up! Rather than waiting for the person to run up to you to ask what must they do to be saved, let's be ready in season and out. Be proactive! Bring God Up!

 I Am Second: Mike Huckabee
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Mike_Huckabee/

 I Am Second: Stephen Baldwin
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Stephen_Baldwin/

Notes:

Hearing God's Voice

chapter: John 10

DAY #10

Wednesday, Jan. 12th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27)

Hear It: Revelation

Jesus presents a seemingly simple scenario. Which would you rather follow, the Good Shepherd or the thief? It seems like an easy answer. Everyone knows who they'd rather follow, but the real question is, who are you actually following?

In this verse, Jesus is referring to his role as the Good Shepherd. He tells the disciples that His sheep (followers) know the sound of His voice and know to follow Him. Sheep have an amazing ability to only listen to the voice of their shepherd and completely tune out anyone else. If only humans had that same talent.

What happens when a stranger enters the sheep pen? The sheep become confused and they scatter. The same thing happens to people. If we start listening to a voice other than the voice of the Good Shepherd, we become confused. Jesus often refers to this stranger as a "thief." That thief represents the devil whose sole purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy.

It is extremely important for Christians to be able to know and recognize the voice of God. Hearing His voice will lead us away from confusion and into green pastures. He will lead us to life, give us shelter from storms, and protect us from wolves.

See It: Illustration

Several years ago, I came to a point in my life where I needed to hear the voice of God. I had been attending church to keep up the appearance of a Christian lifestyle,

but I was listening to the wrong voice. During this time, I found myself at a crossroad. I either had to find God and follow His will for my life, or I would walk down the path of selfish ambition listening to the voice of the thief.

I decided to go on a search for God. I bought a new Bible and started actively seeking the truth. I opened up that Bible and wrote a reminder on the first page. It said, "Wanting desperately to find Jesus and wanting to change my life for good. The search to see if God is real - May 1st, 2002."

Not long after that, I discovered God for myself and began a personal relationship with Him. Eight years have gone by and I can say with total confidence that I know the voice of my Shepherd. Following that voice has never led me astray.

Do It: Application

Ask yourself this question - do I know the voice of God and can I follow it with confidence? If you are like me, you might have a hard time hearing His voice at first. Continue pressing into God's Word, worship Him and be open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. God desires that you know His voice and follow the Good Shepherd throughout life. Listen for Him. He is speaking and He will never lead you astray.

NOTES:

 I Am Second: James Caldemeyer
www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/James-Caldemeyer/ 

Let's Take a Walk

chapter: 1 Corinthians 9

DAY #11

Thursday, Jan. 13th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

THOUGH I AM FREE AND BELONG TO NO MAN, I MAKE MYSELF A SLAVE TO EVERYONE, TO WIN AS MANY AS POSSIBLE. TO THE JEWS I BECAME LIKE A JEW, TO WIN THE JEWS. TO THOSE UNDER THE LAW I BECAME LIKE ONE UNDER THE LAW (THOUGH I MYSELF AM NOT UNDER THE LAW), SO AS TO WIN THOSE UNDER THE LAW. TO THOSE NOT HAVING THE LAW I BECAME LIKE ONE NOT HAVING THE LAW (THOUGH I AM NOT FREE FROM GOD'S LAW BUT I AM UNDER CHRIST'S LAW), SO AS TO WIN THOSE NOT HAVING THE LAW. TO THE WEAK I BECAME WEAK, TO WIN THE WEAK. (1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-22A)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

IN HIS LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF CORINTH, PAUL SAYS, "I IMMERSSED MYSELF INTO THEIR CULTURE. I WASN'T COMPROMISING THE TRUTH. I SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND EVERYONE, TO KNOW WHERE THEY WERE COMING FROM, SO THAT THEY COULD UNDERSTAND ME." HE CONTINUES IN VERSE TWENTY-TWO WITH HIS MOTIVE - "I HAVE BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN SO THAT BY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS I MIGHT SAVE SOME. I DO THIS ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL."

I THINK THE BEST WAY FOR WALLS TO COME DOWN IN PEOPLE'S LIVES IS TO BECOME A TRUSTED FRIEND. TO DO THAT, WE MUST CONSTANTLY INVEST IN FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE OF CHURCH, BOTH FOR THE RELATIONSHIP'S SAKE AND FOR ETERNITY'S SAKE. WE MUST DO LIFE TOGETHER WITH PEOPLE BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. IF WE DON'T, OVER TIME, WE BECOME INWARD-FOCUSED. WE BECOME FOCUSED ON OUR OWN SELF NEEDS AND ULTIMATELY IMplode.

ONE PLACE WE SEE THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK IS IN THE LETTER PAUL WROTE TO THE CORINTHIANS. HE WRITES, "I INVESTED IN RELATIONSHIPS FOR THE SAKE OF ETERNITY; MY OWN NEEDS TOOK A BACK SEAT TO THEIRS AND I BECAME A FRIEND TO OTHERS FOR THEIR SAKE; FOR THE SAKE OF THE FRIENDSHIP, FOR THE SAKE OF ETERNITY."

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

THERE WAS A STUDY A FEW YEARS BACK THAT WAS DONE ON PEOPLE WHO NEVER WENT TO CHURCH BUT HAD RECENTLY STARTED ATTENDING. THEY WERE ASKED THE QUESTION, "WHAT WAS IT THAT MADE YOU START ATTENDING ON A REGULAR BASIS?" THEY ALL SAID, "CONSISTENT ENCOURAGEMENT FROM A TRUSTED FRIEND." THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT MADE THE CHURCH INVITING AND IT WAS THOSE RELATIONSHIPS THAT ULTIMATELY BECAME THE DOOR THAT GOT THEM INTO CHURCH. THIS IS WHAT IS KNOWN AS "RELATIONAL EVANGELISM." THE BEST

SNAPSHOT OF RELATIONAL EVANGELISM TOOK PLACE IN 1985 IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND BETWEEN PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN AND MIKAL GORBACHEV, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOVIET UNION. IT WAS A CRITICAL MOMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IF YOU WERE AROUND THEN, IT SEEMED LIKE THE ENTIRE WORLD WAS ON EDGE.

IT WAS AT THE OPENING OF THE SUMMIT WHEN REAGAN STATED, "THE REASON WE DON'T TRUST YOU IS..." AND HE BEGAN TO LIST SEVERAL VIOLATIONS. GORBACHEV RETORTED BACK, "YOU ARE NOT MY PROSECUTOR. YOU ARE NOT MY TEACHER AND I AM NOT YOUR STUDENT." THINGS CONTINUED LIKE THIS ALL MORNING.

AFTER LUNCH, REAGAN APPROACHED GORBACHEV AND SAID, "I THINK WE SHOULD GO FOR A WALK." THEY LEFT THEIR TEAMS BEHIND, EXCEPT FOR AN INTERPRETER, AND WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A FIFTEEN MINUTE WALK TURNED INTO AN HOUR AND A HALF WALK WHERE THEY TALKED ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES, MOVIES, AND EVEN GOD. IT WAS THROUGH THIS CONVERSATION THAT THEY BECAME FRIENDS.

HISTORY RECORDS THAT WALLS HAD TO COME DOWN PERSONALLY BEFORE THEY COULD COME DOWN FOR COUNTRIES. THE FRIENDSHIP THAT STARTED THAT DAY BECAME THE CATALYST THAT ENABLED THE WALLS OF COMMUNISM TO COME DOWN. THIS SHOWS THAT THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS CAN ACCOMPLISH MUCH BIGGER THINGS THAN JUST FRIENDSHIP.

DO IT: APPLICATION

"I IMMERSSED MYSELF INTO THEIR CULTURE. I WASN'T COMPROMISING THE TRUTH." AS LONG AS YOU ARE INVESTING IN YOUR FRIENDS OUTSIDE CHURCH, YOUR HEART WILL STAY IN THE RIGHT PLACE. MAKE SURE TO LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT AND ABIDE BY THE BOUNDARIES GOD GIVES YOU. YOU DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOU CARE TO START INVESTING; YOU INVEST IN SOMEONE'S LIFE IN ORDER TO CARE. IF YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT SOMEONE, IT IS BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT INVESTING IN THE RELATIONSHIP. WHEN YOU MAKE AN INVESTMENT IN SOMEONE, SOMETHING CHANGES IN YOU. INVITE SOMEONE TO "GO FOR A WALK" TODAY AND SEE THE WALLS COME DOWN.

-PASTOR ERIC PARTIN, SHORELINE CHURCH
DESTIN, FL

 I Am Second: Wayne Huizenga
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Wayne_Huizenga/

Freedom from Addiction

chapter: 1 Corinthians 10

DAY #12

Friday, Jan. 14th, 2011

Key verses:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Hear It: Revelation

An addiction is anything to which people have given themselves over, apart from Christ. As we just read, all temptations that we face are common, but God has a plan for our lasting freedom. The real root of the problem is idolatry, or the love of something that grips our hearts more firmly than the desire to obey God's plan for our lives. Love will drive us toward something, and hatred will drive us away from it. Love and hatred are choices. Therefore, to be set free from addiction, we must choose to hate that behavior because it steals our affections from the One who loves us most, Jesus. It's all about love and surrender to God, and hatred of anything that steals from that. It may not even be something illegal. It may be something that God has asked you to give up, yet you haven't chosen that step of obedience. Even harmless video games and TV shows can win our heart's affections and become idols.

See It: Illustration

There was a time in my life when I repented of lust. But, being a girl, I knew that men were not just going to vanish from my sight. I talked to my accountability partner about it, and she agreed to check in with me. But in the end, the choice was mine. Was I going to love God more and keep my eyes for my future husband

one day? The test came quickly. I pulled up to my house one day and accidentally locked my house and car keys in my car. I gured I would wait on the back porch swing until my roommate came home to let me in, but as soon as I sat in the swing, I looked up and saw a well-built young man my age working on my neighbor's roof without his shirt on. By God's grace, I chose the escape route, which was walking out of the neighborhood, up Fiske, across Barton, and north on US 1 to my roommate's work place to get a key. Pretty inconvenient, but well worth the freedom from sin, and well worth the testimony! I privately told a friend from Bible study the story, and she, in turn, told her friend. That friend heard the story and decided that he wanted to marry a girl like that and he did! He is my best friend and husband of 8 years now. What blessing of obedience! If you are having trouble putting away that thing that you have given yourself over to, it is because you still love it. We must love Jesus more than anything, and freedom flows quickly through love's motivation.

Do It: Application

If you cherish the voice of God asking you to lay down an idol in your life, then begin with repentance. Whatever the sin, be assured God will forgive. Next, if the temptation continues, choose the escape route. God promises it will always be there, so look for it. Lastly, get accountable. Find a good Christian friend, whether a spouse, or a friend of the same gender to hold you to it. Honest accountability is an amazing key to walking in freedom. If you need a fresh start in dealing with a certain temptation, your first step is to be obedient. God will set you free!

 I Am Second: Nate Larkin
[www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Nate_Larkin/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Nate_Larkin/)

Obedience of Faith

DAY #13

chapter: Isaiah 1 & Matthew 21

Saturday, Jan. 15th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

IF YOU ARE WILLING AND OBEDIENT, YOU SHALL EAT THE GOOD OF THE LAND... (ISAIAH 1:19)

"BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK? A MAN HAD TWO SONS, AND HE CAME TO THE FIRST AND SAID, 'SON, GO WORK TODAY IN THE VINEYARD.' AND HE ANSWERED, 'I WILL NOT'; BUT AFTERWARD HE REGRETTED IT AND WENT. THE MAN CAME TO THE SECOND AND SAID THE SAME THING; AND HE ANSWERED, 'I WILL, SIR'; BUT HE DID NOT GO. WHICH OF THE TWO DID THE WILL OF HIS FATHER?" THEY SAID, "THE FIRST." JESUS SAID TO THEM, "TRULY I SAY TO YOU THAT THE TAX COLLECTORS AND PROSTITUTES WILL GET INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEFORE YOU. FOR JOHN CAME TO YOU IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND YOU DID NOT BELIEVE HIM; BUT THE TAX COLLECTORS AND PROSTITUTES DID BELIEVE HIM; AND YOU, SEEING THIS, DID NOT EVEN FEEL REMORSE AFTERWARD SO AS TO BELIEVE HIM." (MATTHEW 21:28-32)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

I WANT TO EAT THE GOOD OF THE LAND. DOESN'T EVERYBODY? I BELIEVE EVERYBODY WANTS TO, BUT NOT EVERYBODY ACTUALLY DOES. WHY NOT? IS GOD TEASING US WITH HIS WORD? I DON'T BELIEVE SO. FOR US TO EAT THE GOOD OF THE LAND, THERE ARE TWO CONDITIONS. WE MUST BE BOTH WILLING AND OBEDIENT TO DO THE WILL OF THE LORD. I BELIEVE BEING OBEDIENT IS EASIER THAN BEING WILLING. OBEDIENCE CAN BE SEEN THROUGH A PERSON'S ACTIONS AND THEY CAN KNOW WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY WHETHER OR NOT THEY'RE BEING OBEDIENT. WILLINGNESS IS MUCH TRICKIER. IT ISN'T SOMETHING THAT CAN BE SEEN WITH THE NATURAL EYE. IT HAS TO DO WITH A PERSON'S HEART AND INTENTIONS. DISCOVERING YOUR LEVEL OF WILLINGNESS CAN BE DONE BY ASKING GOD IF YOUR OBEDIENCE TO HIM IS BASED UPON WHETHER YOU WANT TO BE OBEDIENT OR IF YOU HAVE TO. BEING WILLING IS AN ATTITUDE OF THE HEART. NOBODY CAN SEE IT BUT GOD. IT REMAINS HIDDEN LONGER BECAUSE IT IS HARDER TO DETECT. TIME IS USUALLY WHAT REVEALS A PERSON'S WILLINGNESS...OR LACK THEREOF.

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

MY SPIRITUAL FATHER ONCE SHARED A STORY WITH ME ABOUT HOW FOR ONE YEAR OF MINISTRY HE HAD BEEN OBEDIENT TO DO GOD'S WILL. HOWEVER, IN THE MIDST OF HIS OBEDIENCE, HE WAS COMING UP SHORT FINANCIALLY. HE TALKED TO GOD ABOUT HIS SITUATION AND ABOUT HOW GOOD HE HAD IT BEFORE HE OBEYED GOD IN THIS SPECIFIC AREA. NOW AFTER ONE YEAR, HE WAS \$1,200 SHORT, HIS KIDS WERE NOT ADEQUATELY DRESSED, HIS CAR HAD BALD TIRES AND HE COULDN'T

Beauty Isn't Only Skin Deep

chapter: 1 Peter 3

DAY #14

Sunday, Jan. 16th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

(1 Peter 3:3-4)

Hear It: Revelation

What is the hidden person of the heart? The heart is the central organ of the body and, although we cannot see it, we would die without it. The human spirit is very similar. It is also hidden and when our spirit dies, so does our body. This verse tells us that our human spirit should reflect that of a "gentle and quiet spirit." This probably isn't appealing to everyone. The words, "gentle" and "quiet" are often associated with the description of someone who is weak or timid. What the verse is actually describing is a person's attitude — someone who is friendly, warm, patient and kind.

See It: Illustration

The song, "Beauty Is Only Skin Deep," is a 1966 single recorded by The Temptations. It revolves around inner beauty and its value over physical appearance. It tells the story of a man who is frustrated with dating attractive women with "ugly" attitudes. "She may be fine on the outside, but so untrue on the inside," is a typical lyric.

Men are visual creatures. Every bride wants to look beautiful in the eyes of her husband-to-be when she walks down the aisle. I got married when I was 19 years old — nearly 35 years ago. The effects of gravity have certainly taken over since then! I see a lot more wrinkles when I look in the mirror and I've also put on a few extra pounds over the years.

What does my husband see when he looks at me now? I certainly don't look like a 19-year-old anymore, but I know what he sees. He sees the real me. It is because of Christ on the inside that I am still beautiful on the outside.

I've got news for you. If you get married solely on the basis of looks, you are in for a big surprise. Things change over the years. When the pressure is turned up, the real you will always come out and it can be pretty ugly. My husband and I still argue and disagree; only now it happens less often. We have the same basic personalities. I fell in love with my husband not only because he is handsome, but because of who he is on the inside. And he still thinks I'm beautiful after all these years! (Men, don't ever forget to tell your wife how beautiful she is!)

Do It: Application

Women, appearance is still important, so spend time on the way you look. You don't have to look like a supermodel, just do the best you can! But even more important than outward appearance is working every day to develop your inner beauty. Start small. Spend some time praying and ask God how you can apply the "quiet and gentle" spirit to your personality. It'll be different for everyone, so don't feel like you need to fit into a cookie-cutter type of person.

Men, inner and outer beauty is important for you as well. Women aren't as visual as you are but a well-kept appearance will always be appreciated. Think about how the words, "quiet and gentle," can be seen in a man. Spend some time focusing on your integrity and write down some ways you can strengthen it.

Finally, think about a couple you know who has been married a long time and has a good solid marriage. Write down some traits of their marriage that you would like to see in yours. If you're bold enough, sit down with them and ask them to share the secrets to their success. If you're married, start applying these traits to your marriage. If you're single, take these tips and start to strengthen them now. This will only benefit you when your wedding day comes.

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WEEK 3



- #15 servolution
- #16 overcoming criticism
- #17 Eat Right
- #18 Fresh Friends
- #19 Seventy Times
Seven
- #20 Breaking Barriers
to Your Dreams
- #21 You are the Minister

Servolution

chapter: John 13

DAY #15

Monday, Jan. 17th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

IF I THEN, YOUR LORD AND TEACHER, HAVE WASHED YOUR FEET, YOU ALSO OUGHT TO WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET. FOR I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE, THAT YOU SHOULD DO AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU. (JOHN 13:14-15)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

AWKWARD, IS HOW I WOULD HAVE FELT. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN AWKWARD TO STAND THERE WITH MY FRIENDS AND COWORKERS WHILE THE ONE WE ALL LOOKED UP TO, THE ONE WE RESPECTED AND CALLED TEACHER AND LORD, WAS GETTING READY TO WASH OUR FEET. I THINK THAT IS WHY PETER RESPONDED THE WAY HE DID - AWKWARD. SERVING COMES SO EASILY TO SOME OF US BUT IT'S HARDER FOR OTHERS. JESUS WAS TEACHING REVOLUTIONARIES THAT WERE GOING TO CHANGE THE WORLD. HE WAS STARTING THE REVOLUTION BY SERVING - A SERVOLUTION! HIS MAIN POINT WAS THAT HIS DISCIPLES NEEDED TO BE SERVANTS FIRST. IN FACT, I BELIEVE HE WAS TEACHING THEM THIS BECAUSE IF THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTANDING SERVING, THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HIS MISSION. REMEMBER, THIS WAS ONE OF THE LAST MOMENTS JESUS HAD TO TEACH AND DEMONSTRATE HOW TO LIVE. HE WAS GOING TO THE CROSS IN LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, SO HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT LESSON TO TEACH.

THERE IS A GREAT BOOK BY DINO RIZZO WHO IS A PART OF ARC, THE ASSOCIATION OF RELATED CHURCHES, WHO WE PARTNERED WITH TO PLANT SHORELINE CHURCH IN DESTIN AND WE ALSO HAVE JOINED AS A CHURCH, TO PLANT CHURCHES ALL OVER AMERICA. DINO HAS WRITTEN A BOOK DESTINED TO BECOME A CLASSIC CALLED, SERVOLUTION. JESUS WAS GOING TO THE CROSS TO START A REVOLUTION ON THE EARTH AND THE CATALYST TO KEEP THIS REVOLUTION ALIVE WAS SERVING. THE REAL QUESTION FOR US IS, HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR OWN WALK WITH THE LORD?

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

FOR ME, IT STARTED AT THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LITTLETON, COLORADO. I USHERED, GREETED, LED A LIFE GROUP AND TAUGHT IN CHILDREN'S CHURCH, ALL AS A BABY CHRISTIAN. THEN WHEN I STARTED AT A NEW CHURCH PLANT, I SET UP FOR THE SERVICE BEFORE ANY ONE ELSE ARRIVED. SERVING IN SECRET ALWAYS PRECEDES SERVING IN PUBLIC. DAVID WORSHIPPED WITH THOSE FEW SHEEP LONG BEFORE HE PLAYED FOR KING SAUL. AFTER SETTING UP FOR THE SERVICE, I SERVED IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AND TAUGHT THE SMALLEST SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS IN THE WORLD - 3 PEOPLE - BECAUSE GOD KNOWS WE MUST LEARN TO SERVE THE SMALL, OVERLOOKED AND INSIGNIFICANT IF WE ARE EVER GOING TO SERVE THE MULTITUDES. AFTER FOUR YEARS, I BECAME THE PASTOR OF THAT CHURCH! GOD IS NOT LOOKING FOR THE ACCOMPLISHED AS MUCH AS HE IS LOOKING FOR THE AVAILABLE. AN IMPORTANT LESSON HE TAUGHT ME WAS THAT IF WE CAN'T LEARN TO SERVE HIS CHURCH, HOW WILL WE LEARN TO REACH A LOST AND HURTING WORLD?

DO IT: APPLICATION

- * JUST DO IT - NIKE'S SLOGAN - MAKE A DECISION TO GET STARTED.
- * IDENTIFY A NEED - LOOK AROUND YOUR CHURCH, NEIGHBORHOOD OR COMMUNITY, FIND A NEED AND FILL IT. MOST PEOPLE THINK THE CHURCH IS JUST LOOKING FOR HANDOUTS. WOULDN'T IT BE REFRESHING IF THE CHURCH ASKED THE COMMUNITY, "WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?"
- * GET EQUIPPED - READ THE BOOK, SERVOOLUTION, AND GO TO THEIR WEBSITE - WWW.SERVOOLUTION.ORG. WHO
- * DOES YOUR HEART HAVE A BURDEN FOR?
GET CONNECTED - FIND SOME LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE, INTRODUCE YOUR IDEA TO YOUR LIFE GROUP, OR JOIN A MINISTRY WITHIN OUR CHURCH THAT IS ALREADY MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

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Overcoming Criticism

chapter: Romans 13

DAY #16

Tuesday, Jan. 18th, 2011

Key verse(s):

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. (Romans 13:1)

Hear It: Revelation

Read the verse again. That is a tough pill for a lot of people to swallow! All authority has been put in place by God? Yes! And all of those bosses, teachers, parents, and pastors deserve our loyalty. Although it is possible to be critical of those who are under us in "age and rank," I want to look at our relationships with those who are over us in one way or another. I think it is most important that we understand how difficult it is to live in a society whose government is by and for the people, and still understand Kingdom principles of the Bible when it comes to being subject to authority. It is our wonderful privilege and right to vote for the candidates we choose in the United States, but God never gave us the right to vote on our bosses, teachers, and church leaders. It is up to us to trust God as we submit to the authorities in our lives, that they are accountable to God, not to us. We are not anointed to judge them. It can be difficult to trust authorities in our lives because they are real people who are capable of making mistakes, just as we are. However, it is much easier to find mistakes in others than ourselves! Let's look at how King David handled this type of situation.

See It: Illustration

I was very challenged a couple of years ago by 1 Samuel 24:10 where David says to King Saul, "will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed." King Saul had turned his back on God, yet David continued to be loyal to his authority. He trusted that God would take care of Saul without David coming against him - not in his heart, not with his mouth, and not in his mind. I had a hard time wrapping my mind around this concept, and before long, I found that my "discerning heart" had become a critical heart. I would find myself thinking critical thoughts against my church leaders, and felt as though it was my right to pick them apart as I felt necessary.

The problem with this is that my heart became hardened, and before long, I was unable to receive from them, thinking that they were not able to hear from God as keenly as I could. The amazing thing is that when God showed me the sinful thought patterns I had developed and the critical spirit I had embraced, I repented, and I was immediately able to receive from my pastors again. I realized that they really did hear from God, but my critical spirit had blocked me from receiving from them. I realized that God had not anointed me to judge them. They are accountable to God, not me. We have all disagreed with a teacher, boss, pastor, or parent at some point in our lives, and there is nothing wrong with that. It's fine to have an opinion, but we are responsible for the attitude of our hearts, and keeping the enemy from coming in our heart's door with criticism.

Do It: Application

Let God search your heart and ask Him to reveal any areas where you have become critical of authority in your life. Repent and trust Him to bless you as you come into the safety and peace of living under authority.

Notes:

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Eat Right

chapter: Psalm 107

DAY #17

Wednesday, Jan. 19th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. (Psalm 107:9)

Hear It: Revelation

Do you know anyone who is in need of a lifeline? Psalm 107 talks about four different types of people in this sort of situation. The first part of the chapter (vs. 4-9) is for those who are searching. These people might be wandering, hungry, thirsty, homeless or near death. Part two of this chapter (vs. 10-16) talks about prisoners bound by chains either physically or emotionally. Part three (vs. 17-20) is for those who are sad. It describes people who are distressed and crying out for the Lord. Lastly, part four (vs. 23-30) talks about those who are in the tough times of life describing people who are in storms, tossed around by the sea and wind. The key to this scripture is that everyone who is in these situations and in need of a lifeline is crying out for the Lord's help. God is our rescuer and will save us when we cry out for help.

See It: Illustration

Food is an important part of everyone's life. We need it to survive. Without careful responsibility, though, it can become a hindrance. Throughout my life, beginning in the second grade, I have been known as an overweight person. I have often attempted to lose weight through exercise and dieting and have succeeded a couple times. Four years ago, I lost 117 pounds and thought I had the problem on lockdown. Just over three years later, I found myself weighing more than I had ever weighed before and feeling completely hopeless.

Last year was the year of miraculous breakthrough here at East Coast Christian Center. I wanted so badly to have a breakthrough in this area. I cried out to God and

He answered. He told me to eat healthier - to eat half of what I was currently eating and to eat more often. I started there and when I needed to do more, He showed me what the next step needed to be. I started eating lots of vegetables and lean meats and cut out fried food and fatty condiments. I even bought a bike and rode it anywhere I could.

I am writing this devotional not at my goal weight, but I am on my way. So far, I have lost 82 pounds. I look forward to seeing where I will be in three months when this devotional is printed.

Do It: Application

If your story is similar to mine and you feel like you're stuck in a rut, cry out to God and ask for help. If you want to lose weight or even if you just want to gain more energy, try eating smaller portions more often. Eat more vegetables and less complex carbohydrates. Drink more water and less sugary drinks. Stick with it and you will definitely see results! If weight loss isn't your goal, use this opportunity to check your eating habits and make sure what you're eating is healthy and that your portions are appropriate for your body type. Always remember that God is your strength and in your weaknesses, His power is made perfect.

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Fresh Friends

DAY #18

chapter: Proverbs 18 & 27

Thursday, Jan. 20th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

A man who has friends must himself be friendly,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.
(Proverbs 27:17)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

All of us are prone to let friends into our lives that don't sharpen us. Do you have any friendships where you feel like you are doing all the work? There are certain people you keep around because they've just always been there. Bishop Dale Bronner has said that there are three things that will influence our lives. They are the books we read, the people we meet and the friends we have.

Here's the question: If Christians have only Christian friends, how do we reach those who need Jesus? The answer is found in the life of Jesus. It also can be seen as a simple bull's eye. The very center of the bull's eye represents the close friends that influence your life. Jesus had three Peter, James and John. The next ring represents the very outside of your heart and the people you spend time with. For Jesus, this was the other disciples, his family, Mary, Martha, Lazarus and others. The outside ring of the bull's eye consists of the people God has called you to reach for Him. This circle for Jesus included all the people the Jews rejected the Samaritans, tax collectors, prostitutes, drunkards, and so on. It is important to establish friendships with people who need Christ in order to reach them for the Kingdom. Who are the people that God has called you to reach?

This year is all about fresh starts. A fresh start in this area would be to prioritize your friendships. Who needs to move into the outside ring? Who needs to be closer to your heart? Who has God specifically placed in your life so you can share the gospel with them?

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

At one time, Michael Jackson had over seven million friends on Facebook and over nine million fans. Just recently, Lady Gaga surpassed him and

now has over ten million fans. Despite having so many friends and fans, I wonder how many people could be counted as a true friend to either of these two celebrities.

A friend is someone that loves you and truly cares about you. They are someone who believes the best about you, but also encourages you toward greatness.

Zig Ziglar once said, "If you go looking for a friend, you're going to find they're very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you'll find them everywhere." Finding friends can be a lifelong challenge so don't be discouraged if it takes a while. Just continue to be friendly and people will be drawn to you. In the meantime, rely on Jesus as both a friend and confidant.

DO IT: APPLICATION

1. Take a look at your friends and see if you need to reprioritize them.
2. Go and be a true friend.

 I Am Second: Shannon Culpepper
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NOTES:

Seventy Times Seven

chapter: Matthew 18

DAY #19

Friday, Jan. 21st, 2011

Key Verse(s):

Then Peter came up to Him and said, Lord, how many times may my brother sin against me and I forgive him and let it go? [As many as] up to seven times? Jesus answered him, I tell you, not up to seven times, but seventy times seven! (Matthew 18:21-22)

Hear It: Revelation

I believe Jesus has given us the key to living a life of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Everyone, at one point or another, has been hurt by another person. Maybe it was a parent telling you that you don't add up; maybe a friend wronged you; maybe a boss passed you up for the promotion and gave it to your co-worker; or maybe you're holding unforgiveness towards yourself for a past mistake. Whatever it may be, Jesus commands us to forgive each other (or yourself) "seventy times seven." Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. It's a daily decision to give up your right of being offended. Forgiveness is not denying that you've been hurt or wronged, it's releasing that offense. Holding onto unforgiveness will only lead to bitterness, which has been proven to make you sick, depressed, and anxious. On the contrary, forgiveness allows you to have better relationships, a healthier body, and an enjoyable and more peaceful life altogether. Quit looking at yourself as a victim of a situation and look at yourself as having the victory through Christ Jesus!

See It: Illustration

Many years ago, as my husband (then fiancé) and I were fast approaching our wedding day, it was made known to me that a mutual friend of ours had intentions of breaking up our relationship because she felt I was wrong for him and that she was supposed to be with him. At first I didn't believe it, but it turned out to be true. I was shocked and hurt, considering the young lady had worked very hard at becoming our friend. I felt very deceived and began to have nightmares, oftentimes waking up sobbing in the middle of the night. One night, I woke up crying. My dad came into my room and taught me the key to overcoming this situation - forgiveness.

He said that I needed to forgive her and begin to pray that the blinders on her eyes would be lifted. I needed to see her through the eyes of compassion rather than anger, because although she had sin in her life, she was a child of God whom the enemy had deceived. When I changed my perspective, it allowed me to completely forgive her and the Lord began to show me how to pray for her. We then had to take the steps necessary to protect ourselves. She could no longer be our friend, and sadly, we completely separated ourselves from her. I did, however, continue to lift her up in prayer. The more I prayed for her, the more compassion I felt towards her. As I prayed, I grew more confident in Jesus, and I knew I could trust Him to protect my husband and myself from this destructive plan, and as I made a choice to forgive her in faith, the feelings of anger left.

Do It: Application

Think about it. Is there any unforgiveness in your life? Is there a situation where someone wronged you that you're holding onto? Maybe you need to forgive yourself for a past mistake. Give yourself a fresh start and make the choice to forgive, just as Jesus did for you. Re-occurring thoughts may come up about how bad this person wronged you, or how terrible of a person you are for what you did in the past. When this happens, take those thoughts captive unto the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5) and say "I forgive _____". Here is a good confession for today: "I am the body of Christ and Satan has no power over me, for I overcome evil with good."

www.newcreationconfession.com

I Am Second: Rod Bayron
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I Am Second: Jarrett Stephens
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Breaking Barriers to Your Dreams

chapter: 2 Corinthians 10

DAY #20

Saturday, Jan. 22nd, 2011

Key Verse(s):

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Hear It: Revelation

The devil is a defeated foe, but he is still seeking whom he may devour. Using deception, he tries to keep us defeated so we will not fulfill our destiny. Paul shares in this passage that even though we live in a fleshly body, we have mighty, spiritual weapons. Using the word of God as our spiritual sword, we can bring "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." When we pull down strongholds, we are breaking the barriers to our dreams.

See It: Illustration

Early one January morning, I awoke with a start. The clock read 5:00 a.m. As I sat up in bed, I felt the presence of fear in my room. I could almost picture a stone-faced figure sitting in a chair with arms crossed in defiance. Thoughts attacked my mind, you're not going any further than you did before, so why don't you just quit?

I knew immediately this accusation was in regard to my decision to pick up my dream to write and take it to the next level. (I had scheduled a prayer meeting with a friend that day as I prepared for a writers conference.) Feelings of defeat pulled at my chest as the negative thoughts swirled in my head. Wait a minute! Not this time! I threw the covers off, got out of bed, and went to my computer to write a story about a woman who was tormented by fear and rejection. About to lose the battle, she realizes she has a powerful weapon — the word of God. She speaks that word and defeats her enemies.

When I finished writing, fear and rejection were replaced with a strong conviction that I had the victory. I would no longer believe the lies of the enemy that had held me captive for so long. I shared the story with my friend, and told her, "This piece is one

of the two selections I will send to the conference for review. I'm sending a message to the devil."

A month later I attended that writers conference and received an award for that story. I came home with tangible evidence that I had indeed gone farther than I ever had before. The devil's lies had been exposed. A month after that, I received my first article contract.

I believe that the barriers of fear and rejection had to be broken in my life before I could jump start my dream. I had the weapon all along, but I had to speak that word with authority. I chose to get out of bed that morning instead of covering under the covers. The very thing the devil tried to keep me from doing became his downfall. I wielded the sword of the spirit, and my life has never been the same since.

Do It: Application

What barriers are standing in the way of your dream? Take a few moments to ask God to reveal the barriers.

Then take the following steps:

- Identify the barriers to your dream.
- Look up three scriptures dealing with the barriers.
- Write the scriptures on 3 x 5 cards for easy access and memorize them.
- Speak those scriptures out loud daily.

 I Am Second: Josh Hamilton
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You Are the Minister

chapter: 2 Corinthians 5

DAY #21

Sunday, Jan. 23rd, 2011

Key verse(s):

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Hear It: Revelation

You have been reconciled to God. You were lost in your sin until someone told you that you were no longer guilty. In other words, your sins were paid for by Jesus' death on the cross. You received it and are a new creation in Christ. The next step in this wonderful transformation is learning that you are a minister. According to 2 Corinthians 5:18, your ministry is the ministry of reconciliation. You have been deputized and anointed to carry the same word of reconciliation to those who are in the same condition you once were. It is your responsibility to tell people the same message someone told you - that you are no longer guilty of your sin because of Jesus Christ and accepting His salvation is the atonement for sin.

You might be thinking that speaking to someone about salvation is out of your comfort zone. And you're probably right, but Christ has a funny way of bringing a person's strengths out of their weaknesses. Do you think it was within Jesus' comfort zone to go to the cross? What about the person that shared Christ with you? Sharing your heart with someone is a big risk and they probably felt uncomfortable doing so. But now that you've accepted salvation, it's your turn and your responsibility to show someone else. God is faithful to set up divine appointments with people who are in need of reconciliation with God. Your part is to simply share the good news. It may seem uncomfortable, but the words you'll share with them, as simple as they may be, might be the very words they need to hear at that very moment. The end result is well worth it, wouldn't you say?

See It: Illustration

My wife and I were recently eating at a restaurant when we noticed a person sitting at another table who used to attend our church. My first reaction was to scoot my chair around so I wouldn't make eye contact with them. As I repositioned my chair, I felt the Lord say to me, "I've been trying to set this up for a while." I repented. As we were leaving, we greeted the person. They explained their circumstances for having to leave the church for a short time to care for a sick loved one. We were introduced to their lost family members and made a connection with them. Afterwards, I felt like the Lord said, "Well done. Now watch how I'm going to use that encounter in the future."

Do It: Application

Take a moment right now to thank God for your ministry of reconciliation. Tell Him that you are willing to talk to anyone He brings to you about the good news of their sins being forgiven. Be on the lookout for that appointment. God will be faithful to send someone your way.

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Notes:



*Fresh
Start*

WEEK 4

- #22 Anointed and Disappointed
- #23 Building Your Dream - step by step
- #24 Another Level of Prayer
- #25 when the Right Time Comes
- #26 Near and Far
- #27 wilderness wells of Praise
- #28 win a witness

Anointed & Disappointed

chapter: 2 Thessalonians 1

DAY #22

Monday, Jan. 24th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

"To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; "

(2 Thessalonians 1:11)

Hear It: Revelation

My mother has always said, "Disappointment breeds resentment." How many times have you been disappointed about something you had no control over? It happens to me often and when it does, bitterness and anger start to rise up within me because of disappointment. This type of disappointment is unhealthy. It's the kind of frustration that keeps us focused on ourselves. Thoughts come into our minds such as, "I'm not good enough. I never thought this is where I'd be in life. I hate my job. My coworkers are so difficult." Where does Jesus fit in this thought process? We are all prone to get down, but it's mainly about how quickly we bounce back. When you are feeling disappointed, do you get angry or do you seek godly counsel? Do you find your answers in other people or in the Word?

See It: Illustration

Disappointment is a guaranteed part of life. It's what you do with it that counts. King David did not step into his appointed position as King directly from being a shepherd in the fields. He had to push through many disappointing and devastating situations. It took twenty-two years from the time of his anointing for him to take the position God had intended for him. Whatever you were created and anointed to do will come to pass if you allow God to work out the details in His timing. Many of us want to jump into our anointing too quickly. We don't consider the monotony of day-to-day living as experience to equip us for that work.

No matter where you are in life right now, count it a blessing. God knows right where you are. He knows you better than you know yourself. If you let go of your plan for your life and give control over to God, He will light your path and your life will flourish! He calls you to success, but it must be in His timing.

Do It: Application

In Priscilla Shirer's book, Anointed, Transformed, Redeemed, she writes, "...commit your whole life to the Lord, especially if it looks drastically different than what you had in mind. Do not despair and become frustrated in the seasons of waiting that the Lord might allow you to go through. Rather, ask Him to allow your spiritual eyes to clearly see His hand and help you to fully engage and rely on His Spirit to empower you to do what He has called you to do."

There is a dream God has placed in your heart that He wants you to fulfill. If you feel like you are in the "waiting room," remember that God is faithful and He will call all things into purpose in His timing. Be faithful in your daily tasks no matter how mundane they may be.

Write down the dream God has given you and ask Him to reveal the steps you need to take in order to see that dream come to reality. Stay faithful to His calling and direction and watch as your dream unfolds.

 I Am Second: Janine Turner
www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Janine-Turner/

Notes:

Building Your Dream - Step by Step chapter: Nehemiah 4

DAY #23

Tuesday, Jan. 25th, 2011

Key Verse(s):

So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. (Nehemiah 4:6)

Hear It: Revelation

Nehemiah had a dream to see the walls of Jerusalem restored. He sought the Lord in prayer, and God gave him a plan to accomplish the task. God gave Nehemiah favor with King Artaxerxes who allowed him to go to Judah to rebuild the walls. He also gave him supplies and a company of soldiers for protection. Once Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he implemented a strategy to begin the project. When there was opposition, Nehemiah posted half the men to stand guard while the other half continued working. What seemed like an impossible job was completed in only 52 days!

See It: Illustration

I attended the 2009 Florida Christian Writers Conference as one step toward building my dream to write. One of the editors made an announcement that he would be leaving in a few hours. I knew I should go talk to him immediately. That one small step would have intimidated me in years past, but I had already dealt with the barrier of fear. I spoke very briefly with Jesse Fiorea, the editor of Clubhouse magazine, pitching my ideas. He expressed interest in one of them.

Following the conference, I made plans to do an interview so I could write the article. Jesse had made a statement that stuck with me. He said, "So many people give me good ideas, but they don't follow through and send them to me." I determined I would not be one of those people. Within a month's time, I had done the interview, taken pictures, and written the story. Then it was time for another small act of courage - submitting my work to the editor.

Two weeks went by, and I got an email from the editor. He said he really liked the story, but he wanted a few changes. Then he said, "I'm sending you a contract anyway, because I know you can deliver." Wow! He knows I can deliver! That was such motivation for

me! After a little more editing, I knew it was time to hit the send button. What if he doesn't like it? I argued with myself. Just SEND IT! I argued back. I hit the send button, and my rewrite zoomed through cyberspace to Jesse's computer. About two hours later I received this reply: "Two words. Awe some!"

I was thrilled to sell my first article to Clubhouse, a nationally-recognized, award-winning Christian magazine for kids. I was in touch with Jesse as I worked on other articles, and one day he wrote that my motocross article would be featured on the COVER of the May 2010 issue! Since then I have sold five other articles, including another cover story.

Do It: Application

Pastor Dan taught a series of messages based on the book, In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day, by Mark Batterson. The book and the series were life changing for me. If you missed it, get the CDs and read the book.

One quote from the book says, "I'm convinced that the only thing between you and your destiny is one small act of courage." I took several small steps of courage that resulted in launching my dream.

What small act of courage can you take today? Write down one or two things you can do today to build your dream. Then do it! There is a dream God has placed in your heart that He wants you to fulfill. If you feel like you are in the "waiting room," remember that God is faithful and He will call all things into purpose in His timing. Be faithful in your daily tasks no matter how mundane they may be.

Write down the dream God has given you and ask Him to reveal the steps you need to take in order to see that dream come to reality. Stay faithful to His calling and direction and watch as your dream unfolds.



I Am Second: Tony Dungy
www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Tony-Dungy/



Another Level of Prayer

DAY #24

chapter: 1 Corinthians 14

Wednesday, Jan. 26th, 2011

Key verse(s):

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. (1 Corinthians 14:14-15)

Hear It: Revelation

How's your prayer life? Do you enjoy talking with God on a daily basis? What if I told you that your current prayer life was missing something?

There are two categories of prayer in the Bible. One is when you're praying about things that you understand - things like your job and the well-being of your children. The second category is praying about things that you know nothing about. These types of prayers are usually done in a different language than the one you know and speak. This is called "praying in tongues."

If someone were to compile all the information that can ever be known, what percentage of it would you already know? Would it be generous to say 10%? It is impossible for one single person to know everything. Even the English language doesn't contain words that hold the weight and meaning of words in other languages. Thankfully, God, in His wisdom, knows our limitations and has provided a way for us to pray for anything He needs us to pray for whether we have a full understanding of it or not. It's our own personal prayer language.

Parents, think about it. By praying in tongues, you can pray for the things your children are facing even if you don't know exactly what it is or what to pray for. Students, you can pray for upcoming exams and for your classmates. The possibilities are limitless.

See It: Illustration

A good friend once shared a story with me before I fully understood praying in tongues. She was praying one evening and suddenly felt an overwhelming burden to begin praying in tongues. As she began, she felt an urgency to pray even more fervently, as if the situation was worsening. The feeling quickly subsided and she went about her evening. Soon after that, she received a phone call saying that her brother had been in a motorcycle accident and had been critically injured. The time of the accident was the exact time she felt the burden to pray in tongues. Her brother miraculously crawled to a nearby house and was able to receive the help he needed. Her testimony greatly helped me understand the importance of praying in tongues.

Do It: Application

Human language is a series of syllables and sounds that can be understood by the hearer. Tongues is a heavenly language complete with syllables and sounds that cannot be understood by humans without divine help. And, just like everything else God has given, tongues must be received by faith. If you don't speak in tongues, ask God to baptize you in the Holy Spirit and to loose your prayer language. He will do it, but you have to open your mouth and speak the words He gives you. If you already pray in tongues, work on increasing the time you spend on it. Ask God to give you a clearer understanding of what praying in tongues really means and be thinking daily about people and situations that you can pray for while praying in tongues.

I Am Second: Landry Jones
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seconds/Landry-Jones/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Landry-Jones/)

Notes:

When the Right Time Comes

chapter: 1 Peter 5

DAY #25

Thursday, Jan. 27th, 2011

Key verse(s):

Be humble under God's powerful hand so he will lift you up when the right time comes. Give all your worries to him, because he cares about you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)

Hear It: Revelation

The workplace is often called a "dog-eat-dog world." It's tough and aggressive. In order to get to the top, you have to step on a few people. How is a Christian supposed to act in this environment? How can you be successful in your career and still be a witness in the process? Real success doesn't come from savvy self-effort. It comes from following the will of God. If we are committed to His will first, promotion will come from Him when the time is right.

Let's talk about your boss. Are you successful in helping him achieve his goals? Do you join in when your coworkers are talking about him negatively? Think about the day when you are promoted and people are working under you. You know the attitudes of your coworkers. Are those the type of people you want working for you?

See It: Illustration

In the book of Genesis, Joseph was sold into slavery and worked for a man named Potiphar, a wealthy land-owner in Egypt. Even though Joseph's own family sold him, he never spoke badly about them. He was committed to the will of God and also to his new boss, and when the right time came, God led Potiphar to promote Joseph to the head of his estate. Later on, Potiphar's wife told a lie about Joseph and he was thrown into prison. Even in the midst of this, Joseph never spoke poorly about his former boss, and he never blamed God for the lousy job he was given in prison. He stayed true to God's will and his master and when the right time came, God promoted him to the head of the prison.

Soon after, it was discovered that Joseph could interpret dreams. Sure enough, God promoted him again, out of prison and into a leadership position of the entire nation of Egypt. Then, in

the midst of a big economic downturn in Egypt, Joseph was prepared and God used him to sustain his family, the same family that sold him into slavery, and the entire country during a time of famine. Joseph's life can be summed up in Genesis 50:20, "What the enemy meant for evil, God turned for good."

Do It: Application

There are two ways to apply this principle. First, purpose in your heart to not speak negatively about your boss. Your boss is a gift from God. They may not even be a godly person, but God may have placed you there to show them what a godly employee looks like.

Second, encourage your coworkers to celebrate your boss. Accentuate the good things and learn to work with the bad. You'll appreciate it one day, when the right time comes, and you have employees doing the same for you..

 I Am Second: Darrell Waltrip
[www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Darrell-Waltrip/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Darrell-Waltrip/)

Notes:

Near & Far

chapter: Deuteronomy 6

DAY #26

Friday, Jan. 28th, 2011

Key verses:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

(Deuteronomy 6:5-7)

Hear It: Revelation

Parents are the primary faith influencers in their children's lives. What does that mean exactly? Notice what came first in Deuteronomy 6:5-7. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Next, it says that His word shall be in our hearts. It is out of a heart of love that we diligently teach our children the Word. God is a God of love. Teaching our children His Word must be founded in love. Ephesians 6:4 says, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

How do we teach our children? Diligently. "Diligent" in Webster's Dictionary means "steady, earnest, and energetic effort; painstaking." It takes effort and energy to continually pour into our children's lives. Sometimes it is painstaking when our children are resisting because of their lack of maturity and understanding. We are still to remain steadfast. Kids need to be engaged to really learn. Make your lessons interactive, relational, and applicable.

When do we teach them? All the time. We are a continual reflection of Christ who lives in us. When? When we are at home, when we are out and about, when we rest, and when we get up.

What do we teach them? All of God's promises! Acts 2:38-39 says, ". . . Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off as many as the Lord our God will call."

The result of this type of training in a family is compassion for those who are far off. Children who have been interactive with their parents concerning the Word will seek out those who are far off also. Who are those that are far off? Orphans and widows would name just a couple. It could mean the young person in church who comes without parents because they are unbelieving.

See It: Illustration

Imagine if the Florida Marlins stayed in spring training all year long. They would go through the regimen of training but never get to play the real game. Timothy Paul Jones said in Children's Magazine, "The goal is for God's truth to be rehearsed in homes and reinforced through the church so that the gospel is revealed to all the world. 'Family ministry is both for you and for your children' and 'for those who are far off.'" Training your children at home is just like spring training. When the day of the big game comes, your children will be equipped and ready because of your diligent teaching of the Word of God.

Do It: Application

- * Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength.
- * Meditate on His Word.
- * Live your walk with Christ out loud. Let your children see you reflect an intimate relationship with Christ.
- * Make your lessons interactive, relational, and applicable with your children.
- * If you are the guardian of your children or grandparents raising grandchildren, all of these truths apply to you also.
- * Take it outside the home to those who are "far off."

 I Am Second: Bailee Madison
[www.iamsecond.com/#/
seconds/Bailee_Madison/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Bailee_Madison/)

Wilderness Wells
of Praise
chapter: Numbers 21

DAY #27

Saturday, Jan. 29th, 2011

Key verse(s):

From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it..." (Numbers 21:16-17)

Hear IT: Revelation

Up to this point, a lot of events had taken place in the camp of Israel. Men, women, and children whom God had redeemed were in the midst of an arduous journey. And just like the journey we navigate here and now, that trek was not without trying times.

They had arrived at something quite miraculous - a desert well. Deep beneath the seemingly waterless wilderness was a well of refreshment, providentially placed by a good and faithful God. The shame of their discord and doubt was probably still hanging heavy in their hearts. The backs of their throats were probably sour from both a lack of water and a surplus of whining. Yet it was here that God came to quench their thirsty souls (and palates) with another taste of His ever-enduring mercy. Here they were given a fresh start in praising God and a chance to trade their sorrows for songs of God's faithfulness. God's command, God's promise, and Israel's response are still so relevant for us today.

"Gather the people together..."

God knows there is power in agreement, and in unified praise. As God's people arrange themselves around His throne, it makes way for His power to move. Psalm 133 speaks powerfully of the "commanded blessing" of unified praise. Just as the Israelites turned away from themselves and towards God, we must turn aside from our selfishness and isolation to reconnect with God's glorious presence together. He is enthroned upon the praises of Israel!

"I will give them water..."

Our praise should abound when we meditate on the promises

God has made to us. We can look back and see just how great of a promise keeper He is. In a dry season, it is crucial to remember that He who promised is faithful, and hold fast to that confession without wavering (Hebrews 10:23). And God's promise endures...today you can praise Him in faith that He will surely do what He said He would do! He is FAITHFUL. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

"Spring up, o well...all of you sing to it!"

God has equipped His people with a mechanism that activates the well of His eternal refreshment within our souls it's our mouth! As we allow His commandments and promises to reside in our hearts and sing His promises back to Him, we will be able to walk through even the driest and hardest times of our lives with living water. In John chapter 4, Jesus speaks to a woman about this living water and points out that He alone is its source. We have RIVERS of living water flowing from our spirit because Jesus has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts through faith in Him! May we ever be mindful of our responsibility to prime the pump of praise and find the internal well He has dug in us as we navigate through the external wildernesses of this life.

See IT: Illustration

"When life cuts you, bleed worship" - Author unknown

Do IT: Application

Spend a few moments praising God verbally for what He has promised you. Write them down, then sing those words out loud! Let a new song of praise rise up from within your heart. It doesn't matter whether you can sing or not or if your words flow smoothly into song. God deserves our praise no matter how lowly it may seem! Let 2011 be a year where we are drawing from the wells of salvation with joy (Isaiah 12:3) by praising our faithful God!

 I Am Second: Janelle Hail
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seconds/Janelle_Hail/](http://www.iamsecond.com/#/seconds/Janelle_Hail/)

Win a Witness

chapter: Luke 10

DAY #28

Sunday, Jan. 30th, 2011

KEY VERSE(S):

"ON THE NEXT DAY HE TOOK OUT TWO DENARII AND GAVE THEM TO THE INNKEEPER AND SAID, 'TAKE CARE OF HIM; AND WHATEVER YOU SPEND, WHEN I RETURN I WILL REPAY YOU.' WHICH OF THESE THREE DO YOU THINK PROVED TO BE A NEIGHBOR TO THE MAN WHO FELL INTO THE ROBBERS' HANDS?" AND HE SAID, "THE ONE WHO SHOWED MERCY TOWARD HIM." THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, "GO AND DO THE SAME."
(LUKE 10:35-37)

HEAR IT: REVELATION

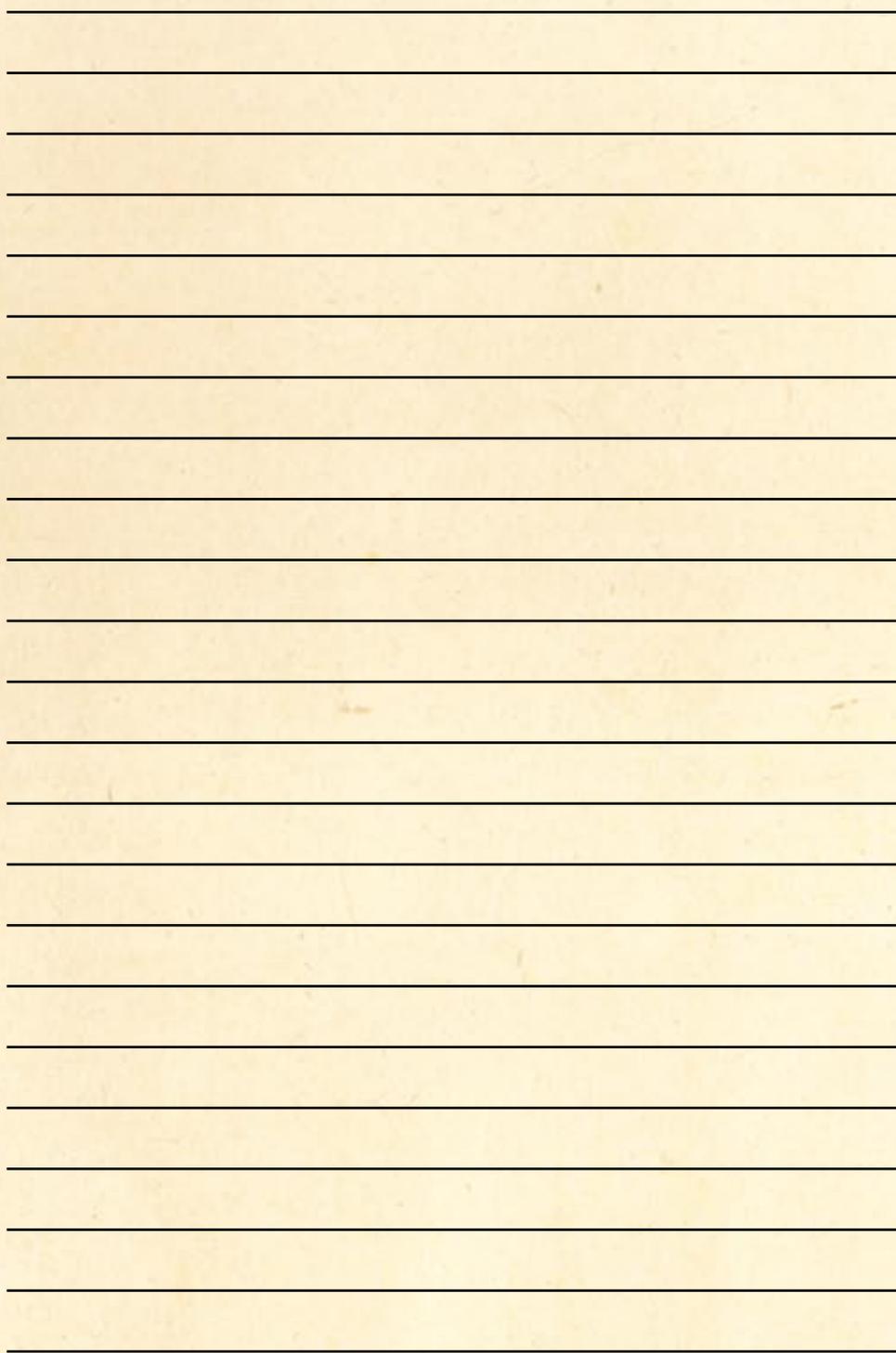
THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN IS A VERY STRONG PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE THAT DEALS WITH WHAT A REAL NEIGHBOR IS. DID YOU NOTICE THAT THE SAMARITAN WAS MORE CONCERNED FOR THE INJURED MAN THAN FOR HIMSELF? HE KNEW THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THAT THE SAME ROBBERS COULD ALSO BE LYING IN WAIT FOR HIM. THE SCRIPTURE SAYS HE WAS MOVED BY COMPASSION - "THE LOVE OF GOD" - FOR SOMEONE HE HAD NEVER MET. THIS SAME LOVE MOVED HIM TO TAKE FROM HIS OWN INCOME AND PAY FOR A ROOM, FOOD AND PERSONAL CARE. IF IT TOOK MORE MONEY THAN WHAT HE LEFT, HE WAS WILLING TO SEE IT THROUGH TO THE END. HE WAS TAKING A CHANCE WITH THE INNKEEPER AS WELL. THE INNKEEPER COULD LIE AND GET MORE MONEY FROM HIM ON HIS RETURN TRIP IF HE WANTED. THIS SAMARITAN WAS NOT AFRAID OF LOSING MONEY EVEN FROM THE INNKEEPER. WHY? I BELIEVE IT WAS BECAUSE HE KNEW GOD AND WAS NOT AFRAID TO RISK SOMETHING (IN THIS CASE, MONEY) FOR SOMEONE ELSE. LOVE FOR GOD AND LOVE FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR WILL MOVE YOU. IT HAS TO!

SEE IT: ILLUSTRATION

DURING THE SUMMER OF 2006, FOUR HURRICANES SWEEP THROUGH FLORIDA. MY NEIGHBOR APPROACHED ME AND ASKED ME TO CONSIDER CUTTING DOWN A 40-FOOT PINE TREE IN MY FRONT YARD. IT WAS LEANING IN HIS DIRECTION AND HE OBVIOUSLY WAS CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO HIS HOUSE. HE OFFERED TO PAY HALF. FOR ME, I REALLY WASN'T INTERESTED IN SPENDING ANY MONEY ON A TREE THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO CUT DOWN. I THOUGHT IF HE WANTED IT CUT DOWN THEN HE SHOULD OFFER TO PAY FOR IT ALL. I TOLD HIM MY WIFE REALLY LIKED THE TREE AND I WASN'T INTERESTED.

I DISMISSED THIS CONVERSATION IN MY MIND, BUT FOR SOME REASON I COULD NOT GET IT OUT OF MY HEART. I FINALLY ASKED THE LORD WHAT I SHOULD DO. I HEARD HIS VOICE SO CLEARLY. "CUT THE TREE DOWN AND PAY FOR THE WHOLE THING." WOW. THAT WAS NOT WHAT I WAS EXPECTING TO HEAR. I WRESTLED WITH THIS FOR SEVERAL MORE WEEKS BEFORE I SPOKE TO MY WIFE. HER QUESTION WAS, "WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR THEN?" NOTHING, I GUESS.

I THOUGHT ABOUT THIS AND WONDERED HOW I COULD USE THIS SITUATION TO SHARE WITH MY NEIGHBOR ABOUT JESUS. WHEN I



THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO

CONTRIBUTED TO OUR 2011 DEVOTIONAL GUIDE. THEY INCLUDE PUBLISHED AUTHORS, SPEAKERS, PASTORS AND THOSE WHO SERVE STRATEGICALLY HERE AT EAST COAST CHRISTIAN CENTER. THEY ARE PARENTS RAISING CHILDREN OF ALL AGES, PASTORS PLANNING MESSAGES BETWEEN COUNSELING APPOINTMENTS, AND CONFERENCE SPEAKERS BALANCING TRAVEL SCHEDULES WITH FAMILY TIME. BUT ABOVE ALL ELSE, THEY HAVE OPENED UP THEIR MINDS, HEARTS AND LIVES TO THE TRUTH OF JESUS CHRIST. THEY HAVE WRITTEN THESE DEVOTIONALS WITH TRUE CONVICTION AND HONESTY. MAY THEIR WORDS IMPACT OUR LIVES AS WE ENTER INTO THIS NEW YEAR OF 2011.

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Suzanne Ellis

Fresh
Start

The logo features a stylized circular emblem on the left, composed of two overlapping, curved lines that form a partial circle, with a small dot inside the inner curve.

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