

VOL.7

BETWEEN THE
LINES

a frontline devotional

DEDICATION

This devotional is
dedicated to all those
who choose to follow
Matthew 6:33 every day.
“Seek First The Kingdom
of God.”

Thank you to our faithful
Youth Staff who, by the power of the Holy
Spirit, poured out of themselves to
complete this amazing devotional as a tool
to equip the body of Christ through
the power of the Word!

...taking it by FORCE!
Paulie & Nikki



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PREFACE

Love, loyalty, worshipful observance, and enthusiasm for something...that is the definition of 'devotion.' When we choose to set aside the time to read devotionals such as this one, alongside God's Word, what is our mindset in those moments? What is the focus and direction of our heart?

I encourage you to take a moment and pray before reading so that we can align our thoughts on what is pure, to properly prepare ourselves as a fertile environment to receive not just encouragement, but also instruction, reproof, correction, wisdom and revelation.

Before we ever set our eyes on God's Word, in any form, let us make certain that our hearts are set in devotion, in love, loyalty, worshipful observance, and enthusiasm toward the things of God.

Fight the good fight of faith!
Jamie

OUR GARDENER

“LIVE IN ME. MAKE YOUR HOME IN ME
JUST AS I DO IN YOU. IN THE SAME WAY
THAT A BRANCH CAN’T BEAR GRAPES BY
ITSELF BUT ONLY BY BEING JOINED TO
THE VINE, YOU CAN’T BEAR FRUIT
UNLESS YOU ARE JOINED WITH ME.”
- JOHN 15:4

ADDITIONAL READING: JOHN 15:1-8

This part of scripture tells us that there is a vine, a branch, and a Gardener or vinedresser. The Vine here is Jesus, the Branch being us, and the Gardener being God the Father; each having a part in the growing process of the fruit.

Today let’s talk about God as our Gardener. In verse 2 it says “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” God’s role as the Gardener of our lives is to prune, or remove, what is dead or unfruitful. He is pruning or removing what does not help us, what may be hindering us, or what is holding back growth in our lives. God does this with His purpose of growth in mind and the reason is for our benefit; to bear much fruit. It’s what the branch is created to do. Yielding to the Gardener and His pruning shears (the tool used to cut), we can know in our hearts it is only for our benefit. As fruit bearing trees, the cutting back process promotes growth. This allows the branch to be strengthened, so it can continue to produce fruit.

Is there a place in your life that is lacking in fruit production? Is there a relationship that is hindering your spiritual growth? Perhaps a “cut back” is needed in the amount of time spent doing unproductive things. Our time is valuable and how you are using each minute of your day can make a big difference in how productive you are. Is there an activity that fills a lot of your time, takes a lot of your energy, and keeps you from time at church or time spent in building healthy relationships, or maybe from being focused on school work?

Take some “time” now to quiet yourself in prayer to God (the Gardener), and ask Him to show you where some pruning is needed, and then allow Him to make those cut backs!

Remember: The pruning process is for a productive purpose! (That’s a lot of P’s LOL)

It’s up to us to allow the Gardener to work in the garden of our lives!!

Walk with the King...

Nikki

LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT

“THEREFORE WE ALSO, SINCE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT, AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENSNARES US, AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US.”

- HEBREWS 12:1

ADDITIONAL READING: HEBREWS 12:1-3, ISAIAH 40:28-31

When you get ready to take a flight somewhere, one of the first things you do as you begin your journey is bring your bag or luggage to the counter to make sure that it does not exceed the weight requirement for what a passenger can bring on the trip. If someone's bag weighs too much, they are offered one of two options. They can go through the contents of their bag and keep what is the most beneficial for their journey, leaving behind any unnecessary bulk, or they can keep the extra weight and pay a hefty price.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us to “lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us.” We all know that we should lay aside sin, but this verse also says to lay aside “the weight.” The word “weight” in this verse only appears one time in the New Testament. Here's what it means: “whatever is prominent, bulk, mass, a burden, an encumbrance.”

When we feel our walk with the Lord is getting heavy or sluggish, or as though we're not moving forward, it might be time for a “baggage check.” We should take the time to carefully evaluate what is prominent in our lives or what is taking up the bulk of our attention. If we can look at our lives and identify something that is not in God's will for us, it may be a burden or encumbrance to our spiritual walk. We should quickly obey and lay aside anything that God is showing us needs to be removed. Even if it doesn't seem as though it's a “bad” thing, if God is asking us to lay it aside, it's because He wants us to make room for something that's better.

It may not be easy but God will always help us. When you really think about it, who wants to carry around or pay the price for things that will just hold us back and weigh us down? Lay it aside! When we do, it will make room for the great things God has for us! Then we can “run with endurance the race that is set before us” and our lives will soar!

Confession for today: “Lord, show me the things in my life that are weighing me down. Help me to let go of anything that is not in Your will for my life. I trust that You only want what is best for me and that anything You tell me to lay aside will be for my benefit. I only want to take on those things that are in Your will and that fulfill Your purpose for my life. Help me to do this in Jesus’ Name.”

Be salt and light,
Miss Dawn

A JOYFUL LIFE

“MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH
ALL JOY AND PEACE AS YOU TRUST
HIM.”

- ROMANS 15:13

ADDITIONAL READING: PSALMS 28:7,
118:24, ROMANS 15:13

It is possible to live a life of Joy in any situation. God’s Word says to trust Him with all your heart (Proverbs 3:5). There is Joy in seeking God for guidance in your life and trusting that He will take care of you and direct your life according to His Word.

It is easy to follow your feelings and inclinations, but it takes effort to be Joyful when the situation or your mood is otherwise. This is when you will need to make a choice, so ask the Holy Spirit for help and then be obedient to what He tells you to do.

God’s Word says to cast all your cares on Him. You are able to do this through prayer so you can get rid of all the weighty thoughts, and know that all the trials you face work out for the best.

Joy is the absence of worry, doubt, and earthly cares. Joy is the result of obedience to God’s Word, and choosing to do what is right. Every choice to obey God is a step away from sin and heaviness and a step closer to ever increasing Joy in your life.

Confession for today: “In the name of Jesus, I cast all my anxiety and cares on Him because He cares for me. I am now free from worry, doubt and the cares of this world. From now on I am going to live a Joyful life...AMEN.”

Stay Connected
Mr. George

DOORS ONLY HE CAN OPEN

“THESE ARE THE WORDS OF HIM WHO IS HOLY AND TRUE, WHO HOLDS THE KEY OF DAVID. WHAT HE OPENS NO ONE CAN SHUT, AND WHAT HE SHUTS NO ONE CAN OPEN.”

- REVELATION 3:7

“THE LORD IS NEAR TO THOSE WHO ARE DISCOURAGED; HE SAVES THOSE WHO HAVE LOST ALL HOPE.”

- PSALMS 34:18

The Lord is good! All the time the Lord is good. I know I say this a lot, but it is because it is always on my spirit. The main scripture at the top talks about how God opens doors, or opportunities. I like to think of it as only He can open or close doors. Let's think about this scripture from a different angle, like heartache. Sometimes things in life just don't seem to be going the way you thought they would. Maybe you just ended a relationship with a guy/gal that you thought you were going to spend the rest of your life with, or maybe you didn't get into a school you wanted or get the job you wanted. Right away this will make you sit back and say, “what the heck, I really thought that was God's will, doesn't God hear my prayer?” These are normal thoughts and reactions, but this is a dangerous place to stay. The devil can use these thoughts to turn you away from God.

Heartache and disappointment might not be the easiest thing to get over, but know that God will give hope to the hopeless and strength to the weak! No matter what disappointment you have gone through, always know that right around the corner God has a new door for you to walk through that is even better! You thought that relationship or school was the best, but now that you see what God has had in store for you all along, you will be amazed! His ways are so much higher than our ways, always remember that! God hears your prayers, and as you live righteous lives, God will continually open and close doors in your life. Remember to keep your faith and trust in the Lord so that if disappointment or heartache occur, the joy and peace of God are right around the corner! God will never leave you nor forsake you, so always lean on the Creator in times of disappointment and heartache.

Confession for today: “Lord, I know you hear my prayers and I lean not on my own understanding, but on You alone!”

God is good... all the time... all the time...

Joey

GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD

“TO THOSE WHO THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST HAVE RECEIVED A FAITH AS PRECIOUS AS OURS: GRACE AND PEACE BE YOURS IN ABUNDANCE THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND OF JESUS OUR LORD. HIS DIVINE POWER HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR A GODLY LIFE THROUGH OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HIM WHO CALLED US BY HIS OWN GLORY AND GOODNESS. THROUGH THESE HE HAS GIVEN US HIS VERY GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES, SO THAT THROUGH THEM YOU MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE DIVINE NATURE, HAVING ESCAPED THE CORRUPTION IN THE WORLD CAUSED BY EVIL DESIRES. FOR THIS VERY REASON, MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ADD TO YOUR FAITH GOODNESS; AND TO GOODNESS, KNOWLEDGE; AND TO KNOWLEDGE, SELF-CONTROL; AND TO SELF-CONTROL, PERSEVERANCE; AND TO PERSEVERANCE, GODLINESS; AND TO GODLINESS, MUTUAL AFFECTION; AND TO MUTUAL AFFECTION, LOVE. FOR IF YOU POSSESS THESE QUALITIES IN INCREASING MEASURE, THEY WILL KEEP YOU FROM BEING INEFFECTIVE AND UNPRODUCTIVE IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

- 2 PETER 1:1-8

Let's focus on growing in our knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ each and every day. In the Greek, knowledge means, "to know through participation." We add to our knowledge when we take the Truth of the Word and apply it to our every day lives.

This word from Peter is a win-win for us when we desire to grow in our knowledge of Jesus because we will receive:

- 1) Grace and peace in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus.
- 2) Everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him.
- 3) His Divine nature, so we can escape the corruption of the world and evil desires through our knowledge of Him.
- 4) We will live effective and productive lives through our knowledge of Jesus.

We have to understand that these traits are truly a benefit to our everyday lives and they allow the growing process of the Spirit to begin and come alive in us!

Confession for today: “Holy Spirit, allow me to grow in Your knowledge and grace each and every day so that I can grow in You and escape the corruption of this world each and every day!”

Seek Him first!

Paulie

SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM SIN

“SO, COME OUT FROM AMONG [UNBELIEVERS], AND SEPARATE (SEVER) YOURSELVES FROM THEM, SAYS THE LORD, AND TOUCH NOT [ANY] UNCLEAN THING; THEN I WILL RECEIVE YOU KINDLY AND TREAT YOU WITH FAVOR. AND I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS, SAYS THE LORD ALMIGHTY.”

- 2 CORINTHIANS 6:17-18

The only way we can really keep ourselves from allowing the thorns of life to creep in is to separate ourselves as much as we can from the world and its devices. If we want God to treat us with favor and receive us as one of His own, we must come out from among the world and all of its distractions. We have to keep up on our spiritual maintenance so that we can constantly be aware of any area that the enemy can get in to harass us and to keep us from receiving the full benefits of producing good fruit in our lives. How do we keep up on our spiritual maintenance? The answer is simple; read the Word and know what the Word says about your life. Many of us fall trap in allowing the enemy to keep us from getting into the Word, but we have to understand how powerful it is in our lives. The Word is what will help us stay separated from the things of this world when we apply its truths to our lives. The thorns of life are only looking to do one thing; choke the fruit of the spirit that God is growing in us each day. We must do what we can to keep ourselves separate from the sin of the world that is all around us. By reading the Word and applying it to our lives daily, we can maintain our spiritual lives much easier and keep the weeds and thorns from choking out all the things the Lord promises us through His Word!

Confession for today: “Holy Spirit, help me to separate myself from any entanglements that the enemy may try to use against me on a daily basis. Give me the strength to use your Word each day to maintain a spiritual life that is free from any thing that would try and keep me attached to the things of this world.”

Seek Him first!

Paulie

DON'T BE DISTURBED

“AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL PROTECT YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.”

- PHILIPPIANS 4:7

Peace is a very important part of our lives, and it is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and a gift from God. In the times we live in, you really need to call upon the Holy Spirit for His help in every troubling situation. Whether it is in school, with family, friends, or whatever bothers you, know that God promises His people a peace that surpasses all understanding. Just accept that peace and don't question it, but instead just say thank you Jesus...I take Your Peace!

Psalms 29:11 says – “The Lord will bless His people with Peace.”

John 14:27 says – Jesus was telling His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit and told them, “Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give to you, not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

John 16:33 – Jesus was talking to His disciples and said, “I have told you these things so that in Me you may have Peace.” (One of Jesus' name is Prince of Peace).

Remember – You never lose as much as when you lose your peace.

Confession for today: “In the Name of Jesus, Holy Spirit please instill in me the Peace of God for _____ (name the situation), so that I will not be troubled by it ever again. I believe I have received the Peace of God over my life...AMEN”

Stay Connected
Mr. George

SEASONS

**“TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A TIME
FOR EVERY MATTER OR PURPOSE UNDER HEAVEN.”
- ECCLESIASTES 3:1**

When we follow God’s plan, things work. When we don’t, things fall apart. Let’s talk about David. When David was a young boy, he was anointed to be King of Israel. God had chosen him, and his future was pretty clear. David then made a series of decisions that didn’t align with God’s will. (Read Samuel and Kings). As a result, David’s future was riddled with many consequences for his poor choices. Once again David had the desire, but he didn’t yield to God’s plan.

It's important to remember that God’s Word does work (Isaiah 55:8-11). The word void means “empty.” The remainder of verse 11 explains what it means to “not return void,” saying that God’s Word “will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” When God says that His Word will not return void, we can know that He has an intention for His Word. God’s Word is from above. He “breathed out” His words to us and they were recorded in the Bible. Every word He gave humanity is purposeful and was given for a reason. Like the rain and snow, God’s words bring forth life (John 6:63) and produce good fruit in our lives. Through His Word, we know that God loves us and that Jesus died to free us from sin and death; we also learn how to live in light of those truths. When God says that His Word will not return to Him void, we understand that God is sovereign. The promise is that God’s Word will accomplish what He wants it to, not necessarily what we want it to. We may share the Word with the purpose of changing someone’s mind—and the person’s mind doesn’t change. Was God’s Word void? No, but our personal goals may have been different from God’s.

God’s timing in our lives comes in seasons. Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us: To everything there is a season, and a time for every matter or purpose under Heaven. This lets us know that we don't all live in the same season at the same time. You should never be jealous of someone who is enjoying their harvest while you're still in the planting season. Remember, they had to go through a season of planting just as you are. Seeing the results they are enjoying should be an encouragement to you. Understand and trust that God is doing the very best for you in your present season. Seedtime represents learning the will of God. Each time we choose God's will instead of our own, we’re planting a good seed that will eventually bring a harvest in our lives. If you want to be victorious, you cannot afford to get pulled into the world's system of doing what you feel like doing. You have to wait on God’s timing so that He can fulfill all that He has promised.

DON'T GET BENT OUT OF SHAPE

“IN THE DAY WHEN I CALLED, YOU ANSWERED ME;
AND YOU STRENGTHENED ME WITH STRENGTH (MIGHT
AND INFLEXIBILITY TO TEMPTATION) IN MY INNER
SELF.”

- PSALMS 138:3

Have you ever felt like you were about to snap? Have you ever been in a situation where you are on the verge of making a negative decision that you know will affect your future? It isn't easy living in this generation. There are so many temptations to sin that are easily accessed and hidden. It can be especially difficult if we lack a true understanding of the strength we have been given through Christ's love. I love this scripture because it reminds me of the strength that I was given the moment I called on God's name. We are not left without any help or defense against temptation. Psalm 138:3 says that we are strengthened with “might and inflexibility to temptation.”

Often we hear the word inflexibility and we think that it is a negative trait. People will say, “she is too uptight” or “you just need to relax and enjoy life.” God has given us strength that is inflexible to sin. The word that came into my spirit when I read this scripture was rigid, which means unable to bend or be forced out of shape; not flexible. The enemy wants to have you bend to his will. He wants you to be forced out of the safety of the Word. People say, “if you don't bend you will break,” but that isn't true for children of God! We are rigid when it comes to the things of God, and there is nothing wrong with that. That word inflexible is a picture of strength! YOU are unbending, YOU are unyielding, YOU are unbreakable, YOU won't be forced out of shape, and YOU won't snap under the pressures of life! That is the strength, might, and power that is freely given to you when you call out to the Lord! Be encouraged to stand firm in what you believe today and don't be bent out of shape!

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

RELATIONSHIPS CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOU

“BE YE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS: FOR WHAT FELLOWSHIP HATH RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH UNRIGHTEOUSNESS? AND WHAT COMMUNION HATH LIGHT WITH DARKNESS?”
- 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14

ADDITIONAL READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6

Relationships, whether they are friends, family, work, or romantic, can influence your life in some way on a daily basis. I define a relationship in the lowest form as any interaction that can be influenced by each others actions. For example, I have the smallest relationship with people at my new job. There are even people that I am not sure of their name, but when we interact for the good of the patients in the office there is a relationship. How I conduct myself and speak when interacting with these smallest of relationships can impact me and that person positively or negatively. Ask yourself, am I standing up for and acting according to the Word that I proclaim to be the cornerstone of my life? Are my interactions with this person, whether big or small, enticing them to get further away from God or closer? This race of life down the narrow path of righteousness has many people on it, and some people that we have relationships with might be running at a different pace towards the prize. Those that are taking detours and falling off the narrow path should be approached with caution and prayer. Praying that they will find the narrow road again and for your own strength not to get steered off the road yourself. Keep your eyes fixated on the narrow path of righteousness and get yoked, or hooked in, with those that have the same goals.

Relationships are everywhere in life, some a lot more serious and time consuming than others. Really think about all relationships in your life, and cut off those relationships in your life that are dragging you down spiritually. Ask the Lord to reveal relationships in your life, whether big or small, that need to be changed. Maybe it is a romantic relationship, or maybe it is just that guy/gal in your English class that you always joke around with and it's not always a wholesome conversation or interaction.

Remember... Relationships, big or small, in your life will either make or break your walk with the Lord, and ultimately your future!

Confession for today: “God, show me the relationships in my life that are hindering my spiritual walk with You.....”

God is good... all the time... all the time...

Joey

DIRECTION ISN'T A GIVEN

“THROUGH YOUR PRECEPTS I GET UNDERSTANDING;
THEREFORE I HATE EVERY FALSE WAY. YOUR WORD IS
A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH.”
- PSALMS 119:104-105

We are always emphasizing the importance of reading the Word. If you ever feel like saying, "Ugh, I just don't feel like it today," hear this: reading the Word is a catalyst for your everyday life. It's a huge part of our day that doesn't take up much time in our daily routine. Kind of like the rudder on a ship: a small part with huge potential for changing the direction of a massive object. If helmsmen never utilized that rudder, they wouldn't be able to steer in the right direction. Have you ever been on a boat or ship in the middle of a large lake or even on the ocean? You don't really notice the rudder shifting around, and out on the ocean, everything looks the same no matter which direction you look. But helmsmen know to trust their navigation system so they can steer the ship straight and true. As they pay attention to that little computer, they're automatically making little corrections here and there, allowing it to guide them along the way.

Think of reading the Word like watching that navigation system. You can't just stare at it 24/7 or you'll crash the ship (or crash your face into your Bible), but you also must be sure to regularly look back to it, and many times even carefully examine it to make sure you understand what it's saying. The Word causes us to change direction in our lives based on what we read. A ship can go miles off course just by consistently veering off by one degree. How much more so are our lives changed by applying even one new scripture verse to our everyday lives on a consistent basis! We end up making a correction in one area, or putting more effort into another. Then one day, without even realizing it, we're so far from that old life we used to participate in, we can hardly believe it!

So get out there and set aside some time today to read your Bible!
You've got the dang app on your phone for crying out loud!

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

PEACE IS A GUARD

“AND THE PEACE OF GOD, WHICH TRANSCENDS
ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR
HEARTS AND MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.”
- PHILIPPIANS 4:7

ADDITIONAL READING: PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

I often think of peace as just a state of mind, something that I feel when everything is calm, tranquil, still, and quiet. But that calmness is just a result of what peace is doing on our behalf. Philippians 4:7 says that God’s peace stands guard over our hearts and minds. “Guard” in the Greek means to be a watcher in advance, to mount guard, to hem in, protect. When we are in a situation that is causing us anxiety, we can call on the peace of God to stand guard over our hearts and minds and work on our behalf. Think of God’s peace like a soldier standing at the gate of our heart, defending us against the attacks of the enemy. We don’t have to feel defenseless or vulnerable when worry and anxiety try to creep in. We can have the powerful peace of God to protect us! In verse 6 of this chapter it says that we can have this peace in every situation if we go to God with our request through prayer. It’s like an exchange. We can’t have both worry and peace. We must go to Him with our worries, requests, fears, and questions and in return He gives us His peace to watch over us. I don’t know about you, but I’d much rather have God’s peace than all the worry, questions, and fears that come up in everyday life. This is something that the world does not have access to. When worry and anxiety comes their way, they have to deal with it on their own. But because of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross, we as believers now have access to His powerful, strong, fear-squashing peace!

Confession for today: “Lord God, I thank You for making Your peace readily available to me through Your son Jesus Christ. Right now I give You all of my fear and anxiety and I ask that Your peace comes to stand guard over my heart and mind. You know the things that I am facing in my life at this moment, and I confess that as Your peace guards me I will trust in You. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”

Let your light shine,
Bre

BE SURE TO WIN "IN HIM"

**“THEREFORE, REMEMBER THAT...AT THAT TIME YOU WERE SEPARATE FROM CHRIST...WITHOUT HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD. BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS YOU WHO WERE ONCE FAR AWAY HAVE BEEN BROUGHT NEAR THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.”
- EPHESIANS 2:11-13**

Have you ever wondered what it really means to be in Christ Jesus? Once you take the time to find out what it really means, it will radically change your life. It is in Him that we are saved from our sins. It's in Him that we have been set free. It's in Him that we are in right-standing before God!

If you want those powerful words to explode in you, then start searching out scriptures that talk about being in Christ. Watch for the words in Him, with Him, through Him, and in Whom. Mark them down and think on them until their truth gets down inside of you. They will give you some powerful bombshells against Satan's attacks.

For instance, when he tries to tell you that you are just a sinner and God doesn't want to be bothered with your problems, you will know he is lying. You will be able to boldly answer and say, "Thank you God, I was a sinner, but now I have right-standing with God in Jesus. I am in Him and you have no right to touch me!"

Be prepared the next time Satan comes at you with doubt and unbelief. Be ready to fight back with the scriptures about who you are in Christ Jesus. You cannot lose once you truly know who you are in Him.

Confession for today: "I have been brought near to God through the blood of Jesus. Now I am in Him!"

Remember, your words are powerful weapons!!

Hugs,
Miss Lois

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

“BE STRONG AND CONFIDENT AND COURAGEOUS...”
- JOSHUA 1:6

ADDITIONAL READING: JOSHUA 1:5-9

God is telling Joshua to be strong and courageous as he follows the commands given to him. Be strong; God was telling him this before Joshua started out in battle. Just as Joshua is encouraged to be strong and courageous in order to follow God’s commands, tasks, and assignments for him, we too need to be strong and courageous following what God has given us to do. The word strong here means to be courageous, to be firm, to conquer, to seize. “Be strong” is a command from God to you as it was to Joshua, so that you don’t have to feel weak or unable, causing you to yield to the enemy in what you are facing today. Instead, you can stand firm footed and move forward with God’s instructions for you in courage and bravery! To be strong is to be infused with God’s supernatural strength and ability. You are empowered with a special touch of God’s strength today in your inner most being, so take that strength that God has provided and apply it to whatever you will face each day! As you face each test or challenge, face it with courage, knowing you are able to do all God has given for you to do this day!

What is it you are facing that you are using God’s command to be strong as you face it?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to proceed with this challenge?

Walk with the King...
Nikki

DANGEROUS PRIDE

“FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE
HUMBLED, AND HE WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF
[FORSAKING SELF-RIGHTEOUS PRIDE] WILL BE
EXALTED.”

- LUKE 18:14

ADDITIONAL READING: LUKE 18:9-14

Have you ever seen someone doing something so blatantly wrong and immediately thought to yourself, “How could they do something like that?” or “I would never do something like that?” In that quick moment and simple thought process we have found ourselves puffed up with pride and exalting ourselves over that person. Here in chapter 18 of Luke, Jesus is addressing a group of people that thought they had it all together, too. It says in verse 9, “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.” He goes on to compare two different men; one of whom is a sinner with a repentant heart and another who did all the right things but was full of pride and looked down on others. This passage is a good reminder that our walk with the Lord is not just about our works. Faith without works is dead, and works full of pride and self-righteousness lead to a dangerous place.

Romans 3:24 says, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Just because we are not doing something wrong in a particular moment does not mean that we need the forgiveness and grace of God any less than someone else. Matthew 7:5 talks about examining your own life before you pick apart what’s wrong with someone else. It says, “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” It is very likely that if you truly examine your heart before the Lord and ask Him to reveal something that you could work on, He will bring something to mind. We need to remember that we are a continual work in progress. None of us have reached Jesus’ status, and we won’t until we are with Him in heaven. We need to be compassionate to those around us like Jesus was, even in their struggles and imperfection. They need God’s love, not our judgment.

Let your light shine,
Bre

MORE THAN BURNT OFFERINGS

“SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU DO NOT DESIRE, NOR HAVE YOU DELIGHT IN THEM; YOU HAVE GIVEN ME CAPACITY TO HEAR AND OBEY [YOUR LAW, A MORE VALUABLE SERVICE THAN] BURNT OFFERINGS AND SIN OFFERINGS [WHICH] YOU DO NOT REQUIRE.”

- PSALMS 40:6

Israel had a hard time understanding God's intentions in giving them the Law. They found themselves mundanely performing the rituals of the day, making sacrifices without really understanding why they were doing what they were doing. Their mindset toward sacrifices can sometimes mirror our own mindset toward worship today. We sing the songs and lift our hands, but many times our hearts are not tied to our actions. Have you ever stopped and asked, “What is this for? How do I even participate in this in a meaningful way?”

David knew how to truly worship the Lord. His understanding of it showed not only in the Psalm above, but particularly in 2 Samuel 24:24 when he said, “I will not offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” A man named Araunah had offered to give David everything he needed for a sacrifice to God. But David didn’t want to just throw up some drive-thru sacrifice. He insisted on buying everything he needed from Araunah. David wanted to take what Araunah had and make it his own, heartfelt sacrifice to the Lord.

As the worship team lays songs before us to sing along to, like Araunah laid out the sacrifice for David, then like David, we need to take those songs and make them our own, embracing the full meaning behind them. If our minds and our hearts are focused somewhere else during worship, then our worship is costing us nothing. Think about the words, think about what they mean and how they apply to what God has done for you. Then sing those words out to God with everything you’ve got! True sacrifice--true worship--sometimes involves material things and sometimes intangible things, but it is always tied to our heart. It always makes God out to be more important to us than anything else, and it is so much more than a burnt offering.

Confession for today: “Holy Spirit, help me to focus completely on You every time I worship. Remind me to stop and think about You throughout the day: how You love and care about me more than anyone else does, and how You do more for me than anyone else would. Help me, from this day forward, to make a true sacrifice of praise, wholly pleasing to You, my God and my King. I love you and everything that You are.”

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

CONTROLLING OR CARING?

No one likes to be told what to do. We all like the feeling of being free to do whatever we want, whenever we want. We can even have the impulse to push back when someone tells us to do things, or not to do things that can make us feel like we're being restricted. Many people see living life as a Christian that way. They see the Bible as a list of things they can or cannot do so that God can control our lives. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible clearly tells us that God wants us to choose to love and serve Him. We have a choice. Why does God want us to choose His way? Living God's way is the way to have a life that is blessed.

"This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life..." - Deuteronomy 30:19

From the very beginning, God's plan for mankind was to provide them with everything they could ever need or want. It was man's choice to go outside of that provision that brought us lack, sickness, pain, and death. God loved us so much, that regardless of man's choice, He made a way for us to return to His original plan for us. He loved us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His own Son to pay the price for man's sin. God wants to take care of us, not control us. But the choice is ours as to whether or not we are willing to become His child and be under His care.

"Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God..." - John 1:12

Have you made the choice to become God's child? It's a choice only you can make. If you have never made that choice, you can make it right now. You can say, "Lord, I receive you into my life. I believe in you. I choose to live Your way. I want to become your child."

If you have prayed that for the first time, you have become God's child! Let someone on the Youth Staff know so we can pray with you and encourage you.

Be salt and light,
Miss Dawn

YOU ARE QUALIFIED

“IT IS HE WHO HAS QUALIFIED US (MAKING US TO BE FIT AND WORTHY AND SUFFICIENT) AS MINISTERS AND DISPENSERS OF A NEW COVENANT (OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST), NOT MINISTERS OF THE LETTER BUT OF THE SPIRIT; FOR THE CODE OF THE LAW KILLS BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES ALIVE.”

- 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6

There are times in our lives – I am sure we can all remember – when we feel unworthy and unable to dispense the Spirit of God to the people around us by what we say and do. Maybe you feel that way now: “I do not have the outgoing personality to make an impact like that,” “I do not know enough scriptures to share them and answer questions,” “No one really cares what I have to say.” These are ALL ways that the enemy would cause us to be ineffectual in ministering the Spirit of God. This scripture tells us that dispensing the Spirit brings revelation of the new covenant, of salvation, and it makes others alive. I desire for you to be emboldened today. This scripture is not saying you are worthy and qualified because you can recite the letter of the Law. It is not saying that you need to be inherently social or outgoing. You are fit, worthy, and sufficient because the Spirit of God dwells on the inside of you and quickens your mortal body! This is the work of the indwelling of the Spirit that allows us to move in His thoughts, words, and actions!

So, as you spend time with the Lord in the morning, and then go about your day, something supernatural takes place that clothes us in glory, not in carnality. It can be by a word or an action that someone else gets a real dose of the Spirit of God that makes them feel alive in a way they have never experienced! As you and I are obedient to the voice of God, He does the rest. He will qualify every experience we have with DIVINE PURPOSE. Verse 8 says that the task of this ministry - of the dispensation of the Spirit – is to cause men to obtain and be governed by the Holy Spirit, and is attended with greater and more splendid glory!

What a holy task we have, and we do it in the power of God with strength, ability, and timing from Him!

Your sister in Christ,
Niki

WHOLEHEARTED

“BUT BECAUSE MY SERVANT CALEB HAS A DIFFERENT SPIRIT AND FOLLOWS ME WHOLEHEARTEDLY, I WILL BRING HIM INTO THE LAND HE WENT TO, AND HIS DESCENDANTS WILL INHERIT IT”

- NUMBERS 14:24

“BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT FOLLOWED ME WHOLEHEARTEDLY, NOT ONE OF THOSE WHO WERE TWENTY YEARS OLD OR MORE WHEN THEY CAME UP OUT OF EGYPT WILL SEE THE LAND I PROMISED ON OATH TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB”

- NUMBERS 32:11

The obvious difference between these two scriptures is that in one situation Caleb followed God wholeheartedly, and when he saw giants in the land God told him to possess, he did not even think twice about it. The Israelites, however, feared the giants and in Numbers 32 you can see God’s response. Wholeheartedly means that you do something with complete sincerity and commitment. There is no “fake it ‘till you make it” with wholeheartedness. There was a sense of trust and complete surrender in Caleb’s words when he said to the Israelites, “Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey” - Numbers 14:9.

Caleb had grabbed ahold of the miracle God had been doing for the Israelites since their release from Egypt and he realized that any lack or delay was not from God but because of the lack of faith the Israelites had.

I find this portion of scripture sad actually. To imagine that an entire nation of God’s people were freed from slavery and bondage and then provided for by God in the wilderness, only to deny God and His power and then to never see their promised land is incredibly sad. But God tells us the cause of their demise; they did not follow God wholeheartedly. If we know God’s promises from His word and we expect to see them without having to work for them or without following Him wholeheartedly, we will miss it. We will miss the blessings, the promises, and the milk and honey.

Confession for today: “God, I want to be like Joshua and Caleb who saw the land You promised them and ignored the giants they faced because they trusted You entirely. Help me to serve You with my whole heart as they did God. Holy Spirit, point out to me the areas that I have not yet turned over to God and help me to focus my attentions there, so that I can reach my promised land. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Believing with you,
Yvonne

A DEVOTION FOR OTHERS

Let us take some time to look at scripture that can be a prayer for someone else. Our devotion time and time in prayer, even as we drive, clean, cook, etc. is a time to break chains off of people. It can be a time to decree a miracle to take place. Remember, Jesus ministered to sinners that did not know Him. They received direct revelation, they were healed, their hearts were transformed and set free from the snares in which sin entangled them... so let's agree together today. These are some scriptures that I have turned into confessions – a weapon we should use all the time!

“Lord I pray that those around me bound by chains of addiction, idolatry, and distraction would not spend their money on what is not bread and their earnings on what does not satisfy. Thank you that they hearken diligently to God and eat what is good, and their souls delight in profuse spiritual joy.”
- Isaiah 55:2

“I decree in the Name of Jesus that the blinders the enemy has placed on the people around me to prevent them from discerning the Truth would be removed! I hold and engage my ministry by the mercy of God and I handle the Word of God honestly in every setting. I pray for the lost and perishing that the gospel would not be obscured and hidden, but CLEAR, UNDERSTANDABLE, and ILLUMINATED to them!
- 2 Corinthians 4:1-4

“Lord I pray that they would flee from the love of money and from temptation that would lead them into foolish, useless things. I decree that they will not be plunged into ruin and destruction. I stand in the gap for them and call them sheep in your pasture, walking in the full knowledge of salvation! They aim at and pursue righteousness, love, faith (add to the measure they've been given Lord!), and gentleness of heart. Lord I thank you that you turn people's hearts to You, exerting Your holy influence upon them.”
- 1 Timothy 6:9, 11; 2:4

“Thank you for our pastors and leaders, thank You Lord that they work with the superhuman energy that You so mightily enkindle within them today. Thank you that they are blessed in every area, as they instruct the flock in wisdom (comprehensive insight into the wisdom and knowledge of God). It is YOU they preach and proclaim, and are refreshed in Jesus' Name!”
- Colossians 1:28-29

Your sister in Christ,
Niki

MAKING UP YOUR MIND

“THE INTEGRITY [THAT’S TO DO THE RIGHT THING] OF
THE UPRIGHT [THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRYING TO DO
THE RIGHT THING], GUIDES THEM...”
- PROVERBS 11:3

In past months, I’ve used an illustration of a guardrail. So to review, the definition of a guardrail is: a system designed to keep vehicles from straying into dangerous or off-limit areas. Ultimately they are placed to protect you from extreme danger, and direct you back to a safe path. And when applied in our lives, it sets boundaries in keeping us from wrecking our lives, by protecting and directing us. So to wrap up this series, I’m going to go to the story of Daniel - how it all started for him, and for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Way back in 600 B.C., we see King Nebuchadnezzar marching all over the place and wreaking havoc, and in the process he is also taking back with him each nation’s best and brightest young men. His plan was to begin a training program in stripping away their entire heritage and all their beliefs, with a grand plan to mold them into Babylonians. What they were saying to the young men was, “you thought you were smart before, so forget your Masters - you’re getting ready to get your Ph.D. We’re going to give you a three year free, all paid for college education, with a food allowance that comes right off the king’s table.” In other words, most of the captives who found themselves in this program were high fiving each other going, “Oh, my gosh! We thought we were going to die in the desert. We thought we were going to die like our parents and grandparents. We thought we were going to work in the salt mines, the copper mines. We’re going to live in the palace, eat the king’s food, and they’re going to educate us. This is unbelievable.” And this is where the story of Daniel and his three amigos begins...

Daniel was so smart that he saw through the whole plan. He saw the end game and he realized: They’ve changed my clothes, they’ve changed my name, they’ve changed my habits, and they’ve changed my schedule. I realize where this is going. One day I will have completely abandoned everything I held near and dear. Here’s what the scripture tells us about what Daniel did... Daniel 1:8 “but Daniel made up his mind.”

He did this in placing a “guardrail,” in saying enough is enough—that’s as far as I go. That’s as close as I get, and if I go any further I’m going to end up wrecking my life. It didn’t matter that he could’ve had the best of everything, but in setting clear boundaries, he protected his relationship with God, and God honored him, along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And when it came time for them to graduate, this is what the scripture says...Daniel 1:20 “And in all matters requiring information and balanced judgment, the king found these young men’s advice ten times better than that of all the skilled magicians and wise astrologers in his realm.”

What happens from this point on in the story, because Daniel made up his mind—his decision to draw a line in the sand was the very thing God used to direct his entire life. In the end, don't decide the problem with a guardrail is "it keeps me from good things, it keeps me from having fun, it’s going to be so weird, my friends aren’t going to understand, it’s so extreme..." but choose to draw a line in the sand, to make up your mind. That decision, for many of you, will be a defining moment! You will look back and say, “God didn’t simply just protect me, but I feel like God directed or redirected my entire life because I made up my mind."

Confession for today: “Today, Jesus, I’m going to make up my mind to do the right thing, so that I will not only be protected, but You will direct my entire life in this crazy, mixed up world, in using me for Your purpose – just like Daniel.”

Living for Today,
Mr. Tom

OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE

“WHOEVER CONFESSES AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, GOD ABIDES IN HIM, AND HE IN GOD. WE HAVE COME TO KNOW [BY PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE], AND HAVE BELIEVED [WITH DEEP, CONSISTENT FAITH] THE LOVE WHICH GOD HAS FOR US. GOD IS LOVE, AND THE ONE WHO ABIDES IN LOVE ABIDES IN GOD, AND GOD ABIDES CONTINUALLY IN HIM.”

- 1 JOHN 4:15-16

Observation and experience are used as a foundation when it comes to learning anything. Think about a science lab, the first thing that happens after a new topic has been introduced is observation. You watch your teacher, or some other expert, complete the task. If you are truly invested in fully understanding the concept, you will carefully watch them, staying focused and avoiding distraction. After you have observed the process carefully, you are ready to try it yourself. This is your chance to experience what you have only been able to observe. After completing the task multiple times, you will become an expert and people may be sent to observe you. In 1 John 4:15-16, we read about the connection we should have to God's love. Our understanding isn't just based in the stories that we hear from others. In verse 16 it says, “We have come to know by personal observation and experience...” Observation is the action or process of observing something or someone carefully in order to gain information and experience by personally encountering or undergoing something. The way we come to know and understand God's love is through direct observation and experience. This means we have seen God's love work in the lives of others and have personally encountered His love for ourselves. Just like in our example, after we have observed and experienced God's love, we can't help but to share it with others. God's love is beaming from within us and we become experts in showing love, which allows others to observe and experience it for themselves.

Do you remember a time when you observed and experienced God's love? Spend some time thinking about that moment and how it has changed your life.

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

BE AS SALT

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, BUT IF SALT HAS LOST ITS TASTE (ITS STRENGTH, ITS QUALITY), HOW CAN ITS SALTINESS BE RESTORED? IT IS NOT GOOD FOR ANYTHING ANY LONGER BUT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRODDEN UNDERFOOT BY MEN.”
- MATTHEW 5:13

ADDITIONAL READING: GALATIANS 2:5 (PRESERVED),
COLOSSIANS 4:6 (SEASONED)

Salt, in the natural, is used to preserve and to season. When the Bible calls us 'the salt of the earth,' it is challenging us as believers to adopt these same traits and to apply them through our interactions with the world. Just as salt has an effect on everything that it comes into contact with, we as believers should be affecting change wherever we go.

We are to preserve the Truth of God's Word as we uphold a righteous and holy standard of living in a day and age when Truth is endangered! When we choose to commit ourselves fully to God's will and purpose for our lives, we are creating an environment which allows God's Word to survive and thrive through us, so it can be shared to those who are lost and hungry.

We are to season God's Word by enhancing its flavor to everyone we meet! When we live a joyful and passionate life focused around our love, relationship, and walk with Jesus Christ, we become living examples of how good God and His Word can taste!

The enemy would love to steal our 'saltiness,' our ability to preserve and to season, but we must fight to preserve the qualities that set us apart!

Fight the good fight of faith!
Jamie

BE AS LIGHT

“YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY SET ON
A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN.”
- MATTHEW 5:14

ADDITIONAL READING: MATTHEW 5:14-16, JOHN 1:5

Light, in the natural, can be put out, absorbed, and appropriated by darkness (John 1:5). We cannot allow Satan to do the same to the Light which shines through our lives as believers, which is the Truth of God’s Word on the inside of us.

Don’t let the enemy put out our Light! (Put an end to, cancel, or render void). If Satan can convince us to neglect our relationship with the Lord, he can cause our life, which should shine as beacon of Truth to the world, to fade away and die out. Stay on guard! Stay alert! Stay vigilant!

Don’t let the enemy absorb our Light! (Consume it, reduce the effect or intensity of it.) He seeks to cause us to compromise the true potential of the Light that we should be emitting. Don’t allow Satan to infiltrate, taint, intermingle with, muddy, or diminish God’s will and purpose for our lives with the things of this world.

Don’t let the enemy appropriate our Light! (Take what isn’t his and use it for his own will and purpose). If the Devil can get us off of our intended path and redirect us to a lifestyle of sin, what does that say to those around us who knew what we once stood for? Don’t be casual in your walk with the Lord, strive to stay committed!

When we seek first the kingdom of God, the darkness can never overpower the Light!

Fight the good fight of faith!
Jamie

MAINTAIN YOUR FIRE

“THAT IS WHY I REMIND YOU TO FAN INTO FLAME THE GRACIOUS GIFT OF GOD, [THAT INNER FIRE—THE SPECIAL ENDOWMENT] WHICH IS IN YOU THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF MY HANDS.”

- 2 TIMOTHY 1:6

Footnote in the Bible: In ancient times, embers were kept slowly burning so they could be fanned into flame at any time. As believers, we have some regular maintenance we need to do to keep the flames of our special endowment burning. Endowment here means: natural capacity, power, or ability. Basically, God has placed His power within us as our own endowment and it is our job to keep that power active. Let’s look at doing this from the natural perspective of maintaining a fire compared to maintaining our special endowment fire:

First, whoever is maintaining the fire has to poke the fire – this breaks up ash and separates the coals so they burn better. The Holy Spirit does this for us when we let Him in; He pokes at the things that need to change: our attitude, our friend group, our confession. As He pokes, He is making them burn better, longer.

Second, the fire maintainer has to clean up the ash – making sure the ash does not stifle the flames. Once the Holy Spirit has poked through some “coals” in our lives, there is going to be some ash that is leftover and needs to be cleaned up. Standing on scripture, you can begin the “cleanup” by changing your confession, speaking the word out over situations, and praying.

Lastly, don’t smother the flame with cold-coals – add them strategically. If the fire is dying down and needs additional fuel, it is best to place fresh coals into the fire one at a time in strategic locations rather than dump a pile of cold coals on top. How does this apply to our Spirit Man? Are you spending time regularly with God, or only as you need Him? If you are regularly spending time with God, then you are practicing the art of strategically refueling by placing “coals” in one at a time. If you only go to God when you need something, then you are dumping a whole bucket of cold coals on an already dying fire!

Believing with you,
Yvonne

PATIENCE

“BE STILL BEFORE THE LORD AND WAIT PATIENTLY
FOR HIM.”
- PSALMS 37:7

When we are impatient with God, we tend to try things on our own. When we try things on our own, they tend to go horribly wrong. Take the Israelites for example, once they left Egypt they were super impatient with God and His timing. When Moses went up the mountain to talk to God, the Israelites grew impatient very quickly. They didn't wait very long before they started gathering all the gold they could to build a new calf to worship. When Moses came back down from the mountain, the Israelites said they were worshipping a golden calf because they didn't know what happened to Moses (Exodus 32). That's like us saying, "Jamie, make us a god who will go before us because we don't know where Paulie went." Now you may say that sounds ridiculous, but the Israelites have always been the perpetual prodigal children.

When we don't wait on God's timing, we are saying that we don't trust Him to get us through situations. Let's talk about the Israelites choosing Saul. In 1 Samuel 8:9-18, Samuel tells the people exactly what God said would happen once they got a king. But the Israelites, being who they are, didn't listen. They didn't trust that God was doing what was best for them. They wanted to be like everyone else, became impatient with God's plan, and took things into their own hands. If that wasn't enough, they basically threw a hissy fit until they got a king. They picked Saul, and we all know how that ended up. If you read the book of Kings you'll see how often the Israelites strayed from God. They had a couple of bad kings who did wrong in the eyes of the Lord, but then they would have a good King who tore down the idols and did good in the eyes of the Lord. This was a perpetual cycle that went on for quite some time. The Israelites could have saved themselves a lot of pain and suffering if they had simply waited on the Lord. God had proven to them over and over again, that if they trusted in Him, He would do all he promised.

Patience is a spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22), and scripture makes it clear that God is pleased with us when we display this virtue: "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him" (Psalms 37:7), "for God is good to those who wait for Him" (Lamentations 3:25). Our patience often reveals the degree of trust we have in God's timing. We must remember that God operates according to His perfect eternal schedule, not ours. We should take great comfort in knowing that, when we wait on the LORD, we receive divine energy and strength.

ACTIVATE THE POWER

“NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO IMMEASURABLY
MORE THAN ALL WE ASK OR IMAGINE, ACCORDING TO
HIS POWER THAT IS AT WORK IN US.”
- EPHESIANS 3:20

As a Christian, you have the power of the Holy Spirit inside of you. But that power won't go to work until you put it to work! The Holy Spirit will not force Himself on you. He won't turn off your TV or music and throw you against the wall and say, "Listen to Me!"

No, He is a gentleman. He is sent to help you do what God wants, and to give you strength, wisdom, and guidance. The Holy Spirit is waiting on you to call on Him...but He will not do a thing until He is asked.

I am guessing that if Jesus came into your room and sat down you would drop everything to talk to Him. You wouldn't say "Jesus, I'm so happy to see you but I am so tired and I want to just sit here and watch TV...maybe I could make some time for you tomorrow." If Jesus came into your room, I am guessing you would drop to your knees and worship Him. You wouldn't care about how tired you were...you would jump at the opportunity to spend time with Him.

Well, the Holy Spirit is in you saying, "I'm here to help you and strengthen you. I want to comfort you today and give you wisdom and get that worry out of your life."

The Holy Spirit has things He wants to show you – things you've been beating your head against the wall trying to figure out. He is waiting there with the power to overcome every problem you come up against, or to help you make important decisions concerning your future. Take time to pray in the spirit. Pray in your own language. Pray and activate God's power in you today.

Confession for today: "I call on the Holy Spirit and pray in the spirit and His power works in me!"

Hugs,
Miss Lois

THE BIG PICTURE

“IN MY GREAT TROUBLE I CRIED TO THE LORD AND HE
ANSWERED ME; FROM THE DEPTHS OF DEATH I
CALLED, AND LORD, YOU HEARD ME!”
- JONAH 2:2

In the story of Jonah, God called Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh that they faced certain destruction if they refused to repent of their sins. Jonah wanted God to destroy them; he didn't want to see their people repent and receive God's forgiveness, so Jonah boarded a ship and headed in the opposite direction. You see, God's ways aren't always our ways. God gave Jonah a message that he didn't want to hear, much less obey. It didn't matter that the people of Nineveh were the enemies of Israel, God's compassion and forgiveness are for everyone. In the end, Jonah would have rather died than see his enemies be delivered. It took Jonah three days in the belly of the whale to realize that he needed to follow God's plan for his life. Jonah tried to do things his own way, and that way meant he had to suffer some consequences.

Even though Jonah quit on God, God never gave up on Jonah. God used numerous object lessons - a storm, a great fish, a large bush, a small worm, and a scorching wind - to teach Jonah about compassion and forgiveness. In spite of Jonah's resistance to God's call, God used him to save the lives of 600,000 Ninevites, 120,000 of whom were innocent children.

We all have the same choice Jonah did. We can do things God's way and receive His help and blessing, or we can do things our way and suffer the consequences. So when you are tempted to drag your feet or pout when life doesn't go your way, God is patient with us. In the end, because God sees the big picture, rather than running from God, we need to run to God, who is in control and will walk with us all the way.

Confession for today: “Jesus, I make the choice to run towards all that You have for me, knowing You see the big picture for my life. I know that in doing so You will cover and protect me through every circumstance. Please use me for Your plan and purpose, in all that I do.”

Living for Today,
Mr. Tom

THE PRUNING PROCESS

“I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER. ANY BRANCH IN ME THAT DOES NOT BEAR FRUIT [THAT STOPS BEARING] HE CUTS AWAY (TRIMS OFF, TAKES AWAY); AND HE CLEANSSES AND REPEATEDLY PRUNES EVERY BRANCH THAT CONTINUES TO BEAR FRUIT, TO MAKE IT BEAR MORE AND RICHER AND MORE EXCELLENT FRUIT. YOU ARE CLEANSSED AND PRUNED ALREADY, BECAUSE OF THE WORD WHICH I HAVE GIVEN YOU [THE TEACHINGS I HAVE DISCUSSED WITH YOU.]”

- JOHN 15:1-3

In our lives there are periods of growth and periods of waiting. During these periods of growth, it is very easy to trust God that everything is going to work out because we are experiencing the changes happening in our lives. On the other hand, the periods of waiting can be very difficult and can cause us to question our purpose because we think we aren't making any forward progress. The appearance of inactivity in our lives, while knowing we are meant for more, can be hard to deal with. However, the waiting periods we face only appear to be inactive slumps. In reality, God is constantly doing a work in us; He is working on our behalf even when we don't feel capable to do so.

In John 15:1-3, it says that we are cleansed and repeatedly pruned through God's Word given to us, so that we continue to bear fruit and to make our fruit richer and more excellent. This means that during the time we spend with the Lord, we are being perfected and prepped for our periods of growth. Just like a plant, the pruning process is meant to remove those things that are dormant and dying in our lives to make way for the fresh, new growth and development in our spiritual walks and everyday lives. The waiting periods you experience can feel purposeless, but know that God is preparing you for continued growth in Him and for new development and success in ways you can't begin to imagine.

Stay Strong and Carry On,
Carrington

THE VITAL UNION

“DWELL IN ME, AND I WILL DWELL IN YOU.
[LIVE IN ME, AND I WILL LIVE IN YOU.] JUST
AS NO BRANCH CAN BEAR FRUIT OF ITSELF
WITHOUT ABIDING IN (BEING VITALLY UNITED
TO) THE VINE, NEITHER CAN YOU BEAR FRUIT
UNLESS YOU ABIDE IN ME.”
- JOHN 15:4

Have you ever heard of MLA or APA format? I would guess that if you have ever written a paper or taken an English class, you have had to cite the sources of the information that you included in your paper, or were at least introduced to those two formats. For educators, it is extremely important that we identify who our sources are, so they are sure we aren't plagiarizing our work. In our spiritual walk, it is very important that we know who our source is, connect to Him, and remain connected to Him. In John 15:4, it says that we need to be vitally united to the Vine, and that we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Him. If something is vital to you, that means you need it to survive.

If we are cut off from God, separated from His Word and His Presence, we will not survive or be able to grow. God wants us to live a life full of Him and in Him, and in return He lives in us and with us. God is our provider and enables us to produce fruit as long as we stay connected to Him. When we live in God, we know who our source is. Connect to Him through His Word, and He holds on to us as we hold on to Him.

Stay Strong and Carry On,
Carrington