

MEN OF CA 2024



15 DAY DEVOTIONAL

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SCAN ME

DAY 1

Scriptures:

Be appalled at this, you heavens and shudder with great horror," declares the Lord. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Jeremiah 2:12-13

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psalms 42: 1-2

Other Verses: John 7:37-39, and John 10:10

We all know what it is like to experience thirst physically. Imagine if you went on a long hike in the mountains on a hot summer day, but did not have access to any water. You would quickly realize how much your body needs water in order to survive and thrive.

In the same way, we also have spiritual thirst. We all have longings and desires, and God made us to be satisfied by Him. We were all created with a God-shaped hole that only He can fill. Saint Augustine once wrote, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." God wants us to turn to Him for true life and satisfaction. That's why He created us, so that we can be in a loving relationship with Him and be satisfied in Him.

Yet, it is so easy to turn to lesser things for our satisfaction. We can believe the lie that sin is more satisfying. Or we can distract ourselves and numb ourselves with what the world offers. When we turn to lesser things, we miss out on being satisfied in God and the life to the full that Jesus offers. However, when we are satisfied in God, we are a lot less tempted to settle for lesser things and cheap imitations that the world offers.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "*It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*"

Jesus came so that we can have life to the full. He declares that if anyone thirsts, come to Him to drink. For those who come to Jesus, out of their hearts will flow rivers of living water. God offers our souls a deep joy, peace, love, and satisfaction that cannot be found anywhere else.

What does it look like to come to Him with our spiritual thirst?

Reflection Questions:

1. What sticks out to you about these verses? What is God inviting you into?
2. What are you trying to fill your life with, that isn't truly satisfying?
3. What can it look like to find your satisfaction in God (turning to Him for your spiritual thirst)?

Action Steps:

1. **Confession/Repentance:** Take time to confess your sins and turn away from any idols in your life (ex: works based performance, sexual sin, love of money, etc.). Confess where your love for God may have grown cold. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Receive his love and grace. Turn towards seeking Him and his good plans to be satisfied in Him.
2. **Proactively build in some spiritual disciplines to your schedule.** In the same way your body needs to eat and drink water throughout the day, we need to abide in Christ's love throughout the day. Start somewhere. Take time in the morning to spend time with God in the Scriptures, pray throughout the day, and take time to reflect and be with God at the end of your day.

- Scott Quay

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DAY 2

Scriptures:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:23

When I think of the word worship, I think of response. What is my response? How do I respond to something in general.... specific? My response says a lot about me and what matters to me. What and who do I worship? If worship means “love expressed”, is my response to events indicating God is first in my life? Now that I have asked a few questions, I hope that I have your attention.

God is first! He may not be first in your life, but He is still first. He is the Alpha amongst many other names. **I give God the first of my day with the Word, worship, and prayer.** I have my routine. I start each day the same way. I turn on my phone; I read the verse of the day from my bible app; I go to Spotify and tap on my worship playlist. I sit on “my” chair in the living room. I read a chapter (more or less) from whatever book in the bible I am currently reading; I reflect on what I read and listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to me; I get on my knees and invite God into my day by praying. That’s it. Each day and every day He gets the first part of it.

I give God the first of my month with tithes and offerings. Everything that I have comes from God. I am very aware and grateful for this and realize that He blesses me so that I can be a blessing to others. He provides for all of my needs and the excess is for me to share with others. I should be a river and allow the water to flow and not be a dam where the water is stored. I’ve asked for God to create in me a generous heart. I’ve asked God to help me be obedient to Him while simultaneously changing my desires to be in alignment with His. The changing of my desires was not easy to say the least. It requires sacrifice and is still an ongoing process.

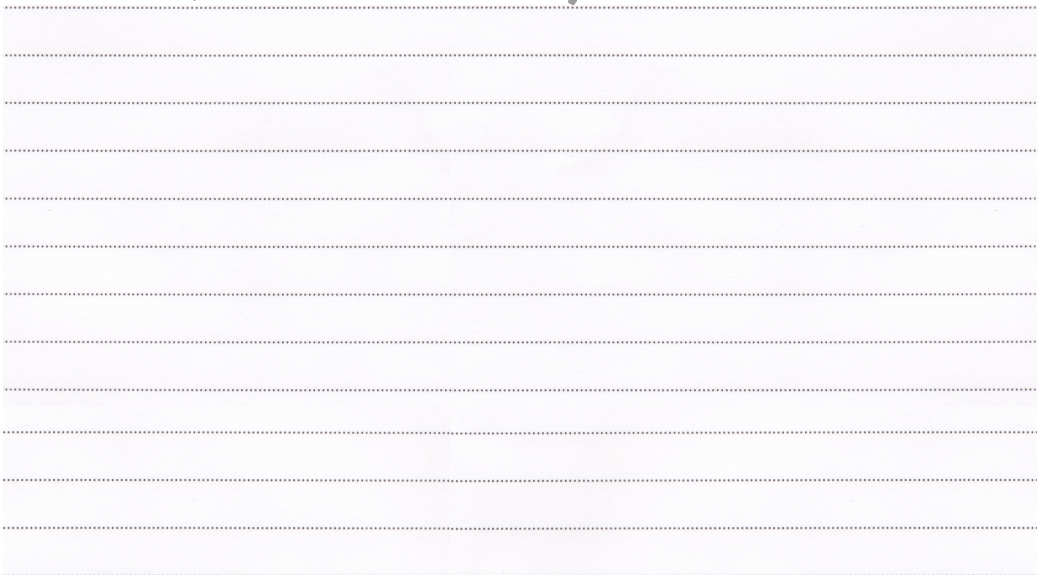
I give God the first of my week with consistent church attendance. This one is easy because I am at church every weekend..... because I'm on staff and work there. That doesn't count. That doesn't require sacrifice and that doesn't express love. So, I attend service on a non-working day. It is a joy and a response to God.

Action Steps:

1. **Start by taking small steps in the areas that God is not first.** Perhaps pray first thing in the morning. If you're not tithing and trusting God with your finances, start by giving an amount that may stretch you a little bit at the beginning of the month. Try coming to church regularly and making a point of meeting a new person. Be the kind of worshiper the Father seeks!

- Jorge Fernandez

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DAY 3

Scriptures:

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written:

“Be holy, because I am holy.”

1 Peter 1:13-16

Men, we're called by our Holy God to be holy. Why? He's Holy and part of our calling as His image-bearers is to represent who He is. Another word to describe being holy or set apart for God and His purposes is *Consecrated*. The etymology is from the Latin verb *Consecrare*. *Con* = *with intensive force* + *Sacrare* = *Dedicate*. Being a consecrated man is being intensely dedicated to God and His purposes.

Being a Consecrated Man is an important part of our worship. Worship is giving God what He's worth. He's worthy of our obedience and our representing Him as He truly is. Paul writes in Romans 12 that offering our bodies (lives) as a living, holy, and pleasing sacrifice is our true and proper worship.

I want to challenge you to take on the identity of a Consecrated Man unto the Lord. This challenge impacts every part of our lives, not just Sunday mornings. How would a consecrated man handle his finances? How would a consecrated man steward his time? How would a consecrated man honor God with his sexuality? As the passage above indicates, this takes being diligent to have a mind that is alert and fully sober, set on the ultimate hope of eternity with Christ.

I believe every man has a deep, God-given desire to make his life count for something that matters. The only way to truly get there is to be a consecrated man. Check out 2nd Timothy 2:21 - *Therefore, if anyone cleanses Himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.* The more consecrated we live, the more effective we will be at extending His Kingdom.

Pursuing holiness is not optional in the Christian life. Hebrews 12:14 says, *Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.* We're saved by grace through faith alone, but that faith is only genuine if it produces in us a pursuit of true holiness. Men, let's cleanse ourselves of what is dishonorable. Let's consecrate ourselves to the Lord and so be ready for every good work. This is such an important way we worship.

Application Prayer:

Father, thank you for saving me by grace through faith. I know that the ultimate cleansing I need is only possible through the saving work of your Son, Jesus Christ. Father, I commit this day to being a consecrated man. Help me. I can't do this without the power of your Spirit. Thank you that you are at work in me, giving me the desire and the power to do what pleases you (Philippians 2:13). I love you, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen.

- Jake Walker

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DAY 4

Scriptures:

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

Revelation 5:11-12

In this passage, we catch a glimpse into heaven - specifically, we see a picture of what people cry out when they see Jesus in all his glory: WORTHY! Jesus, the triumphant, risen King is the WORTHY One. This isn't mere opinion, it is God's revealed Word declaring what is true.

Worship comes from an old word meaning "worth" ship. What that means is we worship what we think is most "worth it" or valuable. My guess is that most people reading this are followers of Jesus and would therefore affirm that God is the most "worth it" thing in our lives, so he deserves our worship.

At the same moment, a life following God comes with many costs - living generously, living selflessly, living in purity - these are all things that require something from us. Most honestly, though I believe God is worthy of all my life, it can be hard to live that way. My mouth can CLAIM what my priorities are, but my schedule (how I spend my time) and my budget (how I spend my money) will REVEAL what my priorities are.

I want to spend time in prayer and God's Word every day, but I also want an extra 30 minutes of sleep in the morning. I want to be generous with my finances, but I also want to eat out all the time.

My brothers, I join Paul in calling us to “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Cor 4:18). That is the gift of passages like this one from Revelation 5: it pulls us out of our everyday grind and gives us a picture of what is truly “worth it.” Jesus is worth it all. Whether or not I feel like it, he is worthy. I have never regretted spending time or money on God and His Kingdom, and on the day we meet him face-to-face, I’m sure I will only wish I had given more. We have the opportunity to live that way today!

Application:

Take an honest inventory of what you think is most “worth it” in your life. Then honestly evaluate your schedule and your budget. Do the two match? If not, do not be discouraged, but take seriously the gift of this picture of Jesus from Revelation 5. What is one step you can take to align your schedule and budget with your values ..., with the One who is Worthy?

-Levi Walker

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DAY 5

Scriptures:

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations

Psalm 100

A Psalm Of Thanksgiving - In all of scripture, Psalm 100 is the only psalm that has this title. It speaks of an invitation to the whole earth to know and to worship God.

This psalm has been an anchor for me in this season of my life. If you're anything like me, I can come to God's presence feeling heavy from life. It's almost like I can come to God with a bag full of requests and not thanksgiving. Now, there's nothing wrong with bringing requests to God but let's look at what the psalm says.

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."

Psalms 100:1-5 NIV

This Psalm is an exhortation to PRAISE God! It's a call to lay everything aside that hinders us and to make a joyful noise to the Lord. Instead of coming to God with our requests for, I believe God wants our praise and worship before we come to our requests. Ultimately, God is worthy of our praise and worship more than anything in this life.

DAY 6

Scriptures:

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, sixty cubits high and six cubits wide...Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

Daniel 3: 1-7

Culture and our world will always want you to worship other things...any-thing...other than God. This is as true today as it was thousands of years ago when these young men were faced with the same difficult temptation. You might be saying to yourself "well, nobody really worships gold statues anymore." You're right our world does not worship gold...hmmm

Who or what you choose to worship will always be central to your life and walk. If you don't think the enemy wants your worship today you're not living. The enemy, the culture, our world desperately wants your worship, your heart, your affection. Men we MUST set our hearts and our minds this and every year to reserve our worship for the one and only true God. Just like these men faced persecution for their decision to worship God and only God - we will face the persecution of this world and our current culture. These men resolved to worship God alone even if it cost them everything, even their life. Their faith in God was unwavering.

One of the ways I remind myself yearly of what is most important is by identifying and revisiting the core convictions of my life. I write these down as a way of keeping my heart pure of anything else that may want to compete for my affection.

These core statements are simple declarations that help guide my life. Statements like:

- I will worship God and only God
- I will trust God's infallible Word as my main source of guidance
- Being with God's people is a top priority

So as we contemplate on the ways we will keep our hearts and minds pure of worship to God alone - what core convictions will help you preserve that value?

Application:

Spend a few minutes thinking about and writing down your core convictions that will guide you in the new year.

- Marvin Enriquez

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DAY 7

Scriptures:

The Lord made a covenant with Jacob's descendants and commanded them, "Do not fear other gods; do not bow in worship to them; do not serve them; do not sacrifice to them. Instead fear the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm. You are to bow down to him, and you are to sacrifice to him. You are to be careful always to observe the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandments he wrote for you; do not fear other gods. Do not forget the covenant that I have made with you. Do not fear other gods, but fear the Lord your God, and he will rescue you from all your enemies."

2 Kings 17:35-39

For most of human history, people thought the earth was the center of the universe. And why wouldn't they? It's in our nature to assume that everything revolves around us. Then, in the 16th century, a man named Nicolaus Copernicus published the heliocentric theory, claiming that the earth orbited around the sun – not the other way around! History was changed and our understanding of the universe has never been the same.

Much like the earth spinning around the sun, our lives all orbit around something. We all decide something will be in the center of our life's universe. The question is – what do you place in the center of your universe? Around what (or whom) does your life orbit?

- Your career?
- Your finances?
- Your kid's sports schedule?

To what do you give the lion's share of your time, energy, focus, finances, and attention? I would suggest that whatever comes to mind when you answer that question is likely what is in the center of your universe.

And if we're honest – that is what we worship. We worship whatever we place in the center of our life's universe. The thing(s) to which we give our best effort and resources are the thing(s) that we actually worship.

The nation of Israel struggled with this. Though they had no concept of the earth's orbit around the sun, they placed false gods in the center of their lives over and over again. God called it idolatry. Remember His words in 2 Kings 17 (Verse above).

Times are different, and we don't generally bow down to golden statues of false gods. But we do at times create false gods out of good things. Your family, your career and your commitments aren't bad things. They just aren't meant to be the center of your universe. God alone is meant to have that place.

And that's good news. Because anything other than God that we worship, that we place in the center of our universe, is doomed, because it was never meant to bear that kind of weight. Jesus alone, who is our corner stone (Eph. 2:19-22), can give our lives the support it needs.

This year, place Him in the center of your universe!

- Bo Flores

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DAY 8

Scriptures:

“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

From the moment we wake up, all manner of things starts calling out for our attention – some of those things are good and necessary such as family, work, school, or other responsibilities, but some of those things are less meaningful and time wasters. In Martha’s case it was something we might all agree was good – preparing a meal for Jesus. Yet all her busyness ended up in frustration, anger and even disappointment and misunderstanding God, “Lord, don’t you care...”

You and I were not created to ignore our responsibilities, but rather to discern legitimate responsibilities from those which prevent us from time with God. God would never put so much on our plates that we would not have time for Him. It’s the enemy who if he can’t get us to sin will get us to be too busy. One of the greatest, daily battles you and I face is the battle to order our lives in such a way that makes worshipping God with our time our highest priority.

As you move into a new year, remember Jesus’ words to Martha, “...few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better...”. What Mary chose was to worship God with her life by intentionally making time to sit at his feet to listen to His life-giving words.

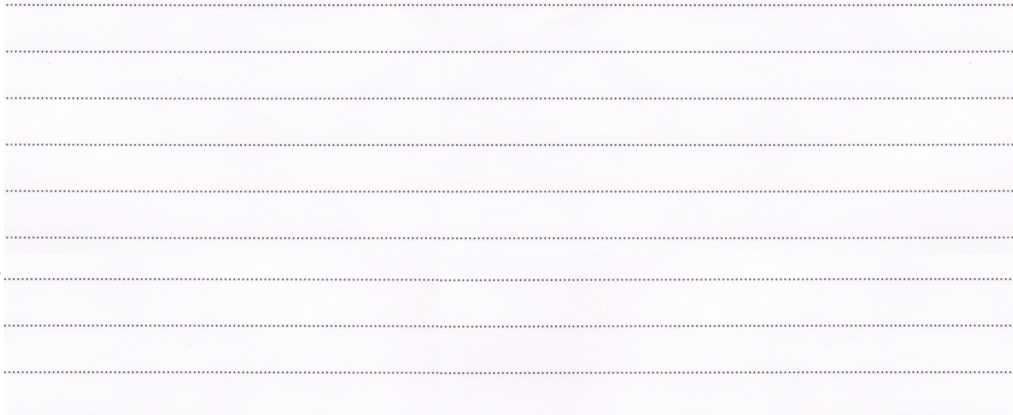
Know that every time you are intentional about setting aside time to be with God through Bible reading, or prayer or any other spiritual practice seen in Scripture you are worshipping God with your time, and it's the better thing!

Application:

Reflect and write down the things that compete with God for your time Which of those things might need to be set aside for you to be more available for Jesus? Pray and ask God to help you worship Him with your time - reading the Bible, prayer, gathering with other believers, etc.

- Ralph Delgado

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DAY 9

Scriptures:

"When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

Luke 7:9

"Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Luke 7:50

Worship is when we give our deepest affections and highest praise to something. True worship of God is when we love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. It's when we prize God above everything else and put Him first in our hearts. When we truly love something or someone with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, it shows in our actions because our actions flow from what we value.

Love is not just a feeling, it is also action. Jesus spoke about faith and action together as worship throughout the gospels. Faith is what we believe and good works are the result of that faith in action. In Luke chapter 7 there are 2 instances that Jesus talks about faith in action. First, with the Roman Centurion who tells Jesus that he understands authority and that Jesus' authority is enough to heal his servant. Also, at the end of the chapter he tells the woman who wiped his feet with her tears that her faith has saved her.

Both the Roman Centurion and the woman acted on their faith regardless of the outcome. It can be easy to read this chapter and think that the actions here matter more than the faith but Jesus points out a couple of times in Luke 7 that faith is what motivates the actions.

Faith is the beginning and the behavior or obedience is the byproduct of that faith in action. If I am honest, sometimes my faith wanes and my actions can be motivated out of a sense of duty. But if my heart stays focused on my faith in Jesus motivating the action then I am less likely to get frustrated if I don't get the results that I hope for.

This has been one of the hardest lessons for me to learn. I grew up in a 'performance' based household, good performance equaled good gifts and that led to a lot of disappointment and frustration as I got older when people did not respond to my good works. The result of gaining love and approval because of my good works were my motivation to do good rather than it being the right thing to do, and that is just not the way it is in God's kingdom.

I am so thankful for God's patience and His pursuit of someone like me. He has worked patiently with me to change my perspective and motivation to do good for Him alone and that feels like freedom in so many ways because I am no longer a slave to the results.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help us to grow in faith and help that faith to motivate us to be obedient to your Word. Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit to love others in your name and as we practice loving them and doing good works may you be glorified. Our lives are yours, thank you for the gift of life and the courage to love in your name Jesus. Amen

- Sean Strovos

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DAY 10

Scriptures:

By faith Noah, being divinely warned about things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to save his family... By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he would later receive as an inheritance... Therefore from one man, who was as good as dead, sprang so many, a multitude as the stars of the sky and innumerable as the sand by the seashore.

Hebrews 11:7-8

Other Verses: Hebrews 11:24-25, Hebrews 11:30, Hebrews 11:39-40

Worship often involves waiting, trusting, and obeying. All of the people mentioned in these verses of Hebrews chapter 11 had one thing in common - they had all received promises from God and yet had to wait on those promises. Noah received God's word, obeyed it and waited for a storm, and again waited on the ark for the storm to pass. Abraham received God's word but didn't have a son until he was almost 100! Moses received God's word, chose a harder life and died just before seeing his people enter into their promised land. The people of Israel were marching towards their promised land but had to wait seven days for the walls of Jericho to fall. And on and on we see example after example of people in wait.

You know what else they had in common? They all worshiped the Lord as they waited. Yes they did so imperfectly but they trusted God and His word and waited on that promise. You see, life will always bring seasons of wait. Waiting on the perfect job, waiting on the right spouse, waiting for the home purchase to go through, waiting on building permits to be approved, waiting, waiting, waiting. Some might be tempted to cross their arms and grumble their way through this season.

I think though that God is longing for us to trust Him deeper in these seasons. It's in these seasons that faith is built and character is developed. Some people will often say "it's not the destination - it's the journey." So it is with the Christian life - the trust in God we develop in these seasons of wait, the tender moments of desperate worship bring a renewed intimacy with our loving father.

DAY 11

Scriptures:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:13-17

Words matter. We all know the joy of when someone encourages us. It lifts our spirits, reminds us that we are good at something, and helps us continue when situations are challenging. We also know the sting of harsh criticism. We often remember the harsh things people say more often than the encouragement. We can replay those words over and over again in our minds. It can even change the trajectory of our lives when we hold on to those negative criticisms. Words matter. According to Proverbs 18:21, our tongues (our words) have the power of life and death.

I recently read Matthew chapter 3 and came across the story of Jesus' baptism. In the story, Jesus comes to John and asks to be baptized. While John recognizes that he isn't worthy to baptize the savior of the world, Jesus insists. So John indeed baptizes his master. After Jesus is baptized he hears the father say to him. "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3: 17 ESV) The phrase "well pleased" can also mean to delight in. The Father is communicating that he delights in who Jesus is.

I don't know if you are like me, but my father had trouble telling me he was pleased or was delighted with me. He communicated his love for me, but it felt rare at times. God the Father doesn't pass up the moment to speak words of encouragement to his Son. I am so pleased with you. I delight in who you are. You see, words matter. After this passage, Jesus is sent out into the wilderness and is tempted by the devil. But those words that he received led him to do one simple thing. Worship.

Words can shape our identity, and our identity can determine what we worship. If we are shaped by the words of the world around us, we can soon worship money, success, an easy life, or the desire for more. But if God's words shape us, we can turn our worship to him, knowing that he is well pleased with you and delights in you.

I want to be a person shaped by God's word, knowing that when I am faced with challenges, my first response is to worship God. I know that I'm not perfect, but He is. I want a heart that meditates on God's love for me. When I do, I have only one response: to turn and worship God. We see throughout the bible that response. We see that when Paul is impressed and in the lowest part of his life. He chooses to worship despite his circumstances because he has received God's word and set his identity on it. May we be people who are encouraged by God's love for us and worship him fully.

Application:

Is your identity shaped by God's word or someone else's? Do those words lead you to trust God more or trust yourself? How can knowing God truly delights in you allow you to worship him fully?

- Trey Gomez

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DAY 12

Scriptures:

This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made...

Genesis 2:4-8; 15

A "side-hustle" is a second job that requires work to happen in quick sprints of free time. You have to hustle-up to make a side-hustle work. But what if all work is meant to be a side-hustle in life with God. I'm convinced that the Bible poses this great challenge for all men. Who you worship will rule and reign in every area of your life. Don't let work climb on to the throne — it's your side-hustle. In life with God, the work you do is all a side-hustle to the worship that God is due.

In the Bible, we find that work began at the very beginning. First, God began the work of creation. Then, God created human beings and gave them work to do. Adam was placed in the garden of Eden, and given the job of cultivating the garden. Adam didn't plant the garden and Adam didn't find it. He was placed there for the work God gave him to do. God provided the soil, the sunshine and the water. Without God's provision, Adam could never succeed in the job he was given.

In the garden, there is something true and vital for every man — you don't have to be a gardener to learn this lesson from Adam. God's ideal life for us includes productive, fruitful, God-honoring, life-cultivating work with Him. We were meant to work, but no man has all it takes to do the work God gives him. Like in the garden, God had to bring the water. You might be tilling the ground in your job and wondering why you aren't seeing fruit. God must fill your life with the living water of His Spirit to produce fruitfulness only God can produce. Are you trusting God to be at work with you? Are you trusting God to provide what you don't have? You who were made in His image, need what your Maker didn't give you — it's His to add.

Some of you have jobs you love to do, and some of you know that even in those jobs, what gets done and what gets cultivated around you is a direct result of what or who you worship. And for those of you who are working jobs because you have to not because you want to, it's not the pattern of this world, but it's the truth of God's word that if you begin to worship, even the most mundane and unpleasant work can cultivate a life that God invites us to live with Him.

You might be working to make something happen, but might not even be digging in the right ground. You might need to find out where God wants to place you for the work He wants you to do in this world. Or you might be in a job you didn't really plan to be in, but God planned it. God placed you there for the work He has for you to do. In order to do the job God has given you in the place God has prepared for you, you must be willing to make worship a higher priority than work. When my work is a side-hustle next to my worship of Almighty God then my work is put in its rightful place by restoring God to His rightful place.

Application:

What if your worship of God was influencing how you work more than your work was influencing how you worship? How would you work, worship, and even live differently?

- Matt Price

NOTES

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DAY 13

Scriptures:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

John 4:23-24

If a Christian has experienced the living God, they may develop a spiritual and instinctual habit of seeking to find God governing and working somewhere in their everyday life. This spiritual habit becomes natural because encountering God who leads our lives brings the greatest meaning and value to a Christian's day-to-day existence. Of course, this choice/habit is made with the aid of the Holy Spirit within us based on our free will that was given by God. The most meaningful action we can perform with that free will, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, is to choose the process and outcome of "love and worship" in whatever we do in our lives.

The Bible says "God is love (1 John 4:8). If we love our God who is love, We "choose" to love God, not because someone forced us to, but out of our own free will given by God with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and that loving relationship we choose; we will be able to love our neighbors. All these acts of decision of love are indeed "worship". This worship is a cognitive and subconscious reaction and reflection to what we deem valuable, so we need to examine what fills our hearts and minds everyday because what fills us every day reflects what we worship. Worship is not "about" something; it is about the "subject" of that something.

Are you loving and worshiping God? Or are your mind and heart crammed with something "about" God? Like working for church programs, events, and new projects to start in the new year? Not all things we do while claiming to love God and the church become worship. When we prepare things related to God because we love Him, we should worship with the aid of the Holy Spirit in truth. Even before we create methods and programs to love and help our neighbors, we must first love them as subjects of love. This is the true worship of life that arises with love.

DAY 14

Scriptures:

Then Peter called to him, "Lord if it's really you, tell me to come to you walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him.

Matthew 14:28-31

Mountain top experiences. Moments where you might feel that you have had a specific revelation given by God or a specific time where God has miraculously spoken to you or met a need.

We all face storms and difficulty in life: Spiritual desert, financial hardship, lost a job, loss of a family member or loved one. When the waves of life are crashing all around us it can become harder to keep our focus on God and not on the wind and the waves.

Peter walked on water when his focus on Jesus. If Jesus was in the room with us now it would be much easier to keep our eyes on Him no matter what wind and waves are crashing around us. We have God's Word, and we have our testimony, our memories, our stories of times where God has revealed Himself to us. God gave us practical instructions on this. He said to build an altar.

There are over 400 references to altars in the Bible. The word altar is first used in Genesis when Noah built an altar to the Lord after leaving the ark. An altar always represented a place of consecration. It was often built to commemorate an encounter with God that had a profound impact on someone. Sometimes God Himself commanded that an altar be built after He had delivered someone in a miraculous way. Such an altar would be a memorial to help future generations remember the mighty works of the Lord

Allison and I have built an altar in our home. We created a box of blessings when we were first married. Our marriage counselor warned us that there would be times in our marriage that would be hard and that we would need a tangible way to remember the times that God had met us and encouraged us and had been our help in times of need.

So, we found a decorative box and anytime that we saw God's provision, healing, or something to be thankful for we would write it down and put it in the box. For 22 years, we have opened that box and reflected on the ways that God has met us and it has built our faith and trust in God exponentially.

As we turn the page on 2023 and look forward to 2024. Are you a resolution person? Do you set goals for the new year? I actually practice setting goals for the year because it helps me to have something that I am working towards. But my most important practice is reflection. I like to look back on the previous year, read through my journal and reflect on what God has done in me and through me. I want to remember the lessons I have learned. This practice of reflection and remembering has changed me. It has helped me to become a better man and has really focused my mind on growing deeper in my faith and knowledge of Gods Word.

Aren't you so grateful for God's Word and how God designed practical steps for us to navigate our way through the mountaintop experiences and the valleys of life.

Application:

Do you have a practice of reflection? If so, what are some lessons that you learned in the last year? Write them down so that you will have a tangible place to look back a month, or a year from now. If not, begin today.

- Sean Strovos

NOTES

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DAY 15

Scriptures:

My heart has heard you say, "come and talk with me." And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."

Psalm 27:8

One of the most overlooked aspects of worship is getting our hearts ready before we approach the throne of grace during our personal time with God because I believe that worship begins not just in the moving of the lips, but in the elevation of our hearts to Him first.

One of the best ways I get my heart ready is to simply sit in quiet meditation for a few minutes focusing on God's perfect gift; the incredible sacrifice of Jesus, who loved me and gave Himself for me. And during my few minutes of stillness, a sense of immense gratitude and awe begin to well up in my spirit as I sense the Holy Spirit say "I am here, I am yours, and you are mine."

I want to share with you my go to verse I meditate on that absolutely prepares my heart. I use it for prayer as well as worship. Here it is;
I love this passage for so many reasons, but I'll just mention three here.

First it comes from David, a guy who is known for being a worshiper and a "man after God's heart." Why is that? Was he perfect? Did he have it all together? Far from it! David was guilty of lust, envy, adultery, and eventually murder. With all of his stumbling faults, he has learned that coming and responding to God is not about him. Instead, it's all about recognizing a God whose love for him is personal, immeasurable, and full of undeserved favor. That is the kind of love our Father has towards us because of Jesus' finished work at the cross. I may not have it all together, but it's not about me. It's about His love for me that invites me to come. I worship because His love draws me in.

Secondly, notice that the verse is a clear invitation; “come and talk with me.” In worship, I am “conversing” with the Almighty invited to experience His great love, while turning my eyes toward His faithfulness. Invariably, my heart is strengthened while the concerns I carry are left to His care and exchanged for His promises. I don’t know about you, but knowing God is waiting to personally hear from me gets me excited to worship Him.

Last but not least, this verse invites me to step into the identity I was given as His child who has access to come boldly into my Father’s throne of grace. To be given an open and standing invitation like that affirms my position in who He says I am. And with all the voices that come at me every day, His is the one I need to hear foremost. The one that tenderly says, “I am here, come son, for you are mine.” Aren’t you so grateful for God’s Word and how God designed practical steps for us to navigate our way through the mountaintop experiences and the valleys of life.

Application:

Now that we’ve caught a glimpse of who is calling us to worship, how then should we respond to this invitation? I believe the only appropriate response is the same as the psalmist’s; “Lord, I am coming!” Spend a few quiet minutes before the Lord preparing your heart for worship.

May the knowledge of this truth build and strengthen your personal worship time with God.

- Robert Concepcion

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