

# **THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

A 40-day devotional journey to help  
strengthen you walk with Christ

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## **THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

The purpose of this forty-day devotion is simple: to strengthen the practice of specific spiritual disciplines in your life. From the moment God saves us, He calls us into a life-long journey of following Him, learning from Him, and emulating Him in and through our lives. The practice of spiritual disciplines helps grow us spiritually with the goal of being mature followers of Christ. Completing this devotion does not mean you have, “arrived” at spiritual maturity; that happens when we meet the Lord in glory one day.

My prayer is that this devotion will in some way help strengthen your walk with Christ. This devotion has also been designed to use each chapter separately if you need to go back at some time to refresh a section or to even add to it from your own pursuit of spiritual maturity. Wherever you are in your walk with Christ, my prayer for you is that you continue to walk with the Lord in the pursuit of spiritual maturity. I pray God will continue to use you for His glory.

Striving together for the faith of the gospel,

*Bro. Ben*

*We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.*

*Col. 1.28*

## MEDITATION

*But in His law he meditates day and night. (Ps. 1.2b)*

To “meditate” on the Word of God has been described in many ways. It has been described as, “searching and thinking” on the Word of God<sup>1</sup>. The actual meaning of the word is to, “moan, growl, or speak . . . reflecting the sighing and low sounds one may make while musing, at least as the ancients practiced it<sup>2</sup>.” In the New Testament book of 1 Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote, “*Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.*” The word Paul used for, “take pains” is a Greek word for mediation, which means to give careful thought to and think about<sup>3</sup>.

The spiritual discipline of meditation is simply spending time with God’s Word, thinking about it, and praying over it. The key to meditation is time, quiet time. *Webster’s On-line Dictionary* simply defines meditation as, “to spend time in quiet thought for religious purposes<sup>4</sup>.”

Spending time thinking about God’s Word takes discipline because we can so easily become distracted by other thoughts. Our minds begin to race about what we have to do in the day or issues we may be dealing with. Meditation takes discipline because in order to hear God’s voice clearly we have to get ourselves to a place where distractions are at a minimum; this may be a tough challenge when our homes may be anything but quiet. Pray this week that God will help develop the spiritual discipline of meditation, of spending time thinking on His Word.

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<sup>1</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5, Psalms (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 49.

<sup>2</sup> W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 150 under “to meditate.”

<sup>3</sup> *Friberg Greek Lexicon*, Bible Works 7.0.

<sup>4</sup> miriam-webster.com, under “mediation”.

## MEDITATION

**Jul 26:**  
**PS 63.1-11**

*“I meditate on you in the night watches.” (Ps. 63.6b)*

A love for the Lord and for the Word of God so captured David that even during the night his mind was on the Word of God. To meditate on the Word of God means simply to think about it, to consider it, to pray over it and spend time in it. David also wrote this about the value of meditating on the Word of God:

*“And in His law, he [the blessed man] meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1.2b)*

Spending time meditating on the Word of God yields the fruit of understanding. Through understanding we learn how to apply God’s Word to our lives for life transformation.

Locate JOSHUA 1.8 and write it on the following lines. Ask God to help you begin to understand and to develop the spiritual discipline of meditating on His Word.

JOSHUA 1.8: \_\_\_\_\_

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**July 27:**  
**GEN 24.63**

*“Isaac went out to meditate. . .”*

What Isaac was meditating on the Bible does not tell us. Isaac had just been through a terribly traumatic experience of almost dying on an altar built by his father Abraham. Perhaps Isaac was simply spending time before the Lord thanking Him for sparing his life, maybe Isaac was thanking God for having a father that loved and obeyed God. Whatever the reasons for his meditation, Isaac was a man that spent time with the Lord.

**READ:**

Psalm 19.14. How can this one verse be an encouragement to you in your development of the spiritual discipline of meditation? \_\_\_\_\_

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July 28:  
PS 119.15

*I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways.*

To “meditate” and “regard” means to think about, to consider, to ponder, and then to do. To regard literally is to consider carefully, to turn it over in my mind, and then to do it. This meditation and regarding is a deliberate act of the will in following and obeying God. There is a two-part process here that cannot be missed nor can it be ignored:

The first part: meditating and thinking about God’s Word, what it means and how it applies to your life.

The second part: putting what you have learned about God’s Word into action. Reading and understanding God’s Word does us no good if we do not obey it.

**READ:**

MATT. 7.24-25: How do you think meditating on God’s Word equips you to weather the uncertainties of life? \_\_\_\_\_

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**July 29:**

**PHIL 4.8**

*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

We are in charge of what goes through our mind, what we think on. When Paul wrote, “dwell on these things”, he is writing the Philippians to help them understand they can either have a God-centered mind or a world-centered mind. We are in charge of what goes through our minds. Meditating on God’s word, on a daily basis, helps us keep God’s word in our minds and on our hearts.

**READ:**

COL. 3.1-2: What are some of the ways you can think of to, “keep seeking the things above”, and “setting your mind on the things above?” \_\_\_\_\_

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## PRAYER

*But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*

Matt. 6.6

Prayer is simply communication and communion with God. Through prayer we communicate with the God of the universe. Through prayer we spend time with the Lord, listening to Him and getting direction from Him. In Matthew 6, Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, and in verse eight He told them something they may have never heard before:

*For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*

If God knows what we need before we ask Him, what is the point in praying?

1. Prayer acknowledges our dependence on God to answer prayers that only God can answer.
2. Prayer confirms our assurance in God to both hear and honor our prayers.
3. Prayer is our primary means of communicating with the God of the universe.
4. Prayer confirms our belief in the power of prayer.

As Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, He made some clear assumptions:

Matt. 6.5: *“When you pray;”*

Matt. 6.6: *“But you, when you pray;”*

Matt. 6.7: *“And when you are praying;”*

Matt. 6.9: *“Pray, then, in this way:”*

Jesus never for one minute thought His disciples would *not* be men of prayer; and so it is with us today. Jesus taught about the importance of prayer, not about how long our prayers are to

be nor what kind of language we are to use as we pray. I have often told church members this simple truth about prayer: pray as long as you need to pray for whatever needs praying for. As followers of Jesus Christ, prayer must be an indispensable spiritual discipline that is practiced and pursued as we strive to follow the Lord daily. I want to encourage you to ask God to help develop the spiritual discipline of prayer in your life.

## **PRAYER**

**July 30 – Sunday:  
NEH 1.1-11**

Nehemiah was serving the king of Babylon while in captivity with the rest of Israel. While serving the king, Nehemiah received some very distressing news about his home city of Jerusalem: the walls of the city were broken down, the city gates had been burned, and the people of the city were in, “great distress and reproach.” Nehemiah was so distressed and upset at the news that he, “sat down and wept and mourned for days (1.4).” Nehemiah also fasted and prayed. God is greater than our circumstances; prayer helps us get God’s perspective on our situation.

### **READ:**

JAMES 5.13-15. What do you think it means to pray with prayers, “offered in faith?”

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What was the result James wrote about as a result of faithful prayers? \_\_\_\_\_

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**July 31:**

**MATT 6.5-15**

Years ago I ran across some prayers offered by children; here are some samples:

- Dear God, I know you love me but I wish you would give me an “A” on my report card so I could be sure. Love, Theresa, (Age 8)
- Dear Pastor, Could you say a special blessing for my Aunt Beatrice? She has been looking for a husband for 12 years and still hasn’t found one. Yours sincerely, Debbie, (Age 9)
- Dear Pastor, Do I have to say grace before every meal? Even when I am only having a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? Wesley, (Age 9)
- Dear Pastor, Thank you for your sermon on Sunday. I will write more when my mother explains to me what you said. Yours truly, Justin, (Age 9)
- Dear Pastor, Please pray for all the airline pilots. I am flying to California tomorrow. Laurie, (Age 10)
- Dear Pastor, We say grace every night before we eat dinner even when we have leftovers from the night before. Yours truly, Jacki, (Age 9)
- Dear Pastor, I say my prayer before I eat my supper but my mother still makes me finish my spinach and drink my milk. Julie, (Age 9)

Prayer is the ultimate in wireless communication. The truth is, God is always on-line, waiting to hear from us.

**READ:**

MARK 9.14-29. Why do you think the disciples failed in their attempts to drive out the demon from the young boy? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there a lesson to be learned here about dependence on God? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 1:**

**LUKE 5.16**

*But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.*

Jesus never considered He was too busy to pray; He never thought He was so important that prayer was unnecessary because of who He was. Notice what Luke wrote, “Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.” This was the habit and the indispensable part of Jesus’ life, staying connected to His heavenly Father through prayer. May it be said of us, as children of God, that we, “often slip away to pray.”

**READ:**

EPH. 6.10-20. What is the purpose, as Paul writes in v. 11, of putting on the, “full armor of God?” \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you think that prayer is listed as part of the, “full armor of God?”

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Are you truly fitted with the whole armor of God if you are not a person of prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 2:**

**1 SAM 1.1-11**

Year after year, Hanna would go to the temple with her husband and pour her heart out to the Lord. Hanna wanted children but was unable to have them, and her husband's other wife, Peninnah, used Hanna's childlessness as a means to humiliate her. But God answered Hanna's prayer and gave her and Elkanah a son, Samuel.

At times it may seem that God is either not listening to our prayers or ignoring them. The truth is, God answers prayers based on three factors:

- 1, His will in eternity;
2. His glory;
3. His timing.

God simply wants us to be faithful to pray; God does the answering in His way and in His time.

**READ:**

2 COR 12.7-10. Paul prayed three times for God to remove the "thorn" from his flesh, and three times God said, "no." How have you found yourself reacting when it seems that God is not answering your prayers? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does Paul's example of receiving a, "no" from God help you when you feel God may be telling you, "no?" \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 3:**

***1 THES 5.17***

*Pray without ceasing.*

If you wanted to memorize a verse of scripture on prayer, this would probably be a good one! In the Greek language of the New Testament, this verse is only two words that literally read, “Continually pray.” This is a great verse that teaches you about how important prayer is in your daily life.

**READ:**

PHIL. 1.1-4. Based on these four verses of Scripture, how do you think you could characterize the prayer life of Paul? \_\_\_\_\_

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How would you describe your prayer life? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 4:**

**JOHN 15.7**

*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

This one verse of Scripture has been often misunderstood as a blanket promise from God that everything you ask for in prayer will be given to you. The key in this verse, as is the key in vv. 1-16 is the word, ‘abide.’ That word simply means you are allowing the Holy Spirit of God to have an overwhelming influence in your life. When that happens then you will be praying in the will of God.

**READ:**

MATT. 7.7-11. In the Greek language, the words, “ask”, “seek”, and “knock” are participles, meaning they could be read this way, “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking.”

Based on Jesus’ instructions in these verses, what do you think it means to be persistence in prayer? \_\_\_\_\_

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If persistence in prayer is taught by Jesus, how do you know when to stop praying for something? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 5:**

**JAS 5.16-18**

James wrote, “the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” The “righteous man” is the one who is saved and allowing himself to be led by the Holy Spirit, he is the one who is allowing the Holy Spirit to have an overwhelming influence in his life. The righteous life is the life God has called and equipped us to live for His glory.

**READ:**

1 TIM 2.1-2. Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy to pray for those in authority. He did not write Timothy to pray for those he *liked* in authority, but to pray for all those in authority.

Sometimes it’s hard to pray for someone we may disagree with or may not like. Spend some time now and think of someone you may be at odds with. Pray that God will bless them and be gracious to them; pray that God will dissolve the tension between you and that person. This is the prayer that honors God because it honors His Word.

## **BIBLE STUDY**

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

(2 Tim. 3.16-17)

The value of Bible study is summed up in these two verses of Scripture. The study of the Word of God is:

1. Profitable;
2. Profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

The reason Bible study is so important is: *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

The consistent and constant study of the Word of God is not just to gain information. You and I could study the Bible until we become experts in what the Bible contains, but that would do us no good if we don't learn how to apply what we learn to our lives. The value and importance of the study of God's Word is to teach us God's will for our lives. As we study, we gain insight into how we are to live God's Word, from both good and bad examples in the Bible.

Bible study is a discipline to be mastered as prayer and meditation are. Bible study takes time, it takes the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's Word. Bible study is a slow, methodical walk with God through the ages as we strive to walk in obedience to His Word every day.

This week I want to challenge you to slow down as you study God's Word, Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand His Word and how to apply His Word for His glory.

## **BIBLE STUDY**

**Aug 6: Sunday**

**PS 119.89-94**

Psalm 119 is the longest Psalm at 176 verses. This particular psalm is arranged in twenty-three stanzas of eight verses each. At the beginning of each stanza the first word begins with the next successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 was used by the Hebrews to teach their children their, “a-b-c’s” of the Hebrew language. Psalm 119 is about the value of reading, studying, and applying the Word of God. Verse ninety-three sums up the value of studying the Word of God:

*I will never forget your commandments, for by them you give me life. (NLT).*

**READ:**

LUKE 4.14-21. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing?” \_\_\_\_\_

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What does this tell you about the importance of reading and studying the Word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 7:**

**2 TIM 2.15**

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

The word, “handling” literally means to cut a straight line. It can also mean to teach and follow God’s word correctly. If we are going to be presented to God as, “approved workmen”, then the only way we will be, “cutting straight” with God’s Word is through daily study and application in our lives.

**READ:**

ACTS 20.25-31. Paul cautioned the members of the Ephesian church to, “be on guard” and to, “be on the alert” for false teachers that would try to infiltrate the church after he left. Why do you think Bible study is so important in combating false teachers? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 8:**

**2 TIM 3.16-17**

To be, “inspired by God” literally means to be, “God-breathed”. Although human authors wrote the various books of the Bible, they all wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message reads:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation<sup>5</sup>.

The Bible can be trusted because it is the very breath of God.

**READ:**

HEB. 4.12. Because the Word of God is, “living and active”, the truth is, we not only read God’s Word, but God’s Word reads us. What are the implications in your own life to know that the Bible is, “living and active . . . able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart?” \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>5</sup> “The Baptist Faith and Message”, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, June 14, 2000. The entire text can be viewed at: [www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net), or pocket-sized copies are available through Bethel Baptist Church.

**Aug 9:**

**ACTS 17.10-11**

The word, “examining” means careful study, evaluation, and investigation. While in the Navy I was assigned as a student at the Defense Intelligence College for a year studying military strategy and tactics. From the beginning we were taught how to speed read because of the volume of materials we were required to read. The Bible is not a book that one can speed read. Rather, the Bible should be read slowly and carefully because God speaks through His Word. If we rush through His Word we may very well miss what God would have us to learn. To truly examine the Word of God takes time and patience.

READ:

DEUT. 17.14-20. What was the purposes of the king reading the Word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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What were in the implications for his future generations in reading and following the Word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 10:**

**EX 17.14**

*Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”*

Israel had just won a victory over the Amelekites by the power of God. God directed Moses to write down what had happened as a record to be recited to future generations. The Bible is God’s record of His actions towards sinful man, of His many ways He revealed Himself to man, and man’s response to that revelation. Ultimately God’s Word is the story of His ultimate revelation to man in Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.

**READ:**

Psalm 40.7-8. The Bible is not a history book; rather, the Bible is a book of history. In reading verses seven and eight, what important fact do we learn about David? \_\_\_\_\_

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If a book were written about your journey of faith, would it be said of you, that you, “delighted in doing God’s will?” Spend some time in prayer today asking God to help you take delight in doing His will.

**Aug 11:**

**LUKE 24.25-27**

No doubt this encounter Jesus had with the two disciples had to be one of the most powerful discipleship training lessons of all times! Jesus Himself, used the Old Testament (“the Scriptures”) to, “explain the things concerning Himself.” The entire Bible points to Jesus Christ.

**READ:**

ACTS 8.35. Philip, using the Book of Isaiah the Ethiopian was reading, explained Jesus to this man. The result? The Ethiopian trusted Christ and was baptized. The value of consistent Bible study is knowing what it contains and how to explain it to those who do not understand it. Take some time today in prayer, asking God to help you develop into a student of His Word.

Aug 12:

**2 KINGS 22.8-13**

The temple had been neglected for years. When King Josiah came to power he instituted many religious reforms, one of which was ridding the temple of idols and restoring the worship of the Lord. As they were cleaning they found the Word of God that had been neglected for years. After reading God's Word they were struck to the heart at how far they had drifted from His Word. *The longer we stay away from the Word of God the further we drift from the God of the Word.*

**READ:**

2 KINGS 23.1-3. What was the result of Josiah having the Word of God read to him?

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What are some steps you could take in your own life to ensure you do not drift away from God's Word? \_\_\_\_\_

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## GIVING

*But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You.*

(1 Chron. 29.14)

Giving is probably one of the most difficult spiritual disciplines to develop in the life of the believer. Young couples just getting started in life are trying to juggle jobs, getting adjusted to married life, house and car payments, and possibly children coming into the family. It is difficult to see the value of biblical giving when it seems there is just enough money to get you to the next payday. My wife and I have been there with this struggle of biblical giving. We would get a year-end giving statement every January at the church we were members of and we would pat ourselves on the back because we had given more than the year before. But the truth was, we were not giving biblically, we were not tithing. God worked in us and brought us to the point where we knew what we had to do; we started tithing and God has always made it work out.

The truth is, God does not need our money. Giving is an acknowledgement that we are trusting in God to meet our needs, and that God has provided and continues to provide for us. In fact, in Scripture after Scripture the Bible affirms that *we cannot afford not to be biblical givers*. We commit the first and best to God because He gave of His first and best in the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

My prayer for you this week, as you read daily on giving, is that God will strengthen your resolve to be biblical givers. Trust God in the area of your finances and I promise you He will show Himself to be faithful in providing for you.

## GIVING

Aug 13 – Sunday

### 1 CHRON 29.1-9

David was the great king of Israel and wanted to build a temple for God. However God would not allow David to build it. Instead, God told David that his son Solomon would build the temple. David did not get mad and have a fit with God. Instead, David decided to gather all the materials needed for the construction of the temple so all Solomon would have to do was get it constructed. Notice the sequence of events in these nine verses:

1. David, as king, stepped up to the plate and set the example for giving.
2. In response to David's example, the people gave what they had.

Notice also the attitude of those who gave: they gave willingly and with a whole heart. This is the proper attitude for giving to God – joy and thanksgiving for the ability to give.

### **READ:**

Acts 4.34-35. The church was in its infancy when this example of giving was recorded. Why do you think the early church had such an attitude of selfless giving when most did not have much at all? \_\_\_\_\_

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What kind of impact would this attitude of giving have on the church, on any local church, today? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 14:**

**2 COR 9.6**

*Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

The farmer that plants a limited amount of seed cannot expect an overwhelming crop to be produced. At the same time the farmer that plants hundreds or thousands of acres of seed can reasonably expect a fairly good sized crop from his labors under normal conditions. We do not give to get something in return, we give because we love the Lord. However, the blessings from God are in direct proportion to the size of our gifts to Him. Whatever and however God decides to bless is His business, our joy is being able to give.

**READ:**

LUKE 6.38. This verse of Scripture has been translated by some to mean that God will make you rich based on how much you give to Him. That interpretation totally misses the mark of what this verse actually means. In simple terms this verse means that you cannot out give God.

What, “standards of measure” do we use when giving to the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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What standard of measure should you use when giving to the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 15:**

**2 COR 9.7**

*Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

The word, “purposed” means to decide ahead of time, to do something with and on purpose. When Paul wrote that we are to give based on what we have decided, he is telling us that giving is something that should be scheduled, systematic, and sincere. It is so interesting to see how people, regular attending church members, react when the offering is taken up: they fumble around and act frustrated because an offering is being taken up when they should know that is part of the worship service. Being prepared to give before ever coming to the worship service is a matter of the heart and a condition of the heart before God.

**READ:**

2 Cor. 9.5: Paul wanted the Corinthians to be prepared to give before the offering was ever taken up. What was the one condition that Paul wanted the Corinthians to guard against in their giving?

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What is the value to the church and in your relationship with the Lord to be a systematic and sincere giver? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 16:**

**PHIL 4.14-16**

The church at Philippi was a poor church and no doubt could not afford to give very much in support of Paul's missions endeavors. In reading these verses it is clear the Philippian church gave because they saw a need; their ability to give was not as great as the need that presented itself. The church simply stepped up and met the need regardless of what they thought they could or could not afford. This is the essence of faithful giving – meeting needs regardless of what our own situation is.

**READ:**

PROV. 16.2: *Why* we give is just as important as *what* we give. In fact, it is the condition of our hearts that will drive our giving. Why is the condition of our heart so important in the area of giving? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some concrete steps you and your family could make to ensure your heart is in the right place when you give to the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 17:**

**2 COR 9.8-9**

God gives us the ability to give – that’s the simple translation of these two verses. The New Living Translation of verse eight reads this way:

*And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.*

When we gripe and complain about giving, we are tragically telling God He has not provided adequately enough in our own lives to be able to give.

**READ:**

PS. 104.10-14, 27-30. Psalm 104 is a clear testimony to the fact that God gives us everything we need to sustain life. Think on the impact of verse twenty-eight: how has God, “opened His hand” for good in your own life? \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your giving reflect your appreciation and thankfulness for God’s provision in your own life and in the life of your family?

Aug 18:

**2 COR 9.10-11**

By this time you are probably thinking, “Good grief! The pastor is about to wear me out with all this stuff on giving! Ahhhhhh! Give me just five minutes to draw a circle in the dirt, stand in the middle of it and have a fit!” (If that helps, then go ahead.)

There is a kernel of truth in the fact that it seems sometimes all you hear from the church is, “Give, give, give.” However, the Bible does not shy away from the fact that giving is an important part of our relationship with Jesus. We often think of giving only in terms of money, but notice what Paul wrote in verse eleven: “. . . you will be enriched in everything.” God gives in so many ways in our lives, financially as well as other areas. Notice also some important words that are associated with God and giving: God *supplies*, God *multiplies*, God *increases*, and God *enriches*. And the result of all this? Thanksgiving to God.

**READ:**

PSALM 145.4-6. Part of our spiritual legacy is passing down our faith to the next generation.

What would you have to say to the generation coming behind you about how God has provided

for you in life? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Aug 19:**

**EX 36.1-7**

Imagine you and your family come to worship on a typical Sunday morning. When the time comes in the worship service for the offering to be taken up, the pastor stands in the pulpit and says, “Today we are not taking up an offering. In fact, we will not be taking up an offering for the next few weeks because you have given so much our budget is just overflowing with funds!” The deacons and the finance committee would probably have an emergency meeting about the mental condition of the pastor while the congregation breaks out in, “amen!” and, “praise the Lord!” for the rest of the day!

The Hebrews gave to the construction of the Tabernacle from what they had. Understand something about their giving – they were in the wilderness and would be for the next forty years! They could not go to Lowes® or Home Depot® to buy material to construct the building. What they had is what they brought with them from Egypt, and when they gave it, it would not be replaced! The modern day equivalent: the leadership of the church says a new sanctuary is going to be built, and the material to build it will come from what the church members bring from their own homes!

**READ:**

PS. 50.10-15. The truth is, God does not need our money; He owns the universe! God simply wants His children to honor Him in every part of their lives, and giving is no exception. How does giving honor God?\_\_\_\_\_

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How has your understanding of giving changed through these devotions? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are there any changes to your approach to biblical giving that need to be made? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **SERVING**

*Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.*

*(Rom. 12.4a)*

The moment God saves the sinner, He fills them with His Holy Spirit and gives that person a special ability to serve the Lord in a particular way. This special ability is known as a, “spiritual gift.” Spiritual gifts are given to each believer to serve in the Lord’s church for the benefit of the church. There is no such person as a Christian that does not have at least one spiritual gift. When Christians serve based on how God has gifted them, the church gets the benefit and God is honored. The more we serve the Lord the more we get to see how God works.

We do not serve the Lord to keep our salvation, nor do we serve the Lord so that He will love us more. We serve the Lord because of His great love for us. We serve the Lord out of gratitude for saving us. We serve the Lord because He has given us and done more for us that we deserve or could ever earn. Serving the Lord is not what we *have* to do, serving the Lord is what we *get* to do.

The truth is, God does not need us. God has chosen to work through us for His glory, imperfect people doing His perfect work. This week I want to encourage you to read these verses of scripture carefully and prayerfully. Evaluate your service to the Lord and commit, or recommit, to serving Him with all the strength and energy He has given you for His glory.

## SERVING

**Aug 20 – Sunday:**

**EX 35.30-35**

God enabled two men with special skills to form and fashion the gold, silver, bronze, and cloths that would be used in the tabernacle. Notice what the Bible tells us about how God equipped them: “filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship . . . with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer . . . and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs.” God called them by name and God equipped them to serve Him in a specific way. The same is true of us, God calls us by name and then equips us, through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, to serve Him in a special way.

**READ:**

AMOS 7.14-15: What did Amos say his qualifications were for being a prophet of the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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Is what God did in the life of Amos any different than what He does in our lives today? \_\_\_\_\_

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*God does not call the qualified, He qualifies those He calls.*



**Aug 21:**

**NUM 3.25-37**

The sons of Gershon, the son of Levi, and their families, were given specific responsibilities regarding duty in the Tabernacle. Not only were they given specific responsibilities, they were also given specific positions of their camp around the Tabernacle. Everything God does, He does with purpose and with precision. When God saved you and filled you with His spirit, He also gifted you with purpose to serve Him in a special way.

**READ:**

EXODUS 4.10-13. If we were honest we would have to admit that at times we are just like Moses: we want to argue with God and not do what He wants us to do. We would just as soon let someone else serve because we just don't have the time! How have you seen, "a bit of Moses" in your own life when it comes to the call of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the remedy is when it comes to reluctance to serve God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Aug 22:**

**PS 100.2**

*Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing.*

The apostle Paul wrote to the pastor Titus that Jesus Christ gave of Himself on the cross of Calvary to redeem us as His own people, “zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2.14). Both Psalm 100.2 and Titus 2.14 tell us this same truth: as children of God we are to serve the Lord with enthusiasm and joy. Why? Because when we trusted and believed in Jesus, He saved us, forgave us, and gave us life everlasting. How great is that!

**READ:**

ACTS 20.24. What did Paul consider his sole focus in life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When we consider what Christ has done for us, should we take the call God has placed on our lives any less serious than the apostle Paul did? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think we allow in our lives to keep us from being totally focused and sold-out to the call God has placed on our lives? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Aug 23:**

**ROM 12.1**

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

This is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible when it comes to how we should respond to the saving grace of Jesus Christ in our own lives. Here is how this verse breaks down:

**PRESENT YOUR BODY:** come before the Lord ready to serve Him;

**LIVING AND HOLY SACRIFICE:** with life and breath and energy and excitement, set aside for the work God has called you to with nothing in your life to take away from that call;

**ACCEPTABLE TO GOD:** there should be nothing in our lives that God would be displeased with;

**SPIRITUAL SERVICE OF WORSHIP:** our lives, with everything we are and with all God has given us the ability to do, are to be given in service to the Lord. As we serve Him, our service is considered an act of worship to the Lord.

Have you ever considered your life to be a living sacrifice to God?\_\_\_\_\_

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Spend some time before the Lord today and honestly ask Him if there is anything in your life that is keeping you from serving Him the way He has called and equipped you to serve. Then ask God to help you to be able to serve Him as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to Him.

**Aug 24:**

**ROM 12.6-8**

The “gifts” that Paul wrote about in verse six is the special work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. When God saves a sinner, He fills that person with His Holy Spirit and gives that person a special “gift” or work of the Holy Spirit within them that enables them to serve God in a special way. Because God works in the lives of believers this way, there is no such person as the Christian that has not been gifted to serve God in some special way.

**READ:**

JUDGES 3.9-11. What happened to Othniel when God, “raised him up as a deliverer for the sons of Israel?” \_\_\_\_\_

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In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit would come upon people temporarily for God’s purposes; now the Holy Spirit is permanent within each believer.

Aug 25:

**1 COR 12.4-7**

Paul wrote, “*to each one is given . . . for the common good.*” This simply means that God has gifted each member in the church for the benefit of other members. God has not gifted us for the benefit of ourselves. This means that when we exercise our gifts God has blessed us with, the church gets the benefit; and when we do not exercise those gifts, the church suffers. Think about how powerful that truth is – God has given you a gift for someone else, and consequently God has gifted other believers for your benefit. The church is an interconnected body of believers, brought together through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. We have been gifted by God for the benefit of each other.

**READ**

GAL. 5.13b: What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “but through love serve one another?” \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is serving through love so important? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Aug 26:**

**EPH 4.11-13**

Notice what Paul wrote, “He gave *some* as apostles, and *some* as prophets, and *some* as evangelists, and *some* as pastors and teachers.” God did not equip every believer with every gift; every believer has a specific gift designed to serve the church in a specific way.

What do you think would happen in a church where everyone was equipped to preach? \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you think would happen in a church where everyone was equipped with the gift of spiritual leadership? \_\_\_\_\_

What would happen if everyone was equipped with the gift of teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

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God has put His church together with a variety of gifts to be exercised through a variety of different people.

What has God gifted you to do in His church? \_\_\_\_\_

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If you are not sure about how God has gifted you to serve, talk to the pastor about taking the six-week discipleship course called *Jesus on Leadership*. This course will help you understand how God has gifted you and where you might fit in the life of the church.

## **WITNESSING**

*For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.*

*(Gal. 5.13)*

Every Christian has a story. The story of every Christian is how God saved them. The story of every Christian is called their *testimony*. A person's testimony is simply what their life was like before God saved them, what brought them to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and what their life has been like since God saved them. When someone shares their testimony with a lost person, that is called "witnessing."

Here is what is so powerful about witnessing: there are some who simply want to argue the Bible, and we will never argue anyone into heaven. However, no one can argue with what God has done in your life because it is what has happened to you. God has not given us the power to save anyone, that's His business. God has not given us the power to produce results, that is His business as well. God has however given us the ability to share what He has done in our lives and simply wants us to be found faithful to do that. It is amazing what God can do when we simply share what He has done in and through us. I want to encourage you this week to pray and ask God, as you study the daily scriptures, to help you be more focused on sharing your story of God's amazing grace in your own life with others you come in contact with.

**WITNESSING**

**Aug 27 – Sunday**

**REV 12.7-12**

Those who placed their faith in Christ won the victory (overcame) Satan, but not because of anything they had done. They won the victory through:

1. The shed blood of Jesus Christ;
2. Through their testimony of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

God has not called us to produce results, which we do not have the power to do. God has called us to be His witnesses to a lost and dying world. Our part is to witness, God does the rest.

**READ:**

ACTS 4.13-20: What did Peter tell the authorities in verse 20? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What does this tell you about the basics of our witness as Christians? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Aug 28:**

**ACTS 1.6-8**

Notice something very important in the directions Jesus gave His disciples: *“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses.”* When we witness we do it in the power provided by the Holy Spirit of God. Without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit within us we are ineffective as witnesses for the Lord.

**READ:**

JOHN 9.25: What was the witness of the man that had received his sight? \_\_\_\_\_

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Your witness is what God has done in your life. While many may try and argue about what is in the Bible, they cannot argue about what God has done in your own life; this is the power of the personal witness.

**Aug 29:**

**EX 14.30-31**

The Hebrews had been in slavery, living in Egypt for 400 years. They may have heard about God but had never witnessed His power. Seeing the waters of the Red Sea parted, walking through on dry land, and then seeing the waters close in on the Egyptian army was something they no doubt would never forget. Whether or not they understood who God was or even believed in Him, the miracle at the Red Sea taught them one great truth: God is real and He is the God of power.

**READ:**

Psalm 103.12. What does this verse tell you about the power of God over the sin in your life?\_\_\_\_

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When God removes sin, and removes the penalty of that sin, it never comes back. This is the power of God in salvation.

**Aug 30:**

**ISA 45.22**

*Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.*

This is one of the most powerful verses of Scripture in the Old Testament that proclaim salvation through trust in God. This one verse of Scripture is a:

1. Command: TURN TO ME
2. With a purpose: AND BE SAVED
3. For a people: ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH
4. With a truth: FOR I AM GOD
5. And a guarantee: AND THERE IS NO OTHER.

**READ:**

ACTS 2.38: What were the two commands and the one promise that Peter gave those listening to his sermon? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Repentance comes before baptism; there is no saving power in baptism. However, once saved, baptism is the first act of obedience in the life of the new believer.

**Aug 31:**

**JOHN 4.39-42**

The disciples of Jesus could not believe what they were experiencing: while they had gone into the city looking for food, Jesus struck up a conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well (4.27). The Jews had nothing to do with the Samaritans and yet Jesus was talking with a Samaritan woman at the well, in public! She was so moved by the truth that Jesus spoke she left her water pot at the well to go into town and share the news of Jesus (4.28-31). Because she was willing to share the news of Jesus many came out to see Jesus, and many believed in Him. We never know how God will use our witness about Him.

**READ:**

1 Cor. 15.1-4: What were the three key facts concerning the gospel that Paul proclaimed? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you think it is so important not to just say that, “Jesus died,” but that, “Jesus died for our sins?” \_\_\_\_\_

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The message of the gospel is not complicated.

**Sep 1:**

**MARK 5.19-20**

Jesus took His disciples across the Sea of Galilee in a boat for one reason: to heal a demon-possessed man. This man had lived a terrible life: possessed by a, “legion” of demons. This poor man lived among the tombs, yelling and screaming day and night, and cutting himself with rocks. The Bible tells us the demons within him were so powerful that not even chains could hold him down. Jesus confronted him and cast the demons into a herd of pigs. The pigs were driven by the demons into the Sea of Galilee and drowned! The man, now in his right mind, was so overjoyed, he wanted to go with Jesus. Jesus told him to stay and proclaim the gospel in his hometown. Sometimes it may be difficult to witness to those we know because they know who we are. And yet it is God’s Spirit within us that brings about a change that others can see, a change that is transformational. It is this change that makes our witness so much more powerful.

**READ:**

Acts 26.9-11: What did Paul tell King Agrippa about his former life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The power of the personal witness is to share your life story. That story is your life before God saved you, what brought you to the saving knowledge of Jesus, and your life since being saved. You don’t have to give all the details of your old life, but you do need to know that God took you from being a condemned sinner to a saved sinner by His grace; that’s the most powerful message of all!

**Sep 2: ACTS 8.34-38**

Philip was an evangelist, preaching the gospel in Samaria. God through the Holy Spirit directed him to leave his preaching in Samaria and go south to the desert. There, Philip met an Ethiopian riding in a chariot reading the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Philip was invited into the chariot to explain to the Ethiopian what he was reading. This encounter resulted in the Ethiopian trusting Christ and being baptized, and he returned to Ethiopia with the gospel.

Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian is called a, "divine appointment", a God-directed appointment between a Christian and a lost person for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel. God orchestrates divine appointments so lost people can have the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel. Our part is to be prepared to share the gospel when we are given the opportunity.

**READ:**

**ACTS 16.11-15:** How did God work in the heart of Lydia when she heard the gospel? \_\_\_\_\_

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Our part in witnessing is to share the gospel, God through the Holy Spirit is the one who works on the hearts of those listening, drawing them to Himself in salvation.

**Sep 3:**

**ROM 1.16**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

What were the two statements Paul made about the gospel?

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So often we are paralyzed by fear when it comes to witnessing; fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of saying the wrong words or not knowing what to say, and even fear of how people will react. Satan uses fear to keep us from witnessing; God gives us both the strength and boldness to witness in the name of Jesus. Trust and take confidence in God to give you the strength and boldness to conquer your fears in witnessing.

**READ:**

Nehemiah 2.1-5: What did Nehemiah do when the king asked him what he requested?\_\_\_\_\_

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Witnessing requires prayer, and the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. If we pray for God to give us boldness in our witness, He will.