

VOL. 8

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

Hi everyone!

I am so happy to be writing this little note to you all!

Each devotion that was written comes from the personal experiences of your youth staff and God's love for you. I encourage you to look at them as special notes from us to you! They are not just words thrown onto a page, they are scriptures that have been life-giving to us, and now they can be the same for you.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Whenever you spend time in God's Word, you have another opportunity to come out different. As you sit down each day, ask yourself: What areas do I want to change? What areas do I need to strengthen? Are there situations that feel hopeless to me? What can I learn about my Abba Father?

When you keep specific questions in your mind, it helps focus your devotion time. Allow God's Word to do its job and be life changing to you each time you sit down and read it!

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

THINK, THINK, THINK

“CONSIDER WELL THE PATH OF YOUR FEET AND LET ALL YOUR WAYS BE ESTABLISHED AND ORDERED RIGHT.”
- PROVERBS 4:26

ADDITIONAL READING: PROVERBS 4:20-27

Today, let’s look at the word consider. Consider means to think carefully about, or especially, in order to make a decision. Wisdom is telling us that we should think carefully about the path we are on as we have decisions to make along the way. How do you consider your day? Do you think about your day and what points of vulnerability may be on your pathway? Points of vulnerability are areas that the enemy may be waiting to send a temptation or a hindrance to trip you up along your daily path. The great thing is that you can pray about situations that will arise before you get to them along your path. Maybe a teammate has been antagonizing you and you have been tempted to respond in anger. Maybe there is a test that you are studying for on a subject that is a challenge, and the temptation is to be anxious while you are studying. Another thing we learn from this verse is that we can determine what parts of our path can be ordered and made right. As you consider your steps, pray about the day before you start out so you can avoid confusion and pitfalls and be ready for any obstacles that may be in your way.

Think about what you know is ahead for your day and pray about it before you get to that point. Consider the day, pray about it, and as you pray and speak the Word over your day, it is as if you are laying down pavement to walk on a smooth road. When you do this, you will be ready for whatever is ahead of you on your path each day!!

As you consider your day, what can you pray about specifically?

Walk with the King...
Nikki

FEAR NOT!

“YOU WILL KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE,
WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON YOU, BECAUSE
HE TRUSTS YOU.”
- ISAIAH 26:3

God tells us over and over in His Word that we should fear not. So, what should we do when fear tries to creep in?

- FOCUS ON GOD - "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."- Isaiah 26:3

When you keep your mind focused on who God is and His love for you, you will not allow room for fearful thoughts.

- EXPECT GOD’S HELP - “My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.” - Psalm 62:5

Fear will make you expect the worst; keep your expectation on God’s promises and what God will do for those who put their trust in Him.

- ANSWER FEAR WITH GOD’S WORD - “But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written...” - Luke 4:4

Jesus answered the enemy’s twisted suggestions with God’s Word. Don’t let the enemy make twisted suggestions to you and make you fearful. Jesus is our example. Answer those suggestions with God’s Word!

- REPEAT! - “Is not My Word like a fire?” says the Lord, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” - Jeremiah 23:29

If fear tries to return, keep speaking God’s Word. God’s Word is a hammer and a sword! Keep swinging until fear is broken!

Here are some additional scriptures to read to encourage you not to fear: Isaiah 41:10, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 56:3, Psalm 56:11, Psalm 118:6, 1 John 4:18

Be salt and light,
Miss Dawn

A TENDER HEART

**“A MAN WHO REMAINS STIFF-NECKED AFTER
MANY REBUKES WILL SUDDENLY BE
DESTROYED - WITHOUT REMEDY.”
- PROVERBS 29:1**

I read a powerful article the other day and decided to share it with you because I believe it will be very enlightening to you!

“Some people, young and old, have the idea that when the Holy Spirit gives them direction, they can ignore it for a while if they want, then obey Him later when they are good and ready. They think, “Hey, I know what I am doing is wrong, but I will just do it a little longer, and then straighten things out with God.”

Let me warn you, that is an extremely dangerous thing to do. Because God says that when you refuse to listen to Him, your heart grows hard. It's not that God's compassion isn't there for you anymore, and it's not that He won't forgive you if you turned to Him for forgiveness. It's just that sin will block your heart to the point where you can't hear Him calling.

That's what happened to the Israelites. God was trying to bring them into the Promised Land, but they stubbornly refused to do what He told them to do. They thought they had good reasons, being full of fear and unbelief, they thought they would be destroyed.

It doesn't matter how good your reasons are for disobeying God. Disobedience will still hurt you and it will still harden your heart. They eventually were sent into the wilderness. He couldn't lead them into all the good things He had planned for them because they ignored His leading. He had to just let them wander around until all but two of them had died. He had to raise up a whole new generation of tenderhearted people before He could take them into the Promised Land. In the end, it took 40 years to take what should have been an 11 day trip!

The lesson is: don't play around with sin. When God tells you what you need to do, don't put Him off thinking it will be easier to do it later...IT WON'T BE, it will be HARDER.

When the Holy Spirit comes to correct you, follow His instructions and follow them quickly. Keep your heart tender. Obey God!

Confession for today: "I will quickly follow the Holy Spirit's instructions when He corrects me. As I obey Him, God's blessings come to me!"

Stay Connected

Mr. George

BUT GOD...

“JESUS LOOKED AT THEM AND SAID, “WITH MAN THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.”

- MATTHEW 19:26

“BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE AFRAID OR TERRIFIED BECAUSE OF THEM, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD GOES WITH YOU; HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU.”

- DEUTERONOMY 31:6

ADDITIONAL READING: EPHESIANS 2:4-8

But God...

I was so encouraged one day listening to the radio on the way to work when I heard this scripture (Ephesians 2:4) and it just super charged my spirit! I felt like the Holy Spirit just dropped in my spirit that no matter what you face during this day you can say, “BUT GOD “ so anything that comes after this beginning statement is possible, as with God everything is possible. I wanted to encourage you today that no matter what you face today or this week or down the road, you can face that situation and say, “BUT GOD.” In my life there have been thoughts of, “how am I ever going to learn all this information for this class?” or, “this person at school or work is just unbearable” or, “what am I going to do with myself in a couple years once this gravy train of a ride called high school ends?” (haha). No matter what the situation may be, when you start your prayer with “BUT GOD” you are casting all your cares unto Him, just like He asked us to do. Have faith that once you put the ball in God’s court He will take care of it! Is this an easy thing? Most definitely not, because naturally as humans we want to take on everything and solve problems on our own. What we must remember is there is a greater power than any one of us working on our behalf... Jesus left His Holy Spirit to help and guide us, so we must make sure we listen to Him! I just get so super charged when I think of this scripture in Ephesians 2:4... “BUT GOD!” So ponder on this and let it boost your faith and trust in God to do the impossible in your life! No matter the situation you face, God can make it happen!

Reflection: Take a second and think of situations or issues that you face that need to be spoken to with the start of “BUT GOD.” Pray about it and listen to what God wants to show or tell you about each issue you are facing.

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

Joey

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS WISELY

READ: PROVERBS 10:11,13,15,18-20,31-32

V.11-THE MOUTH OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE, BUT THE MOUTH OF THE WICKED CONCEALS VIOLENCE. **V.13**-WISDOM IS FOUND ON THE LIPS OF THE DISCERNING, BUT A ROD IS FOR THE BACK OF ONE WHO HAS NO SENSE. **V.15**-THE WISE STORE UP KNOWLEDGE, BUT THE MOUTH OF A FOOL INVITES RUIN. **V.18**-WHOEVER CONCEALS HATRED WITH LYING LIPS AND SPREADS SLANDER IS A FOOL. **V.19-20**-THE TONGUE OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS CHOICE SILVER, BUT THE HEART OF THE WICKED IS OF LITTLE VALUE. THE LIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS NOURISH MANY, BUT FOOLS DIE FOR LACK OF SENSE. **V.31-32**-FROM THE MOUTH OF THE RIGHTEOUS COMES THE FRUIT OF WISDOM, BUT A PERVERSE TONGUE WILL BE SILENCED. THE LIPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS KNOW WHAT FINDS FAVOR, BUT THE MOUTH OF THE WICKED ONLY WHAT IS PERVERSE.

Throughout this 10th chapter of Proverbs, we read about our words. Eight times in one chapter we read something pertaining to our words. This chapter teaches us how important the words are that we speak. We cannot hide what is in our hearts, because it is out of our hearts that our mouths speak. Matthew 15:18 says, "...for out of a person's heart the mouth speaks." Once words are spoken (or typed), you cannot take them back. What kinds of words are you speaking or typing to put out into the atmosphere? Are they "life giving" to those around you, or are they hurtful and destructive? Choose your words wisely, because in them carry the ability to bring life or death to everyone and everything around you!

Confession for today: "Holy Spirit, help my heart and my mouth to line up with Your Word and only speak life into every situation of my life. Help me keep my heart full of Godly things so my mouth only confesses good things."

Seek Him first!

Paulie

HEARKEN TO WISDOM

“BUT WHOSO HEARKENS TO ME (WISDOM) SHALL DWELL SECURELY AND IN CONFIDENT TRUST AND SHALL BE QUIET, WITHOUT FEAR OR DREAD OF EVIL.”
- PROVERBS 1:33

What an amazing gift that we have as believers: access to skillful and Godly wisdom. Proverbs 2:6-7 says that “the Lord gives skillful and Godly wisdom, from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding... the Lord stores up wisdom for the righteous.” So as Wisdom is available, stored up and ready to be distributed to us, let us hearken to it. Reading the Word of God daily, as well as bringing it with us during our day (written in our day planners, in our phones, etc) to rehearse it, is heeding the wisdom of the Word. As we spend more time in the Word and in prayer, the Holy Spirit will give us direct revelation and wisdom on a continual basis.

The wisdom that we receive from the Lord is not limited to a broad picture and scope of our lives. It does give us the steps and timing that we need to move into our God-given destinies, but it also is precise for the moments of the day. The word skillful paints the picture of accuracy and effectiveness. It lets us know that the Lord wants to give us the skills needed for success in His awesome plan. So whatever you are facing - maybe it is a new task, a new season, a tough conversation, a complicated social situation - trust that the Lord not only gives His ideas, but His skill to carry it out!

Proverbs 1:33 says that when we listen to wisdom, we shall live securely and confidently, and we shall be quiet, without fear or dread of evil.

Take a look at Proverbs 15:15. How does this scripture relate to Proverbs 1:33?

If you are battling despondency or the feeling that something bad is going to happen (evil foreboding), you can bind it up! That is a strategy of the enemy, to bring fear into our lives and for us to perceive our day through a lens of deception. Evil forebodings can keep us out of the timely Kingdom living that the Lord designed for the day, because our minds and emotions are tied up with dread. Cleave to Godly Wisdom today and apply what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. It may be in direct opposition to what the world may tell you, but Godly wisdom yields a peaceable result (James 3:17-18)!

Your sister in Christ,
Niki

YOUR TIME IS NOW

“'FOR I KNOW THE PLANS THAT I HAVE FOR YOU,' SAYS THE LORD”
- JEREMIAH 29:11

ADDITIONAL READING: MATTHEW 6:31-33,
PSALM 91:1, PROVERBS 3:5-6

Is it time for you to make a life changing decision? Maybe you are deciding on your educational future, or maybe you are wondering what your future will be like. If you have spoken to your family or friends, I am sure they have made suggestions on what they would do. But remember, God already has your future decided for you, and trust me...it is bright and full of promise!

Acts 17:26 says that God appoints your time and your place. The reason you are here right now is because God wants you here right now. You could have been born at any time in history, but God ordained your time and place. You are alive right now because God wants you alive now. That means there is something in your destiny that the world needs now, especially where you live, where you go to school, and the people you associate with. God and His infinite wisdom knows this, and with the help of the Holy Spirit it will be released.

Psalms 139:13-16 says, “You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. Your workmanship is marvelous – how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”

Before you were even born, before you were on earth even one single day, God wrote down the plans and a destiny He had for you. Before you were ever put into your mother’s womb, He recorded in His Book things about your life.

2 Timothy 1:9 says, “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our words, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

God has established your purpose. God has great plans for every one of us. Your future is bright and your destiny is good. His plans are only good and they are designed to give you a bright future, filled with hope.

It is now up to you to seek God’s plans for yourself. Get quiet with Him, pray, read the Word, study to see what your future is. Talk with the Holy Spirit and listen! Make sure you have quality time with the Holy Spirit. Don’t fit Him into your plans, rather fit yourself into His plans.

In John 14:27 it says, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give you, let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid.” I believe when you have heard from the Holy Spirit and you have the Peace of God concerning your situation/decision, you will be able to move forward, but only if you have the Peace of God...NO PEACE, NO GO!!

Confession for today: “Father God, in the name of Jesus I come before You seeking the plans and purpose You have for my life. I trust You and believe in my heart that You have only good things ahead for me. I cast all my cares on You and let go of them. Holy Spirit, please lead and guide me into what God has ordained for Me. I seek Your Peace in every decision.”

Stay Connected
Mr. George

FIRE

“YOU STOOD IN DEEP DARKNESS AND THICK CLOUDS.
GOD SPOKE TO YOU OUT OF THE FIRE. YOU HEARD THE
SOUND OF WORDS BUT YOU SAW NOTHING—NO FORM,
ONLY A VOICE.”

- DEUTERONOMY 4:11-12

Fire is pretty significant in the Bible. When God appeared to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, He appeared with the “Fire of Heaven.” In Deuteronomy 4:11-12 it says, “You stood in deep darkness and thick clouds. God spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but you saw nothing—no form, only a voice.” So the Israelites heard God’s voice for the first time through the fire. When we build our spiritual fire, we can hear God’s voice too.

Just like good fire, we only need a few things to build our spiritual fire. Tinder is the first thing that is needed. Tinder is the smallest type of wood you can find. It’s smaller than your pinky finger and essential to starting your fire. The tinder creates the spark that catches everything else on fire. Our decision to follow Jesus is the tinder of our spiritual fire. Making the choice to be a follower of Christ is the spark that we need to get the rest of our fire lit. We might feel as though this piece is small and insignificant, but we can’t start our spiritual fire without it. The next thing we need is the kindling. It’s the middle sized wood. It connects the spark to the bigger pieces. Without it our spark dies out quickly. The kindling is being in the Word and praying. This helps us stoke our fire. If we want to hear God’s voice like the Israelites did, then we need to be spending time to know His voice. John 10:26-27 says, “But you do not believe Me [so you do not trust and follow Me] because you are not My sheep. The sheep that are My own hear My voice and listen to Me; I know them, and they follow Me.” Address the Spirit throughout the day in ways that reflect His role in your life. The last thing we need is fuel. The fuel is the large wood that keeps our fire going. The fuel in our spiritual fire is our communion with the Holy Spirit. When we are in the Word and praying, we build up our fire. Then when we put our fuel on the fire by continuing our relationship, we keep our fire going.

Once we have our fire built, it's important to keep it going. But sometimes our flames go out and we are left with nothing but coals. When we're down to the coals we feel like we are really far away from God, but the reality is that the coals are the hottest part of the fire. The coal in our fire is God's infallible Word in our hearts. When we are down to coals, we are very similar to the Prodigal Son. We're off on our own and we realize that things were much better when we were at home. All we have to do is call our Father and ask Him to help us. You see, the only thing that you need to reignite coals is air. When you blow onto hot coals, the flames start back up. Add a little wood and your fire will be roaring once again. We need to ask God to blow His fresh Spirit into us and get back into reading God's word, praying, and communing with the Holy Spirit.

Love and Nuggs,
Amanda

GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

“FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP [HIS OWN MASTER WORK, A WORK OF ART], CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS [REBORN FROM ABOVE—SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMED, RENEWED, READY TO BE USED] FOR GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREDESTINED [FOR US] PLANNED BEFOREHAND [TAKING PATHS WHICH HE SET], SO THAT WE WOULD WALK IN THEM [LIVING THE GOOD LIFE WHICH HE PREARRANGED AND MADE READY FOR US].”
- EPHESIANS 2:10

As young followers of Christ, there is a phrase that is said so often that it can lose the true meaning. I remember when the time came for me to start making decisions about my future, everyone would say some form of “God has a perfect plan for your life.” At some point that phrase became less encouraging and more nerve-racking. I felt the weight of every single decision I made, and my mindset made them all the more difficult. I was so concerned that I would “miss” God’s purpose for me.

The truth is that God’s pre-destined and perfect plan doesn’t hinge on whether or not I “miss” it. I came to the realization that God’s perfect will for me was not solely based in my decision about college, career, friendships, or my spouse. His plan is based on His will for us, and it is laid plainly before us in scripture! Are you struggling to find God’s purpose for you? Start with five of the many great things God desires for you:

1. It is God’s will that you live a Holy life (2 Timothy 1:9)
2. It is God’s will that you prosper (Jeremiah 29:11)
3. It is God’s will that you have joy (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
4. It is God’s will that you have peace (John 14:27)
5. It is God’s will that you lead others to Him (Matthew 28:18-20)

When you start with the basics of what God has for you and measure your decisions through the truth of His Word, understanding His purpose for your life becomes a lot easier. If you are starting to make plans for your future, make sure it lines up with the basics of God’s will for your life! The Holy Spirit is our guide and He never fails us.

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

NOW IS THE TIME

“DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD OR THE THINGS IN THE WORLD. IF ANYONE LOVES THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM.”

- 1 JOHN 2:15

“FOR YOU YOURSELVES ARE FULLY AWARE THAT THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.”

- 1 THESSALONIANS 5:22

As we embark on another new year, plenty of people make New Year's resolutions that usually last about 3-4 weeks. There are some that stick to them, but according to the facts, 80% fail by February and only 8% of people keep their resolutions... sad really. People can be just as fleeting with their relationship with God. Fire hot one day and a week later hardly doing Bible studies. I am guilty of doing this in the past, and this devotion is for me as much as it is for you!

I want to encourage you not to think of the new year as setting goals in the natural, but a full changing of your heart, soul, and mind to the things of God. This is no time to be fooling around with your Christianity and faith. The devil is in full force and wants nothing more than to take you out! It doesn't matter how people are acting around you, one little slip up by you and you get in trouble for what other people get away with, or be looked at as a “fake Christian.” They will lose interest in what you have to say about faith. Believe me, people are watching. I feel they are always just a conversation away from coming to church and checking things out, as opposed to not being interested. Now is the time to get super charged and make a difference in this world. Now is the time to save the lost, and now is the time to be the light and salt of the earth. Now is the time because people need God now more than ever. They are hurting and looking for the answer. Be the direction to the answer for these hurting people! Make a heart change today as the new year starts to get real with God, and not just make a New Year's resolution that will fizzle away. Now is not the time to be fooling around or to be lukewarm, because the world is getting bad. Jesus is coming back soon, so don't be left behind.

Confession for today: “God, light a fire in me that can never be extinguished, and help me to stay on fire and win the lost for Christ!”

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

Joey

THEY'VE GOT IT ALL BACKWARD!

“DID YOU RECEIVE THE [HOLY] SPIRIT AS THE RESULT OF OBEYING THE LAW AND DOING ITS WORKS, OR WAS IT BY HEARING [THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL] AND BELIEVING [IT]? [WAS IT FROM OBSERVING A LAW OF RITUALS OR FROM A MESSAGE OF FAITH?] ARE YOU SO FOOLISH...? HAVING BEGUN [YOUR NEW LIFE SPIRITUALLY] WITH THE [HOLY] SPIRIT, ARE YOU NOW REACHING PERFECTION [BY DEPENDENCE] ON THE FLESH?”

- GALATIANS 3:2-3

The purpose of the Law in the Old Testament was not just to be a list of “Dos” and “Don'ts”...It goes much deeper than that. God’s intention in giving the Law was to expose mankind’s sinfulness, so that in turn, they would rely on faith in Him to escape from that sinfulness. Abraham was called righteous solely because of his faith in God, before the Law was ever given (Genesis 15:6). So if God says that having faith is righteousness, what does that say about our actions? They do not equate to righteousness. True faith, however, does result in our taking action, because if we truly believe the Word, we will be deeply compelled to act upon it. James 2:26 says, “...faith without works is dead.” So faith that isn't followed by actions is either very weak or non-existent. We can’t just have a relationship with God and be blessed by Him without that blessing eventually overflowing and affecting others. The Biblical metaphor of us “bearing fruit” is pretty helpful if you think it through: our faith is the tree and the roots, our actions, are the fruit. The tree isn’t “trying” to make fruit, it just happens. It’s effortless. Fruit grows because the tree is rooted in good ground. Likewise, we will develop godly actions the more we root ourselves in faith and the Word.

Based on this concept, any sinfulness in our lives is a direct result of a lack of faith in that area, or as the Amplified puts it, a lack of complete trust in and reliance on Jesus Christ for what we need or desire. It’s like in Mark 11 when Jesus cursed the fig tree. It’s as if that fig tree had no faith and was trying to trick Jesus, saying, “Look at me, Jesus! I’m all healthy and leafy green!” But Jesus saw right through that fig tree’s façade and said, “You ain’t got no fruit!” BAM! Dead tree. That’s like Christians who focus only on their “good deeds.” They have no faith and no real fruit which is the opposite of the Word! Don’t be like that! Have faith and focus on your relationship with God. Then your actions will follow.

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

BUSY BODY

“AS JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE ON THEIR WAY, HE CAME TO A VILLAGE WHERE A WOMAN NAMED MARTHA OPENED HER HOME TO HIM. SHE HAD A SISTER CALLED MARY, WHO SAT AT THE LORD’S FEET LISTENING TO WHAT HE SAID. BUT MARTHA WAS DISTRACTED BY ALL THE PREPARATIONS THAT HAD TO BE MADE. SHE CAME TO HIM AND ASKED, “LORD, DON’T YOU CARE THAT MY SISTER HAS LEFT ME TO DO THE WORK BY MYSELF? TELL HER TO HELP ME!” “MARTHA, MARTHA,” THE LORD ANSWERED, “YOU ARE WORRIED AND UPSET ABOUT MANY THINGS, BUT FEW THINGS ARE NEEDED—OR INDEED ONLY ONE. MARY HAS CHOSEN WHAT IS BETTER, AND IT WILL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HER.”

- LUKE 10:38-42

I often find that it’s easy to stay busy with the cares of this world rather than take a quiet moment to hear from God. There are so many distractions and endless lists of to-dos in our lives today, that unless we make a point to shut them out, we will continuously be bombarded. Notice that in this passage, Jesus was staying at Martha’s house, not Mary’s. Not only was Mary also a guest in her sister’s home, but she wasn’t helping to host this more important guest: Jesus. The amplified version says in verse 40, “But Martha [overly occupied and too busy] was distracted with much.” Martha was clearly overwhelmed with the task of hosting Jesus and His disciples, but all Mary wanted to do was sit at the feet of Jesus and listen. Have you ever read this portion of scripture and asked yourself where you would be if you were at Martha’s house that day? Would you be helping to ease Martha’s stress and help her do the dishes, or would you be at the feet of Jesus soaking up every word He said? For some, a to-do list is hard to resist. Checking off things on a list and getting caught up doesn’t sound like a bad thing at all. However, it’s when we allow the to-dos to get in the way of taking time to hear from God that it becomes a problem. In the end, Jesus explains to Martha that her sister has chosen to do what is better. Sitting at His feet is where He wants us to be. Not only taking time in the morning and giving God the first fruits on our day, but living our lives with a heart attitude of always being open to hear from the Holy Spirit.

Keeping our thoughts close to Him and our ears inclined to His voice, always filtering out the distraction and cares of this world so that we can be open to hear what He wants to say to us. That is where He wants us to be.

Confession for today: “Lord God, forgive me for allowing myself to become distracted with the cares of this world. I want to hear Your voice more and be open to Your Holy Spirit’s instruction as I go through my day. I need Your help to filter out the clutter in my mind so that I can focus more on You throughout my day. Lord, thank you for giving me Your Holy Spirit who speaks to me and gives me clarity to understand Your instructions. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Let your light shine,
Bre

A WORLD OVERCOMER

“DO NOT CONFORM ANY LONGER TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD’S WILL IS - HIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL.”
- ROMANS 12:2

Do not let yourself become like the world. If you live like the world, you will be beaten by its system...it’s as simple as that. So do not let the world squeeze you into its mold! Instead...“be transformed” by the entire “renewing of your mind.” Overcome the world by thinking in a new way – like God thinks. In other words, when you see something in the Bible, say “I agree with that. From now on I’m believing that instead of what I used to think.” For example, if you find yourself with ungodly friends and the conversation starts to turn into gossiping, sex, drugs, alcohol, or making fun of someone that may have different interests than you, don’t give into the temptation to join in. Rather, agree with what the Bible says and turn away from it. If you don’t know what the Bible says about that situation, open the Good Book up and find out what it says about it.

Young people, we are in the last days and Satan is coming at you with everything and anything he can to get you off track. It may seem hard to keep it all on track, but with the Word, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, you can do it!! Be an overcomer and a world changer...it is no accident you are here for such a time as this. God needs you focused on Him and His Word to be an overcomer and world changer.

Confession for today: “By my faith, I am an overcomer and a world changer.”

Remember, your words are your servants, so use them to bring change into your World!!

Hugs,
Miss Lois

BORDERLINE BELIEVER OR FAITHFUL FOLLOWER

“AGAIN JESUS SPOKE TO THEM, SAYING, “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.”

- JOHN 8:12

Warren Wiersbe states in "Be Strong" that, “A Borderline Believer is a believer who compromises with the world, is complacent, and has a half-hearted commitment to the Lord.” Have you experienced a time when you truly want to be a faithful believer but can’t seem to follow through with being Christ-like? Maybe you feel like you are a borderline believer. The Good news is, this can change! You can be a Faithful Follower of Christ today and from now on. A Faithful Follower of Christ is a Christian with no compromise in their walk, someone who is fully committed and actively working out their salvation. This is a choice we each need to make because we can’t succeed as believers if we are unstable in our commitment, double minded, or uncertain in our hearts. It is when we are fixed and determined in our hearts that we will follow Jesus wholeheartedly in every step we take. It starts in our hearts and is a pre-set to each day. Preset your mind by declaring, “I will follow after the Lord today. I will walk in step with the Holy Spirit with each step I take...” We can start with utilizing the Word as a guideline on how to be a Faithful Follower. Make the Ten Comments into a confession to keep as a guard over your thoughts and the intents of your heart:

I will love God with all I am.

I bow my heart to God alone.

No curses will come out of my mouth, and I will honor His name in all I say.

I set aside God’s day to worship Him and serve and learn of Him.

I will respect, honor and obey my parents each day.

I will speak life to those around me.

I am kind, honorable and trustworthy.

True to my first love I will stay.

Today I will be happy and grateful for all I have.

As you do this you will move from a Borderline Believer to a Faithful Follower!!

Walk with the King...

Nikki

OPPORTUNITIES!!

“SO FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, I AM WELL PLEASED AND TAKE PLEASURE IN INFIRMITIES, INSULTS, HARDSHIPS, PERSECUTIONS, PERPLEXITIES AND DISTRESSES; FOR WHEN I AM WEAK [IN HUMAN STRENGTH], THEN AM I [TRULY] STRONG (ABLE, POWERFUL IN DIVINE STRENGTH) LIFE.”
- 2 CORINTHIANS 12:10

ADDITIONAL READING: ROMANS 8:17-22

What now? Take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses? Is this a misquote in the Bible? Why would God tell us to ‘Take pleasure’ in these things? This is a scripture verse which describes a mature believer. It takes someone with great faith to see negative situations not as problems, but as opportunities!

Our weaknesses and times of suffering are opportunities for us to put our faith in God and trust Him to do a work on our behalf! It is only through faith that we can honestly say, “Lord, when I am weak, then I am strong!” Because we aren’t relying on our own human strength to get us through, but on God’s supernatural strength to carry us through and to bring us victory!

Our responsibility is to see situations through eyes of faith, and to put our trust in our Savior! And to always, always, always, “for the sake of Christ” give God all the glory, so that His Name will be glorified as a testimony and witness to everyone around us.

Learn to see things not as they are in the natural, but as they will be by faith!

Fight the good fight of faith!
Jamie

OVERCOME FRUSTRATIONS

“FOR THE CREATION (NATURE) WAS SUBJECTED TO FRAILTY (TO FUTILITY, CONDEMNED TO FRUSTRATION), NOT BECAUSE OF SOME INTENTIONAL FAULT ON ITS PART, BUT BY THE WILL OF HIM WHO SO SUBJECTED IT—[YET] WITH THE HOPE THAT NATURE (CREATION) ITSELF WILL BE SET FREE FROM ITS BONDAGE TO DECAY AND CORRUPTION [AND GAIN AN ENTRANCE] INTO THE GLORIOUS FREEDOM OF GOD’S CHILDREN.”

- ROMANS 8:20-21

We are faced, sometimes daily, with frustrating situations. We are faced, often harshly, with the frailty of our humanity. We are faced, brutally, with twisted statements made by twisted people. "Why?" our hearts cry out. "Why must we put up with all of this garbage?" Romans 8:20 & 21 lays it out quite plain and simple. We were “made subject to” these frailties and frustrations in the hope that we might be set free. We are set free from these things by realizing that we don't need that frustrating situation to go our way in order to be at rest in our souls. We are set free from frailty by letting go and understanding that we don't need to be all-powerful to have perfect peace. We were made subject to these frustrations in the hope that we might overcome our bondage to decay and regression caused by arguments, lashing out against others, and self-pity.

Even as we realize our own frailty, we can remain confident and steadfast because God is Almighty. In the middle of unsettling situations we can remain calm because God is our perfect Peace. When staring twisted minds and twisted ideas in the face, we can retain our joy because our joy doesn't come from the prosperity or righteousness of humanity. Our joy comes from the throne room of Heaven, where it cannot be corrupted or stolen. Remember all this as you face your day. These lyrics say it well: "The chains that seem to bind you serve only to remind you that they drop powerless behind you when you praise Him,” (“Praise the Lord” by The Imperials). Remember that as you face frustrations, they only serve to remind you that they are not what control your joy. God is, and He is all we ever need in this life. With Him, even when we have nothing, we have everything we’ll ever need.

Pursue your purpose in Him,
Anthony B.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE FUTURE

In Matthew chapter 6, Jesus teaches us that we should not be worried or anxious about our lives. In verse 25 He said, “Therefore I tell you, stop being perpetually uneasy (anxious and worried) about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink; or about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life greater [in quality] than food, and the body [far above and more excellent] than clothing?”

It can be overwhelming to think about the future when we don't know what's ahead. We may wonder how we will pay for a car, a place to live, or how we will pay for college, etc. God is not oblivious to the fact that we will need all of those things. If we truly believe that God has a plan for our lives, we need to remember just that. God is a planner (Jeremiah 29:11). God is not trying to figure out our lives as we go along. He sees where we are today, He sees where we are heading, and He knows what we will need. There will never be a time in our lives when God is not able to handle our situation or provide us with what we need. He knows what He's doing and He is never caught by surprise. So, what should we be doing? The key is found in Matthew 6:33. It says, “But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.”

Our job is to seek God's plan first, do things His way first, and all that we need will be taken care of. We don't need to be worried or anxious. We need to be attentive to God and seek Him first. As we start a new year, make a commitment to seek God FIRST and do things His way. Then we'll walk in peace about the future, and worry and anxiety will be a thing of the past.

Additional Reading: Philippians 4:19, 1 Corinthians 2:9, Psalm 9:10, Psalm 34:10

Be salt and light,
Miss Dawn

'TIS THE SEASON

“HE SAID TO THEM, 'IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH AND KNOW WHAT TIME BRINGS (THE THINGS AND EVENTS OF TIME AND THEIR DEFINITE PERIODS) OR FIXED YEARS AND SEASONS (THEIR CRITICAL NICHE IN TIME), WHICH THE FATHER HAS APPOINTED (FIXED AND RESERVED) BY HIS OWN CHOICE AND AUTHORITY AND PERSONAL POWER.'”
- ACTS 1:7

The seasons of our lives shift and ever-change. We all have come to know through experiential knowledge that one season prepares us for the next. The Lord told me years ago to thank Him for the beauty in every season. Be encouraged that all believers can relate to the fact that some seasons are easier than others. It is easier to appreciate and value the seasons of bounty, goodness, rest, and breakthrough. But what about the seasons of waiting, of resistance, of trial and testing? Proverbs tells us that trials chisel us. That is not a beautiful feeling, but the outcome is. The preparation that takes place during these seasons can only be fully realized in the next season, when we can look back and say, “God, you had me the whole time, if I had not dug in in that season, I would not be where I am now, spiritually or in the natural.” In the winepress, the character of Christ develops in us, His holiness in us increases, and then people can see the beauty of the Lord on us (Psalm 90:17).

We do not have to be acquainted with the timing of events and seasons, but we can rest and rejoice in the fact that the Lord sees it all, watches over us through it all, and appoints seasons of our lives by His choice! This comes down to trusting Him. Do we trust Him enough to believe that by His personal power He has laid out the timeline of our lives? Do we trust Him enough to allow Him to see us through the tough seasons to a place of rest and breakthrough? It is not in our own strength that we progress through seasons. Often believers try, in their own strength, to advance to a new season prematurely. When we force doors to open and close, we step out of God’s will. When our flesh says, “I’m ready,” the Spirit of God may say, “Not yet.” We need to fine tune our intimacy with the Holy Spirit so we do not miss or spurn these prompts.

Reflect on the season you are in, and the one you came out of. How does Acts 1:7 encourage you?

Your sister in Christ,
Niki

YOU ARE INVITED

“COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST”
- MATTHEW 11:28

Those are the words of Jesus and He is inviting us to come to Him. How amazing! We get so wrapped up sometimes in what is in front of our faces that we forget that we have been invited by the King of kings and Lord of lords to spend time with Him and find rest with Him. At times I catch myself getting caught up in what other people are doing or paying too much attention to what others are thinking. None of it matters!

Sometimes we tire ourselves out with things that are meaningless and useless. We spend our “extra” time surfing the web or scrolling through social media when we could be spending time with our Heavenly Father. It is for our own benefit that God allows us to come to Him, but still we struggle to do it.

Accept God’s invitation and spend time with Him, listen to worship music, pray for your situation and your family members. You will see an instant turn around in your own attitude and in how things are going in your life. Hebrews 4:8-13 (The Message) – “And so this is still a live promise. It wasn’t canceled at the time of Joshua; otherwise, God wouldn’t keep renewing the appointment for “today.” The promise of “arrival” and “rest” is still there for God’s people. God himself is at rest. And at the end of the journey, we’ll surely rest with God. So let’s keep at it and eventually arrive at the place of rest, not drop out through some sort of disobedience. God means what He says. What He says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon’s scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is impervious to God’s Word. We can’t get away from it-no matter what.”

Don’t miss out on God’s rest and His promises.

Take action: How do you plan to find rest in God?

Believing with you,
Yvonne

YOU HAVE THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

"BEHOLD! I HAVE GIVEN YOU AUTHORITY AND POWER
TO TRAMPLE UPON SERPENTS AND SCORPIONS, AND
[PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STRENGTH AND ABILITY]
OVER ALL THE POWER THAT THE ENEMY [POSSESSES];
AND NOTHING SHALL IN ANY WAY HARM YOU."
- LUKE 10:19

The Meaning of Authority is delegated power, and this power has been given to each and every one of us because of the blood Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary. When Jesus went into hell and defeated the devil, He took all authority that the enemy thought he had and transferred it over to us! You now have the Authority of God to stop the enemy dead in his tracks whenever you feel like he is coming at you in any way. This authority is yours, whether you feel like you've got it or not, because authority has nothing to do with feelings. If I bought you a brand new Jet Ski and handed you the keys and title of ownership, the Jet Ski is yours even though you didn't buy it. As long as you have those keys, you have the authority to ride the Jet Ski any time you want, even though you never did anything to obtain it and you were just given the keys to it. The authority we have in Jesus is the same thing because we don't go by how we feel or what we've done. We just go by what we know, and that is that Jesus already paid the price for us on the cross. It's up to you to exercise the authority that belongs to you everyday! Just knowing this isn't enough. It is the knowledge acted upon that brings results! You exercise this authority by speaking the word toward what the enemy is attacking you with. Just like Jesus spoke to the enemy when He was being tempted..."It is written" and the enemy had no more authority over Him at all. Use the sword of the spirit, the spoken word of God, and put the enemy in his place - defeated!

Confession for today: "Holy Spirit, help me realize and utilize my authority in Jesus' name over the enemy every time he tries to come at me and make me feel like I have no power to overcome him. Give me the power, by the Word of God, to walk in divine authority over every obstacle that would try to keep me from total victory in Jesus' name!"

Seek Him First!
Paulie

THE ABIGAIL WAY

“DON’T REPAY EVIL FOR EVIL. DON’T SNAP BACK AT THOSE WHO SAY UNKIND THINGS ABOUT YOU. INSTEAD, PRAY FOR GOD’S HELP FOR THEM, FOR WE ARE TO BE KIND TO OTHERS, AND GOD WILL BLESS US FOR IT.”
- 1 PETER 3:9

The way of God isn’t appealing when someone else has wronged us. Our natural urge is to try to get even...we want payback that seems just, it seems fair, but does it solve anything? In the end, aren’t we just acting as the other person is? Today, we are going to look at a story in 1 Samuel 25, to see how Abigail avoided disaster for her household by repaying good for evil, and was blessed.

In our passage, while David was still a fugitive, he sent down ten of his men from the wilderness to a local man who was very wealthy, in trying to obtain provisions and food for themselves during the festive season. The man’s name was Nabal (meaning “fool”), and as the Bible verses reference, he was “stubborn, and ill-mannered.” So even though David attempted to use kindness to appeal to this man, Nabal did nothing but throw insults (evil for good) at David and his men. When the men reported back to David, his response was to tell his men – “get your swords,” even strapping on his own. Luckily, Nabal was married to Abigail, who the Bible says, “Was a very beautiful and intelligent woman.” So when it was reported back to her to what Nabal said to David and his men, she did some fast thinking and faster talking to intervene on what was about to happen.

The Bible says she gathered up provisions and food to take to David and his men, and went out to meet him as he was coming to repay evil for evil. When she saw David, she immediately bowed down before him, and began to treat him as the man she hoped he really was. She then begins to speak to David for his potential and future, telling him that God has something great for him, a “lasting dynasty” and because he fights God’s battles, he is a good man and not a wrongdoer. She continues to tell David that his life is so secure that no one can take it, because God is saving him for something specific. And if that wasn’t enough to convince David, she continues to make a point that “when you become king, do you really want this needless act of bloodshed on your conscience?”

In Old Testament law, David had every right to act in vengeance – “eye for eye,” “tooth for tooth” because he was insulted, but because Abigail saw the bigger picture in repaying good for evil, she convinced David to change his mind, and kept him on a path of a greatness for God’s purpose. In the end, Nabal died and Abigail became David’s wife, and they were blessed!

No story in the Bible is by accident, and even though we don’t know if David and Abigail lived happily ever after, we saw by Abigail’s actions that she had already completed Jesus’ “Golden Rule” (Matthew 7:12). Acting like Abigail is our best opportunity to be Christ-like in repaying good for evil when we are wronged or insulted. In the end, this is what Jesus did for us, in showing us grace in doing something we didn’t even deserve. So when you’ve got an opportunity, don’t settle for getting even – even is easy, make it remarkable, just like Abigail!

Confession for today: “Today, Jesus, when I’ve been placed in a position where I feel I’ve been wronged or insulted, help me to be like Abigail. In doing so, I’m going to act Christ-like in showing kindness and speaking blessings, instead of trying to get even over those who choose to act foolishly against me and what I believe. Help me always repay good for evil, because I know I will be blessed!”

Living for Today,
Mr. Tom

WALKING OUT GOD'S PERFECT WILL FOR YOUR LIFE

“FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP [HIS OWN MASTER WORK, A WORK OF ART], CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS [REBORN FROM ABOVE—SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMED, RENEWED, READY TO BE USED] FOR GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREDESTINED [FOR US] PLANNED BEFOREHAND [TAKING PATHS WHICH HE SET], SO THAT WE WOULD WALK IN THEM [LIVING THE GOOD LIFE WHICH HE PREARRANGED AND MADE READY FOR US].”
- EPHESIANS 2:10

The word predestined means that something is decreed, determined, appointed, or settled beforehand. Ephesians 2:10 says that we are created to live a life that is predestined to be filled with great things that God prearranged for us! That is encouraging, but it could also be a little intimidating if you are unsure of how to keep yourself within that predetermined path. It is important to start with knowing God's will for your life, which is laid out for us in His word and should be the measuring stick for our decisions. We know that God's will is for us to live a Holy life, that we prosper, have joy, have peace, and lead others to Him. Just because we know God's will for us doesn't mean that it is active in our lives. In order to live a life based on God's will, we have to be consistent in our choice to serve God. Here are four steps to walking out God's perfect will for your life:

1. Identify yourself with Christ
2. Submit your whole self to God and trust Him (Proverbs 3:5-6)
3. Pray and spend time with God (Romans 12:2)
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you; then listen and obey (John 10:14-15 & 27) (I Thessalonians 5:19)

When you are in the habit of following each of these commands from God's Word, it is easier to make Godly decisions that line up with His perfect will. Knowing what God's will is for you is only part of the picture. When we take action and apply God's Word to our lives we will see the fullness of His plan come into full view!

Find peace in His embrace,
Jasmine

"JUST KEEP SWIMMING, JUST KEEP SWIMMING, SWIMMING, SWIMMING..."

“DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD’S WILL IS—HIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL.”
- ROMANS 12:2

"What do we do? We swim, swim, swim..."

This catchy phrase sung by Dory in a favorite Disney Movie can remind us to keep swimming upstream. Salmon swim upstream, which by definition, means against the current or toward the beginning. This is how you should feel as you walk about your day in your world, as if you are swimming against the current. If this is you, then as a Believer you are going in exactly the right direction and are being led by the Holy Spirit! You are headed toward your beginning, which is Jesus. He is our life source, our starting point, and our finish line!

However, as we swim upstream, we are always fighting against the current. Every day you are swimming against the current of how the world thinks and acts, how the culture is currently telling us how to live our lives. It is a fight upstream, but you are fully equipped to swim in this direction, just like God fully equipped the salmon to do so!!

The added bonus of you staying upstream in your living pattern is that those that live downstream from you will benefit. The things that take place in a river upstream will affect the living creatures that live downstream. You can change the environment of others by swimming upstream on a daily basis!

Do you need to change your daily swimming pattern to get out of the world’s current and start swimming “upstream?”

Walk with the King...
Nikki

A CLEAN SLATE

“WHEN YOU WERE STUCK IN YOUR OLD SIN-DEAD LIFE, YOU WERE INCAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO GOD. GOD BROUGHT YOU ALIVE—RIGHT ALONG WITH CHRIST! THINK OF IT! ALL SINS FORGIVEN, THE SLATE WIPED CLEAN, THAT OLD ARREST WARRANT CANCELED AND NAILED TO CHRIST’S CROSS.”

- COLOSSIANS 2: 13-14

ADDITIONAL READING: “THEREFORE, [THERE IS] NOW NO CONDEMNATION (NO ADJUDGING GUILTY OF WRONG) FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO LIVE [AND] WALK NOT AFTER THE DICTATES OF THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE DICTATES OF THE SPIRIT. FOR THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE [WHICH IS] IN CHRIST JESUS [THE LAW OF OUR NEW BEING] HAS FREED ME FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND OF DEATH...”

- ROMANS 8:1

We have all made bad choices, made questionable decisions, gone somewhere we had no business being, and even blatantly disobeyed God’s commands. Along with that, we have all faced the feeling of condemnation that often accompanies disobedience or wrongdoing. That feeling of condemnation is like a deadly virus that over time wears on us, making us less effective for the kingdom of God. We have to recognize that condemnation is a self-inflicted feeling and not actually something that we face. Romans 8:1 states that we are set free from the law of sin and death because we are led by the Spirit, and therefore face no condemnation. Sometimes it may be difficult to comprehend that by simply trusting God and being sensitive to His Spirit, we are set free and forgiven. God’s unconditional love that grants us this forgiveness is a difficult concept to accept by most, because in our everyday lives there is always give and take, payment and receipt, choices and consequences. God’s love covers all, and in order to receive God’s love we must believe that He loves us. Colossians 2:13-14 tells us that through Christ’s ultimate act of love on the cross for us we are forgiven of our sins and given a clean slate to work with. Condemnation has no rule in our lives. We have freedom from sin and a new beginning through Christ’s love.

Stay Strong and Carry On,
Carrington

DON'T GIVE FEAR A SEAT AT THE TABLE

“FOR GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF
FEAR, BUT OF POWER AND OF LOVE AND OF A
SOUND MIND.”
- 2 TIMOTHY 1:7

As a little background, this scripture that we hear spoken out so often is part of a letter Paul wrote to Timothy while he was imprisoned. Paul was close to his death while he wrote this and yet, he is encouraging Timothy and all other believers to not fear. Seems to me that he had every earthly reason to have fear in his situation, and yet he takes time to write to other believers about having no fear. Paul wants believers to recognize that God has given us the opportunity to live free from fear and to live in victory, but it is our choice to walk in that! Paul was choosing to put down his fears and encourage others while he was imprisoned instead of throwing himself a pity party and living in fear of what was to come. We may not ever have to deal with being imprisoned for our beliefs (Thank God!), but we definitely face things each day that threaten our peace, our joy, and our relationship with God.

In this same sentence, Paul tells Timothy the key to resisting fear is the Holy Spirit. He reminds Timothy that God gave us the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit’s job is to literally help us when we call on Him. He will lead us, guide us, and give us direction and wisdom. All we have to do is obey the Word and call on the Holy Spirit for help.

What have you been obsessing over and feeling fear about?

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you with this situation:

“Heavenly Father, I thank you that You have sent your Holy Spirit to help us as we walk through life. Holy Spirit, I have been fearful about ----- and I need Your help to find peace and direction in this area. Help me to hear Your still, small voice and to be led in the direction I should go. Thank you for this in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Believing with you,
Yvonne

THE PRODIGAL SON

“A CALM AND PEACEFUL AND TRANQUIL HEART IS
LIFE AND HEALTH TO THE BODY, BUT PASSION AND
ENVY ARE LIKE ROTTENNESS TO THE BONES.”
- PROVERBS 14:30

We all know the story of the Prodigal Son. The younger son takes his inheritance early, squanders it all on “wild living,” then takes a job feeding pigs, and eventually, longs to eat the food for the pigs. The son suddenly remembers his dad and plans to go home and ask for forgiveness and mercy. The father, who has been watching and waiting, receives his son back with open arms of compassion. Meanwhile, the older son boils in anger when he comes in from working the fields to discover a party with music and dancing to celebrate his younger brother's return.

The story often focuses on the younger son and how heaven celebrates with joy when the lost are found. How many of us don't identify with the younger son, but the older one who stayed? We often feel jealous or slighted when our actions aren't acknowledged or celebrated. We want the same celebration as the one who left, all because we stayed. One thing we fail to notice about the older son is his corrupt heart. His heart is characterized by anger, envy, self-righteousness, contempt, and pettiness. The older brother even goes as far as to refuse to attend the celebration or even go in his father's house. Since the older brother refuses to go into the house, he is excluded from everything that his father has to offer. He's missing out on what is rightfully his because he's in his feelings.

Jealousy is as old as time, and oftentimes when dealing with jealousy it involves wants rather than needs. When we are too busy looking at how God is dealing with others, we miss out on what God has for us. God has more than enough for us as well as everyone else. What God has in mind for you isn't the same as for someone else. You don't have to feel bad that you don't have all the qualities, features, money, or anything else that someone else has. As you go through your week, ask yourself, am I missing out on what God has for me because I'm focused on what He has for other people?

Love and Nuggs,
Amanda

MAJOR IN MERCY

“THEN MOSES SAID, ‘NOW SHOW ME YOUR GLORY.’”

-EXODUS 33:18

What would you say is the most outstanding and most important characteristic about God? You can find the answer in Exodus 33, where Moses is asking God to show him His Glory. The word “Glory” can be translated as “heavy weight.” It refers to the heaviest, biggest thing about someone. It’s the totality of their worth. So what Moses was actually saying was, “Lord, I want to see the biggest thing about you. I want to know Your greatest attributes.” What did God say in response?

Chapter 34:6-7 tells us, “The Lord passed in front of Moses and said, ‘I am the Lord. The Lord is a God who shows mercy and is kind. The Lord does not become angry quickly. The Lord has great love and faithfulness. The Lord is kind to thousands of people. The Lord forgives people for wrong and sin...’”

Just think about that! When Moses asked God to show him the most important thing about Himself, God showed him His mercy. That means if you and I are to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1) we must major in mercy also. Mercy, goodness, forgiveness, and compassion must mark our behavior above all else. When someone talks behind your back or gossips about you, you must major in mercy and forgive them immediately. When you see someone who is picked on, you must major in mercy and lift them up instead of putting them down. You’ll see – major in mercy and others will see God’s Glory in you!

Confession for today: “I imitate God – His mercy, goodness, forgiveness and compassion mark my life.” (Exodus 33:18)

Don’t forget...Have what you say, rather than saying what you have!
Have a blessed day!!

Hugs,
Miss Lois

BEING UNCONVENTIONAL

“DO NOT LOOK AT HIS APPEARANCE OR AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS STATURE, BECAUSE I HAVE REJECTED HIM. FOR THE LORD SEES NOT AS MAN SEES; FOR MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.”

- 1 SAMUEL 16:7

On Sept. 5, 1906, St Louis University quarterback Bradbury Robinson threw football’s first legal forward pass. From that point forward, when throwing a football on playing fields, in backyards, or gym classes, everyone was taught to hold and throw a football a certain way. Hold the football with your ring and little fingers crossing the laces and your thumb underneath. Your index finger should be over the seam, and your thumb and index fingers should make an “L” shape. Position the ball near you ear, and face in 90-degree direction. Grip loosely and throw in a half-circular motion, letting the football roll off your fingertips – for that perfect spiral every time.

Then there is Dec. 4, 2010, when a 20-year woman from Grand Rapids, Michigan walked onto the field of the Georgia Dome and won the Dr Pepper Tuition Giveaway by pumping 7 out of 10 footballs into a giant replica Dr Pepper soda can...and did so by launching those footballs with a two handed chest pass. On this day she wasn’t going to be mistaken for Tom Brady, but more like LeBron James finding an open teammate on a fast break. In the end, it won her \$100,000 and changed her life forever. Ever since, the chest pass, shot put, or any other non-conventional form of throwing a football has won the contest. And ever since, whoever has won the contest was at the mercy of social media about their unconventional throwing mechanics, and how in doing so looked foolish, or in some cases being accused of cheating. Some social media users even went as far as starting a petition to ban any unconventional method that didn’t conform to throwing a football in the “traditional” way.

Thanks to that trailblazer from 2010, any past or future winner who achieved their glory via non-conventional throwing mechanics simply won’t care what anyone thinks or who they offended. In the end, they are competing to win \$100,000 to secure their future, change their life, and to relieve the stress on their families in paying for their college education. If you look at their stories now, the winners have gone on to change other people’s lives through music, medicine, education, and civil service.

The Bible is filled with stories of how God used people through unconventional means to get His message across and the job done. Think about how silly David must have looked going up against Goliath with only a slingshot, or Joshua marching the people around the city of Jericho in silence. What about Gideon only needing 300 men to wipe out the Midianites when he had 32,000 men to start with and all they needed was trumpets and torches! What about Elisha who had an invisible army at his disposal, and was able to reduce a seemingly unstoppable foe to nothing!

There are many things we can't possibly understand or comprehend, but if we are willing and have a heart to serve God, He will use us to get His message across and the job done. In the end, it won't matter what unconventional means we use, or how foolish we look in being obedient and willing. God's message will change people's lives, and in the end that's what it is all about!!!

Confession for today: "Jesus, even when I don't understand, I'm going to be willing and obedient to get the job done by whatever means necessary! In doing so, I will be a difference maker in my school, on my sports teams, and with my friends."

Living for Today,
Mr. Tom

OVERLOOKING THE HARVEST

“AND HE SAID TO THEM, THE HARVEST INDEED IS ABUNDANT [THERE IS MUCH RIPE GRAIN], BUT THE FARMHANDS ARE FEW. PRAY THEREFORE THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST..”
- LUKE 10:2

How easy is it to get distracted in today's world? From smart phones to computers to television and video games, we are constantly flooded with distractions. People barely interact with each other anymore, and are barely even aware of their surroundings due to these distractions. Be honest with yourself; how many times have you been walking around, either at the mall or at school with your face in your phone, not even aware of who you are walking past? Luke 10:2 tells us that there are many in the world in need of Jesus, but there is a very small amount of those who are working to show them the way to Him. We have something the world needs, but if we are not consciously looking for ways to share Jesus with people, they may miss out. Sometimes we may avoid the calling of Christ to share the gospel with others because we feel it may be difficult or may take too much of our time.

The distractions in our lives make it easier to accept the easy way out and avoid people. Luke 10:2 specifically says that not only is the harvest abundant, but it is ripe; meaning there are many that are lost and that they are ready to receive Christ, but might just need a little push. I encourage you to be more aware of the distractions in your lives and to set them aside. These distractions may not be bad things, but ask God to help you use them in moderation. God saved us and wants to use us to bring more people into His kingdom. If we allow these distractions to overtake our lives, we may overlook the harvest God intended us to reap.

Stay Strong and Carry On,
Carrington

ONE ON ONE

“FOR GOD SO GREATLY LOVED AND DEARLY PRIZED THE WORLD THAT HE [EVEN] GAVE UP HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN (UNIQUE) SON, SO THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN (TRUSTS IN, CLINGS TO, RELIES ON) HIM SHALL NOT PERISH (COME TO DESTRUCTION, BE LOST) BUT HAVE ETERNAL (EVERLASTING) LIFE.”

- JOHN 3:16

ADDITIONAL READING: JOHN 3:1-21, MATTHEW 6:33

John 3:16 is one of the most well known scripture verses in the world today. It is one of my personal favorites for both its powerful meaning and the manner in which it was delivered. It wasn't taught by Jesus on a mountaintop to His disciples, or to a crowd waiting eagerly below. It wasn't given from a boat to the multitudes gathered on the shore. It wasn't preached to believers assembled in a church or a temple. It wasn't even delivered to John, who was one of Jesus' most beloved disciples and the author of the book where it is found! It was shared intimately by Jesus to a man named Nicodemus.

Nicodemus took the time and made the effort to meet with and speak to Jesus in private, at the cost of death if he were caught. We are only given a small glimpse of what was shared between these two men in conversation. Nicodemus sought understanding for the questions that were on his heart, and Jesus lovingly answered them. God desires to have the same one on one intimate relationship with us, where He can share with us deep revelations and great truths. Are we taking the time and making an effort, like Nicodemus, to spend time with our Savior? In this coming New Year, put aside the fleeting relationships and worthless distractions of this life and make a real connection with your Heavenly Father.

Fight the good fight of faith!

Jamie

TOP NOTCH BENEFITS FROM SKILLFUL AND GODLY WISDOM

**“HAPPY IS THE ONE WHO FINDS SKILLFUL AND
GODLY WISDOM”
- PROVERBS 3:13**

I have found that sometimes people can struggle with how to access and obtain this kind of wisdom that the Lord defines in His Word. The second part of verse 13 tells us that we gain understanding from God’s Word and life’s experiences. Sometimes we seek out more understanding from an experience in our lives, while omitting the application of the Word to that experience.

When we bring a moment, a situation, a storm, a trial, a difficulty before the Lord and take time to allow the Holy Spirit to sift, analyze, judge and discern it (Hebrews 4:12) by His Word, the top-notch benefits are activated in our lives. The Holy Spirit discerns and judges all things (1 Corinthians 2:11). With His help, we gain the kind of understanding that Proverbs 3 talks about.

What are these benefits? Verse 16 talks about our length of days and riches and honor, and verse 17 talks about paths and highways that are pleasant and full of peace. Verse 18 talks about joy and happiness when we hold onto wisdom. Proverbs 1:5 talks about steering our course rightly. Wisdom gives us the understanding and resolve to not consent to sin (Proverbs 1:10).

Comb through Proverbs and make a list of these and so many more benefits that are for this present time and for eternity! If you are lacking a pleasant place, and find you are not peaceful, but instead feel turmoil and unrest, I encourage you to take some uninterrupted time with the Holy Spirit. He can show you, through the Word, how to understand life’s experiences, and coupled with that is peace.

Your sister in Christ,
Niki