



31 DAYS **IN THE WORD**

A RESTART GUIDE FOR TIME IN YOUR SPOT

Day 1: Trembling at God's Word

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word." (Isaiah 66:2 | NIV)

Do you tremble when God speaks? When was the last time you were physically affected by the reality that Almighty God just spoke directly to you? John lost all physical strength when God spoke to him (Rev. 1:17); Paul fell to the ground when Christ met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4); Moses trembled when God spoke to him (Acts 7:32); and Peter, when he realized who Jesus was, "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" (Luke 5:8).

Have you lost your sense of awe that the Creator still chooses to speak to you, His creation? Do you approach the reading of your Bible with a holy expectation, listening for the life-changing words that God has for you that day? Scripture says that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). There are things you will see and hear out of your fear and reverence for God that you will not experience in any other way.

As you study your Bible, you may sense that God has something to say directly to you through the verses you are reading. Take a moment to consider the awesome reality that the God who spoke and created a universe is now speaking to you. If Jesus could speak and raise the dead, calm a storm, cast out demons, and heal the incurable, then what effect might a word from Him have upon your life? The possibilities should cause you to tremble! The next time you open God's Word, do so with a sense of holy expectation.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- How might you approach the time you spend in God's Word with more of a "holy expectation" this month?

Day 2: God Looks for Clay

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the Lord.
"Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel." (Jeremiah 18:6 | NIV)*

God knows how to bring salvation to your family, your friends, your community, and your world. Accordingly, He looks for those who will allow Him to shape them into the instruments He requires to do His divine work. Clay has no plans of its own, no aspirations for service, nor reluctance to perform its given task. It is just clay. Moldable, pliable, totally submissive to the will of its master.

At times we excitedly announce to God: "I've discovered my strengths and gifts, and now I know how I can best serve You!" At other times we inform Him, "I am aware of what my weaknesses are, so I know which tasks I'm not capable of doing for You." Yet this is not characteristic of clay. God is not limited to working with our strengths (2 Cor. 12:9-10). He can mold us into whatever kind of instrument He requires. When God's assignment demands humility, he finds a servant willing to be humbled. When His work requires zeal, He looks for someone He can fill with His Spirit. God uses holy vessels, so He finds those who will allow Him to remove their impurities. It is not a noble task, being clay. There is no glamour to it, nothing boast-worthy, except that it is exactly what Almighty God is looking for. Compliant, moldable, yielded clay.

If your tendency is to tell the Father what you can and cannot do for Him, submit to His agenda and allow Him to shape you into the person He wants you to be. Like clay.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Would you describe yourself as moldable, pliable, and submissive to the will of God? If not, how could you become more like clay today?

Day 3: Immeasurably More

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us ... " (Ephesians 3:20 | NIV)

At times we feel as if we could impress God with all we are trying to do for Him and His church. Yet God has yet to be impressed with even the most grandiose human aspirations (Psalm 8:3-4). You will never set a goal so big or attempt a task so significant that God does not have something far greater that He could do in and through your life. Saul of Tarsus worked harder than anyone else to impress God with his efforts, only to discover that his greatest achievements were but rubbish compared to God's will for his life (Philippians 3:7-8).

Our problem is that we become too easily enamored with our own plans. If we are attempting to do noble or difficult things, we assume that we must be experiencing the maximum potential for our lives and that God must, therefore, be pleased with us. Until we have heard from God, we cannot even imagine all that our lives could become or all that God could accomplish through us.

We need to remind ourselves that the Father sees the "big picture," that His power far exceeds our limited imagination. We must set aside our own agenda, however lofty. We must never become satisfied with our own dreams, for they are finite at best. When we follow God's direction, we will witness things happening in our lives that can only be explained by His powerful presence. How could we be satisfied with anything less?

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What would it look like for you to set aside your own agenda and intentionally pursue God's direction for your life?

Day 4: Prayer Discovers God's Agenda

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35 | NIV)

It was common knowledge among the disciples that they would find Jesus praying during the early morning hours. When they needed Him, they knew to go to the place of prayer. When Judas betrayed Jesus, he led his cohorts to Jesus' place of prayer.

Every time the Lord Jesus faced an important decision, He prayed. When He was being tempted to do things by the world's methods instead of the Father's, He prayed (Matt. 4). When it was time to choose His disciples, He prayed the entire night (Luke 6:12). If the Son of God required a night of prayer in order to determine the Father's mind, how long might it take us in prayer to clearly determine our Father's will?

Because Jesus was so often surrounded by crowds, He knew He must find a quiet place so He could clearly hear His Father's voice. Jesus had many people seeking to influence the direction of His life. His disciples wanted Him to go where the crowds were (Mark 1:37). The crowds wanted to crown Him king (John 6:15). Satan tempted Him to make compromises in order to draw a following (Matt. 4:3, 6, 9). Jesus knew that His mission was not to attract a crowd, but to remain obedient to His Father. It was prayer that set the agenda for Jesus' ministry (Luke 6:12). Prayer preceded the miracles (John 11:42-43); prayer brought Him encouragement at critical moments (Luke 9:28-31); prayer enabled Him to go to the cross (Luke 22:41-42); and prayer kept Him there despite excruciating pain (Luke 23:46). Follow the Savior's example, and let your time alone with God, in prayer, set the agenda for your life.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

**- What quiet place do you retreat to so that you can discover God's agenda through prayer?
How has God spoken to you there? If you don't have a place, how might you establish one?**

Day 5: When God Speaks, It Is So

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11 | NIV)

When God speaks, nothing remains the same. At the beginning of time, God spoke, and a universe was created out of nothing. God followed a pattern when He created the earth: He spoke; it was so; it was good (Gen. 1:3-4). This pattern continued throughout the Bible. Whenever God revealed His plans, things happened just as He said, and God considered the result "good" (Phil. 2:13). God doesn't make suggestions. He speaks with the full determination to see that what He has said will come to fruition.

Whenever Jesus spoke, what He said came to pass. Lepers found that a word from Jesus meant healing (Luke 5:13; 17:14). The blind man discovered that a word from Jesus meant sight (Luke 18:42). Through a barren fig tree the disciples saw that a curse from Jesus meant destruction (Mark 11:20). The sinner experienced forgiveness through a word from Jesus (John 8:11). How many attempts did it take Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead? Only one (John 11:43). There was never a time that Jesus spoke that what He said did not happen.

Have you been reading the words of Jesus in your Bible without experiencing His word that transforms everything around you? Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they assumed that knowledge of the written Scriptures would give them life. They were satisfied with having the words instead of experiencing the person who spoke the words (John 5:39). How powerful a word from God is to your life! As you read your Bible and pray, listen to what God has to say to you about His will for your life.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Have you been reading the words of Jesus in your Bible without experiencing them? What would it look like to shift how you read them?

Day 6: God's Eternal Perspective

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." (Genesis 12:2 | NIV)

In Bible times, a person's name represented his character; to know someone's name was to know what the person was like. That's why God changed the name of some when He transformed their character. For example, the Lord wanted to bless all the nations of the earth through Abram, yet Abram's character was too weak for such a great task. God said He would make Abram's name great so that He could make him a blessing to future generations. Then over the next twenty-five years, God developed Abraham's character to match the name He had given him.

God sees your life from His eternal perspective. He will take whatever time is necessary to grow your character to match His assignment for you. If you have not received a divine commission lately, it may be that your character needs maturing. Are you impatient to begin your work before God has refined your character? A small character will fail in a large responsibility every time. Don't be too hasty to get to the work. It took twenty-five years before God entrusted Abraham with his first son and set in motion the establishment of the nation of Israel. Yet God was true to His word, and thousands of years later people continue to be blessed by the account of Abraham's life and by his descendant, Jesus.

How is God building your character? Do you sense He has a task for you that will require a far greater man or woman than you presently are? Will you yield to God as He works in your life to prepare you for your next assignment?

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Do you sense He has a task for you that will require a far greater man or woman than you presently are? How will you yield to God as He works in your life to prepare you for your next assignment?

Day 7: Are You Being Made Perfect?

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Though he was a Son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him." (Hebrews 5:8-9 | NIV)

There is a positive aspect to suffering. We all endure suffering to some degree, but the good news is that through it we can become like Jesus. Are you willing to pay whatever price is necessary in order to become like Christ? There are some things that God can build into your life only through suffering. Even Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was complete only after He had endured the suffering His Father had set before Him. Once He had suffered, He was the complete, mature, and perfect Savior through whom an entire world could find salvation.

If you become bitter over your hardships, you close some parts of your life from God. If you do this, you will never be complete. Some places in your soul can be reached only by suffering. The Spirit of God has important things to teach you, but you can only learn these lessons in the midst of your trials. King Saul was made king without ever enduring hardship, but he never developed the character or maturity to handle God's assignment. David spent years in suffering and heartache. When he finally ascended the throne, he was a man after God's own heart.

Don't resent the suffering God allows in your life. Don't make all your decisions and invest everything you have into avoiding hardship. God did not spare His own Son. How can we expect Him to spare us? Learn obedience even when it hurts!

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- How might God be using your current struggles to teach you obedience and perfect His character in you?

Day 8: Firmly Planted

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither; whatever they do prospers." (Psalm 1:3 | NIV)

It is possible to spend your whole life knowing about the truths of God and never experiencing any of them. Simply knowing about them does not mean that they have become a part of your life. Here is the important question: What are you doing with the word of God? Some people allow themselves to come under the influence of ungodly thinking to the point that God's Word makes no difference to them. If you seek your counsel from ungodly persons, you will find yourself moving away from the direction God's Word commands. If you intentionally seek out sinners as your companions, they will lead you down paths that take you far from God. If you choose to join those who are scornful, you will eventually become cynical.

The righteous man does not find encouragement in the opinions of others but in God's Word. He is not content with a surface knowledge of Scripture but meditates on it day and night until he is satisfied that what he reads reflects his own experience. He becomes like a fruit tree standing firmly on the bank of the river. The tree is well nourished and produces delicious fruit and bountiful leaves. People come from miles around to sit in its shade and eat its fruit.

If you allow God to implement His Word in your life, others will draw encouragement from you. The more you grow in God's righteousness, the stronger you will become. A constant stream of people will seek you out because they know that your life will be a blessing.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Is your life planted by the streams of the Lord? If so, what fruit is God producing in you? If not, what adjustments do you need to make to be firmly planted in Him?

Day 9: Seeking Jesus

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!'" (Mark 1:36-37 | NIV)

Simon Peter is well known to us for his foolish, extemporaneous statements throughout the Gospels (Matt. 16:22; 17:4; 26:33). But Peter was always seeking after Jesus. Peter followed Jesus from afar during the night of Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 26:58). Peter ran to the tomb when he heard Jesus had risen (Luke 24:12). Peter swam in the sea in his haste to get to Jesus (John 21:7) and even walked on water in order to join Jesus (Matt. 14:29). Peter did not always say or do the right things, but he did constantly seek to be with Jesus. Because of this, he was continually encountering his Lord and growing to be a more faithful disciple.

Whenever we see Peter coming to Jesus, he is always accompanied by others. Because Peter was seeking Jesus, others sought Him too. What are you known for by those who know you best? Do they see you searching for fame, power, success, or happiness? Are you known as a person who seeks after Jesus? God promises: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Did you begin today intent on encountering Jesus? Is your search for Him halfhearted, or are you seeking Him with all your heart? Have others grown closer to Jesus because they followed your example and sought Jesus? If your heart is set on pursuing Jesus, you will always find Him. "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come" (Rev. 22:17).

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Did you begin today intent on encountering Jesus? How can you prepare you heart to watch for encounters with Him today?

Day 10: Be Anxious for Nothing

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6 | NIV)

Don't be anxious! Paul said there is nothing that should cause a child of God to worry. He was well aware of things that cause anxiety. His nation was occupied by a foreign army and ruled by corrupt leaders. He was writing from prison, where he was being held as a result of false accusations. He was separated from those he loved; his motives had been questioned; and he had been misrepresented. Some were trying to undermine all that he had accomplished in starting churches. He suffered physically and faced imminent execution (2 Cor. 11:23–29). Yet Paul said there would never be a crisis so troubling that God could not bring peace in the midst of it!

God will not necessarily take your problems away, but He will carry the load for you. He wants you to experience His peace, which is beyond human comprehension. You will never fully understand how God could give you peace in some of the situations you face, but you do not have to understand it in order to experience it. This peace is not just for those who "handle stress well"; it is for everyone! You may know that God wants you to experience peace but wonder how this is possible, given what you are presently facing. Yet, Scripture says to be anxious for nothing. God's Word clearly indicates that there is nothing you can face that is too difficult, too troubling, or too fearful for God. No matter what your circumstances are, turn your anxiety over to God and let His perfect peace guard your heart.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What are you most anxious about today? What would it look like to surrender that burden to God and let His perfect peace guard your heart?

Day 11: God's Promises Are Yes

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ.
And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 1:20 | NIV)*

God keeps every promise He makes. When we walk in intimate fellowship with Christ, we have the assurance that every promise God has made in Scripture is available to us. This truth should motivate us to search the Scriptures for each promise in order to meditate upon its potential for our life.

Jesus promised that when you ask for something in His will, He will give you what you ask (John 16:23b). This promise is available to every Christian. If you ask God if this promise applies to your life, His answer is yes. If you are not now experiencing this promise, it does not change the fact that God has said it. You may need to seek God's answer for why His promise has not yet reached maturity in you.

Paul claimed he had tested each of these promises in his own life and found them all to be abundantly true. That's why he could speak of the "exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7b) and the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8b). Paul had found a wealth of God's promises and enjoyed them all in abundance.

Don't become discouraged or impatient if you are not experiencing to the fullest all of God's promises in your life. God may want to prepare you to receive some of the great truths He has made available to you. Walk closely with your Lord and, in time, you will see Him bring His promises to fruition in your life.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Is there a promise God has made that you struggle to believe for yourself? What would it look like to trust that God has said "Yes" to that promise?

Day 12: Love Brings Obedience

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.
The one who loves me will be loved by my Father." (John 14:21 | NIV)*

Obedience to God's commands comes from your heart. When you begin struggling to obey God, that is a clear indication that your heart has shifted away from Him. Some claim: "I love God, but I'm having difficulty obeying Him in certain areas of my life." That is a spiritual impossibility. If I were to ask you, "Do you love God?" you might easily respond, "Yes!" However, if I were to ask you, "Are you obeying God?" would you answer yes as quickly? Yet I would be asking you the same question! Genuine love for God leads to wholehearted obedience. If you told your spouse that you loved her at certain times but that you struggled to love her at others, your relationship would be in jeopardy. Yet we assume that God is satisfied with occasional love or partial obedience. He is not.

Obedience without love is legalism. Obedience for its own sake can be nothing more than perfectionism, which leads to pride. Many conscientious Christians seek to cultivate discipline in their lives to be more obedient to Christ. As helpful as spiritual disciplines can be, they never can replace your love for God. Love is the discipline. God looks beyond your godly habits, beyond your moral lifestyle, and beyond your church involvement and focuses His penetrating gaze upon your heart.

Has your worship become empty and routine? Have you lost your motivation to read God's Word? Is your prayer life reduced to a ritual? These are symptoms of a heart that has shifted away from God. Return to your first love. Love is the greatest motivation for a relationship with God.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What words from the devotion above spoke to you the most? What do you think God wants you to do about it?

Day 13: Assumes the Best

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*"Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."
(1 Corinthians 13:7 | NIV)*

Love has no limits. Love never says, "You've gone too far. I can't love you now." "All things" means everything is included. Christlike love leaves no doubt in the mind of another that you will continue to love steadfastly. Do those close to you know that they can fail and do foolish things, yet you will not falter in your love for them? Are others assured that, even when they hurt you, you still love them, holding nothing against them?

Love assumes the best about others. If someone inadvertently offends you, you choose to believe the offense was unintentional. If someone seeks to harm you, you "bear all things," forgiving unconditionally. If a positive light can be shed on a difficult encounter, you grasp it. If someone continually provokes you, you "endure all things." You never lose hope in the ones you love. You practice the same unconditional love toward others that Christ gives to you.

Paul said that he was nothing if he had the faith to move mountains, the tongue of an angel, and the gift of prophecy to understand all mysteries, yet did not have God's love. It is unacceptable to say, "Well, I just can't love people that way!" When God loves people through you, this is the only kind of love He has! Read 1 Corinthians 13 with gratitude that God has already expressed this complete and selfless love to you. Pray and ask Him to express it through you now, to others.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- How can you show those close to you know that they can fail and do foolish things, yet you will not falter in your love for them?

Day 14: Relentless Love

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"The Lord said to me, 'Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites.'" (Hosea 3:1 | NIV)

No human can comprehend God's love for His children! Our limited experience of human love hinders us from understanding God's unconditional love for us. We can see a picture of this love in the life of Hosea.

Hosea was a righteous man, but God told him to marry a sinful woman. Hosea obeyed and took Gomer as his wife. He cherished her and treated her with dignity and respect. Never before had Gomer experienced this kind of love, but she soon grew dissatisfied. She began giving her affections to other men. She became so involved in adulterous pursuits that finally she abandoned Hosea altogether. Other men used her until she had nothing left to give. Then they sold her into slavery. After this, God gave Hosea an amazing command: "Go and buy her back." Despite the intense pain and hurt that Gomer had inflicted on him, God told Hosea to forgive her and to pay any price to bring her back into his home.

God's message is clear: When we reject Him and turn our devotion elsewhere, our rejection carries the same pain as an adulterous betrayal. After all God has done for us, it is incomprehensible that we should reject Him. It is even harder to fathom that God could love us even after we have rejected, ignored, and disobeyed Him. Yet God's love is completely different from ours. His love follows us to the depths of our sinfulness until He has reclaimed us. His love is undaunted when we run from Him, and He continues to pursue us. What incredible love He has demonstrated to us!

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- How do you need to experience God's love today? Are there areas of your life where you are doubting His love for you?

Day 15: Learning to Love

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other." (1 Thessalonians 4:9 | NIV)

God is love (1 John 4:16). His very nature is perfect love, but because of sin love does not always come freely and naturally to His children. You may have been raised in a home where love was not expressed. Perhaps you were hurt by someone you loved, and your heart became hardened as a defense against further pain. You may love others but not know how to express your love in words or actions. You may feel frustrated because you have been called by God to love, yet you do not understand how to love others.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica to encourage them not to become disheartened as they learned to love each other (1 Thess. 3:7). They did not need Paul to explain to them how to love, for God Himself would teach them how to love one another. God would give them His love, and as they followed Him, He would cause that love to multiply. If they found someone who was difficult to love, God would enable them to love through His Holy Spirit.

God in His grace has made provision for our human weakness, and He is prepared to teach us how to love one another. There are no exceptions. Are you struggling to love someone? God will help you. He will enable you to love your parents, your spouse, your children, your friends, or your enemy in a deeper way than you could ever love them on your own. If you do not know how to express your love in a meaningful way, God will teach you how to do this. God is the authority on love. Ask Him to make His love overflow to others through your life.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Have you become disheartened in the ways that you love others? How can you rely on God's grace as you love others today?

Day 16: Deny Yourself

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24 | NIV)

Sin causes us to be self-centered, shifting our hearts from God to self. The essence of salvation is an about-face from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. The Christian must spend a lifetime denying self. Our great temptation will be to affirm ourselves while we follow Jesus. James and John did this when they chose to follow Jesus but asked for the two most prominent positions in Jesus' kingdom (Mark 10:35–37). James and John wanted a discipleship that would not impede their personal desires and aspirations. Like them, we say, "Lord, I want to be pleasing to you, but I want to stay where I am."

Self-centered people try to keep their lives unruffled and undisturbed, safe and secure. Our temptation is to give our time and effort to the goals of this world. Then, when we are successful in the world's eyes, we seek to bring God into our world by honoring Him with our success. We may say, "Now that I have succeeded in business [or sports, or politics, or with my family, or even Christian ministry], I want to give God the glory for it!" God is not interested in receiving secondhand glory from our activity. God receives glory from His activity through our lives.

The world will entice you to adopt its goals and to invest in temporal things. Resist the temptation to pursue your own goals, asking God to bless them. Rather, deny yourself and join the activity of God as He reveals it to you.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What would it look like for you to deny yourself and join in on the activity of God today in your life?

Day 17: Take Up Your Cross

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24 | NIV)

Your "cross" is God's will for you, regardless of the cost. Taking up your cross is a choice; it is not beyond your control. You may have health problems or a rebellious child or financial pressures, but do not mistake these as your "cross to bear." Neither circumstances you face nor consequences of your own actions are your cross. Your cross will be to voluntarily participate in Christ's sufferings as He carries out His redemptive purposes (Phil. 3:10). Paul said he rejoiced in his sufferings because he knew that by them he was able to participate in the suffering required to bring others into Christian maturity (Col. 1:24).

We tend to want to go immediately from "denying ourselves" to "following Jesus." But you can never follow Jesus unless you have first taken up your cross. There are aspects of God's redemptive work that can be accomplished only through suffering. Just as Christ had to suffer in order to bring salvation, there will be hardships you may have to endure in order for God to bring salvation to those around you. Jesus did not talk with His disciples about the cross until they had come to know He was the Christ (Matt. 16:21). You will never be able to endure the suffering of the cross unless you have first been convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Once you have settled your relationship with Christ, He will introduce you to your cross. There is no Christianity without a cross. If you are waiting for a relationship with God that never requires suffering or inconvenience, then you cannot use Christ as your model. God's will for you involves a cross. First, take up your cross; then you can follow Him.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Are there any circumstances in your life that are causing you to fear following after Jesus? If so, what would it look like to trust God with those?

Day 18: Follow Me

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24 | NIV)

We can take God's presence for granted. We can assume that because Jesus said He would be with us always, He will follow us wherever we go (Matt. 28:20). Jesus does not follow us; we are to follow Him. You do not invite God to join you in your activity. He invites you to become involved in His activity. Jesus said: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). Following Jesus requires absolute obedience. He does not seek our counsel about which direction we think is suitable. God already knows what is best without ever having to consult with us.

Following Jesus will lead you into experiences you never dreamed of! You will be with Jesus as He weeps over those trapped in sin. You will feel the pain that Jesus feels. You will see those who were spiritually blind experience the joy of coming to see God for the first time. You will see lives that were broken, made whole. You will see marriages restored; those in bondage, released; and those who mourn, comforted. At times it will be easy to follow Jesus. At other times, you will be tempted to abandon Him. Following Jesus can mean going through a storm or standing on a mountaintop.

You may have stopped following Jesus, but now you want to follow again. When you stopped following Jesus, you did so on your terms. But the returning to Jesus is strictly under His conditions. He is God, and you are not. Are you willing to follow Jesus anywhere, at any time, under any condition? That is the only way you can follow Him.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- To what unexpected places has following Jesus led you?

Day 19: You Are Salt

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." (Matthew 5:13 | NIV)

God's people are His preserving agents for a world that is corrupted and degenerating because of sin. Your life is designed and commissioned by God to enhance a community and to preserve what is good and right. There is deep significance today for a godly life that is involved in its community. The presence of Christ in you makes all that He is available to others. His salvation can free an addict, mend a broken home, heal the pain of the past, restore a wayward child, and comfort a grieving heart. All of this is available to those around you as Christ expresses His life through you.

If we are not in a right relationship with our Lord, however, Jesus said we are like salt that has lost its saltiness and is, therefore, good for nothing. None of God's saving grace and power can be dispensed through us to others. How do we test the "saltiness" of our life? Look at our family. Are we preserving it from the destructive influences that surround it? Examine our workplace. Are the sinful influences in our work environment being halted because we are there? Observe our community. Is it a better place because we are involved in it? What about our church? The evidence that we have been used by God as a preserving agent is that things are becoming spiritually better around us instead of worse. If people around us are deteriorating spiritually, we need to go to our Lord and allow Him to adjust our lives so that we can be used to preserve others.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Does your presence bring the flavor of Jesus to the places you go to? What would it look like to be salt in your world?

Day 20: You Are Light

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 | NIV)

There is no mistaking the effect of light upon a darkened place. Light boldly and unabashedly announces its presence and vigorously dispels darkness. God's desire is to fill you with His light. He wants you to shine as a brilliant testimony of His presence and power in your life, so that the darkness in the lives of those around you will be displaced by the light of God's glory.

If, however, you notice the world around you becoming darker and darker, don't blame the darkness! It is simply doing what darkness does. The only remedy for darkness is light. Jesus said His disciples should be the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). What an awesome responsibility—to be the ones through whom God would shine His divine light and dispel the darkness from around others! In announcing His own coming, Jesus said, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, / And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death / Light has dawned" (Matt. 4:16).

There was no ignoring Jesus' arrival upon earth! Darkness was dispelled! Everywhere Jesus went, God's truth was boldly proclaimed, people were healed, hypocrisy was exposed, and sinners found forgiveness. The world was never the same once the Father introduced His light through His Son. Can that be said of you as well? Do your coworkers recognize the light that is within you? Does the presence of Christ radiate from your home into your community? When God's light is allowed to shine unhindered through your life, the darkness around you will be dispelled.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Does the presence of Christ radiate from your life into the world around you?

Day 21: God Is Sending You

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"'You unbelieving and perverse generation,' Jesus replied, 'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?'" (Matthew 17:17 | NIV)

Jesus gave His disciples the power to cast out demons and to perform miracles of healing (Matt. 10:8). He gave them His authority to minister to people, yet they became so self-centered that they lost the power to do the work of God. When God sent a father with his epileptic son to them for healing, they failed miserably. They were so concerned with position and status (Mark 9:32–35) that they lost their focus on what God wanted to do through them.

Jesus' response to His disciples included some of the harshest words ever to come from His mouth. He called His own disciples "unbelieving" and "perverse" and questioned how much longer He had to endure them! Why? Because they were supposed to be on mission with Him to bring salvation to others, but they had become so disoriented to Him that they were spiritually powerless, lacking the faith to bring physical and spiritual comfort to those God had sent to them.

God ought to be able to send hurting persons to any child of His and expect that they will be helped. Like the disciples, we can become so preoccupied with our own ambitions and distracted by the busyness of our lives that we become ineffective in ministering to those whom God sends to us. It is even possible to become so involved in religious activity that we are of no help to anyone. Regularly take inventory of your life to see if you are being a faithful steward of every life God sends to you.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Is there any area of your life where God is calling you to be a more faithful steward of the opportunities He has given you?

Day 22: Focus On Jesus

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'" (Matthew 17:5 | NIV)

Peter and the other disciples were continually disoriented to God. While Jesus was concerned about one thing, it seems that the disciples were always distracted by something else. In order to help his three closest disciples better focus on His imminent sacrifice on the cross, Jesus took them up to the Mount of Transfiguration. There, Jesus was transfigured into a glorious state and was joined by Moses and Elijah, two of history's mightiest men of God. The disciples, however, were asleep! At one of the most profound moments in history, the disciples were more interested in sleep than they were in praying with the Son of God.

When the disciples awakened, they became distracted again. This time, Peter announced his plans to build three tabernacles. The disciples were more concerned with what they could do for God than the incredible work of redemption God was about to accomplish through His Son. Finally, God removed everything from the disciples' sight but Jesus. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

It is so easy to become spiritually distracted. Do you find yourself focusing on everything else but Christ and the work He is doing around you? Are you so eager to "get to the work" that you have not yet clearly heard what is on God's heart? Does the Father need to remove from your life those things that are proving to be a distraction to you? Do you need to refocus on Jesus?

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Do you find yourself focusing on everything else but Christ and the work He is doing around you?

Day 23: Life With the Shepherd

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters." (Psalm 23:1-2 | NIV)

Living like a sheep can bring you incredible peace of mind! The biblical shepherd knew everything about his sheep. He understood what foods were best for them and what would harm them. He knew when they should eat and when they needed their thirst quenched. The shepherd was an expert of the terrain and was aware of the best places for food and water. As long as the sheep trusted and followed their shepherd, they would always have their needs met at the right time. Their shepherd would give them the best that he had.

Do you have absolute trust in your Good Shepherd? Do you value the nourishment that comes from Him more than any you might obtain from the world? Do you ever worry that God might be withholding from you something that you need? The psalmist was convinced that he would "want" for nothing. By his very nature, the Good Shepherd cares for His sheep and would lay down His life for them (John 10:11).

Have you allowed your focus to shift from the Shepherd to what the Shepherd gives you? If you find yourself "wanting," it is not that your Shepherd is unable or unwilling to perfectly meet your needs. It may be that you lack the faith to receive all that He has to give. Could it be that you have become dissatisfied with what your Shepherd has been providing? Are you missing the joy that comes from having a Shepherd who cares for you? Return to Him and trust Him to meet the needs in your life that only He can.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Have you allowed your focus to shift from the Shepherd to what the Shepherd gives you? Are you missing the joy that comes from having a Shepherd who cares for you?

Day 24: Comfort from the Shepherd

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4 | NIV)

As a child of God you are never alone! Your Shepherd is with you at all times. You never have to call Him into your situation. You never have to wonder where He is. You never have to fear that if things become too difficult, He will abandon you. He goes before you; He walks beside you; He comes behind you. He protects you securely. Just as He sees every sparrow and knows every hair that is on your head, so His gaze is constantly upon you (Luke 12:6–7). He comforts you with His strong presence in times of sorrow and grief. He leads you through the valley of the shadow of death. He does not necessarily lead you around the valley as you might wish.

There are times when your Shepherd knows that the only way to get you where He wants to take you is to lead you down the path that passes through the dark valley. Yet, at those times He walks closely with you, reassuring you throughout the journey that He still loves you and is with you. It is during those times that you experience His love and compassion in a deeper dimension than you ever have before.

You never need to fear evil. As intimidating as evil can be, there is nothing you will ever face that intimidates your Shepherd. He has seen it all and soundly defeated every form of wickedness. Evil never catches Him by surprise. Your Shepherd is always prepared and knows exactly when and where you will experience difficulty. Place your absolute trust in your Good Shepherd that He will protect you and demonstrate His love for you through the darkest valley.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What in your life is causing you the most fear right now? What would it look like to place your absolute trust in the Good Shepherd today?

Day 25: Restoration from the Shepherd

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*"He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake."
(Psalm 23:3 | NIV)*

Your Shepherd knows your every need. He knows you will grow weary in your pilgrimage with Him. He knows there are times when you need rest. Your Shepherd knows just what you need to be refreshed. At times you need to lie in lush meadows or beside quiet streams. Sometimes you need to be held by your Shepherd. At other times you need to enjoy the pleasures the Shepherd provides. The Shepherd will not always replenish you in the same way; His response to you will always perfectly correspond to your present need.

As you follow your Shepherd there will be times when your soul becomes exhausted, perhaps because of trials you are experiencing or temptations you are resisting. The persecution you face or the burdens you are carrying for others may be wearing you down. You may be weary from the discipline the Shepherd has brought upon you. There will be times when you feel you can go no further in your Christian pilgrimage. Your Shepherd knows when you have reached this point, and He always has a remedy! There are many ways He can strengthen you: through His word, through others, or through your circumstances. He knows what you need even better than you do.

Have you grown weary? Does your soul need to be refreshed? Don't attempt to recover on your own. Only God knows how to heal and rejuvenate a soul (Isa. 40:28–31; Matt. 11:28–30). He will do it perfectly, sometimes in surprising ways. Ask Him to restore you, and then be prepared to respond to what He does next.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- In what ways does your soul need to be refreshed today? Ask God to restore you and be prepared to respond to Him.

Day 26: Where Has the Spirit Placed You?

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."
(1 Corinthians 12:7 | NIV)*

The moment you are born again you receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift. God doesn't give you some thing , He gives you Himself. The Holy Spirit is God. As He lives out His life through you, you have Almighty God dwelling within you, carrying out His purposes. The Spirit will manifest Himself through your life, not for your good alone, but for the benefit of those around you.

The Spirit will lead you to a church body where He can minister through you to each person in that body (1 Cor. 12:18). God does not add you to a church body so you can be an observer. The Spirit has an assignment for you within the body, and He will equip you by His presence for this work. In the Old Testament, God gave specific assignments to His servants and then placed His Spirit upon them to enable them to accomplish their work. In the New Testament, God placed each member as a vital part of a living body. He placed His Spirit within each believer and manifested Himself through the believer to encourage and equip every other member of the body. What an exciting commission from God! Today the Holy Spirit equips believers because He has given each of His servants a task.

How is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life benefiting those around you? God has equipped you with exactly what is needed for the edification of the body in which He has placed you. If you allow the Holy Spirit to work freely within you, others will be blessed as a result.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- How might the Holy Spirit want to benefit those around you through His presence in you today?

Day 27: The Certainty of God's Supply

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

*"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 4:19 | NIV)*

This verse is one of the most practical we will ever encounter in the Bible. Every one of us faces needs in our lives; at times, they are beyond our own means. Those are not the times to become anxious or to panic. Nor should we give up in defeat. It is at these times that God wants to draw from His unlimited storehouse to meet our need as only He can.

Do you believe God can meet the needs of your finances? Your health? Your children? Your parents? Your church? Scripture says you will never face a need for which God's provision is not more than adequate. This promise appears over and over again in the Scriptures (Ps. 116:6; Heb. 4:16; Matt. 6:8; Ps. 69:33). If you are not experiencing God's bountiful provision, what is the problem? Is the difficulty with God? Or could it be that you do not really believe that God stands ready to meet your every need?

Every resource of God is available to any child of God who will believe Him. No one has ever exhausted God's supply nor suffered a shortfall when trusting Him. Unfortunately, some Christians live as if God's abundant resources were not available to them. They are children of the King, but they live like beggars! Would the people close to you affirm that your life gives evidence of an unwavering belief that God will do what He said?

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- Would the people close to you affirm that your life gives evidence of an unwavering belief that God will do what He said?

Day 28: Wisdom

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5 | NIV)

Wisdom is not what you know about the world but how well you know God. Human reasoning will not make you wise. It may even lead you to reject the ways of God (1 Cor. 1:18-25). God's purpose in creating a nation for Himself was to demonstrate His wisdom to the world through the obedience of His people (Zech. 8:23). As the Israelites followed God, He would bless them, and the wisdom of obeying God would be evident to all.

God gives you the same opportunity to base your life on His wisdom. When unbelievers make important decisions, they must rely on their own knowledge and understanding. You, as a Christian, have access to God's wisdom. God's Spirit is within you to guide you (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit will open your eyes to the truth of the Scriptures so that you can see things from God's perspective. Only God sees the future, so only He can accurately lead you to make correct decisions today.

As you allow God to direct your life, those around you will see true wisdom, wisdom not of the world but of God. Others will be confused about what to do in our complicated world, but God will guide you safely to the correct choices for you. Your family will be blessed because you make wise decisions. Your friends will have a wise counselor to come to for help. Your obedient life will demonstrate the wisdom of allowing the Holy Spirit to be your Guide.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What is one major area of your life where you need wisdom? Ask God for it and He promises He will answer.

Day 29: God's Love

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32 | NIV)

If you ever feel that you are so insignificant that God does not care about you or that He does not want to listen to your prayers, you will be encouraged by Romans 8:32. There, you are assured that your heavenly Father loves you unconditionally. There was nothing so precious to Him that He would not give it up in order to provide for your salvation. When the Father gave His precious Son to save you, He proved once for all that His love is boundless.

The apostle Paul concluded that if God would not spare His own Son in order to provide for our salvation, how would He not willingly give anything else at His disposal in order to care for us? He sacrificed so much to give us eternal life that we can rest secure in the knowledge that He also wants to give us abundant life (John 10:10).

In light of what God did for us at the cross, should we not approach the throne of grace with confidence? God's response to our prayers is not based upon our worthiness but upon His love and grace. Our confidence in prayer comes not from who we are but from who He is. Nothing we could ask of Him could ever compare with the price He paid for us at the cross.

How wonderful to know that God loves us so much! We can live with confidence and anticipation knowing that Almighty God is willing not only to give us eternal life, but also to help us experience it fully!

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- In what areas of your life do you struggle to believe in the depths of God's love? How does this promise speak to that?

Day 30: The Great Exchange

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21 | NIV)

This verse should startle us and cause us to tremble. It is not a verse to be read quickly and passed over. We will never comprehend the awesome price that Jesus paid to cleanse us of our sin and to give us His righteousness.

The prophet Isaiah summarized the human condition: "We are all like an unclean thing, / And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Even the high priest, Joshua, in his exalted position among God's people, was clothed in filthy rags before God (Zech. 3:3). The apostle Paul, who labored arduously to be righteous before God, realized that his most strenuous efforts to please God were no more valuable than rubbish (Phil. 3:4-10). The plight of humanity is that nothing we could ever do could satisfy God's desire for righteousness. But the miracle of God's mercy is that God exchanges our "filthy rags" for "rich robes" of righteousness (Zech. 3:4).

In this awesome exchange, God placed the sin of humanity upon His righteous Son. Jesus became so identified with our sin that Scripture says God made Him to be sin on our behalf. The holy Son of God could not possibly do more for us than this! Experiencing the Father's wrath upon the sin He carried would have been more painful to endure than any human rejection or physical suffering.

Never take the righteousness God has given you for granted. Never take the forgiveness of your sin lightly. It cost God a terrible price in order to forgive you and make you righteous. Walk in a manner worthy of the righteousness He has given you.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- What words from the devotion above spoke to you the most? What do you think God wants you to do about it?

Day 31: True Treasure

Silence & Stillness (5-10 minutes)

Begin this devotional time by sitting quietly and still before the Lord. Simply try to enjoy being loved by Him. When you feel your mind start to wander, breathe and say out loud: *"Father, thank you for loving me."*

Scripture for the Day:

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7 | NIV)

Knowing God and having Him reside within you is a treasure of infinite value. Jesus likened this value to that of a perfect pearl. The collector would readily sell everything he had in order to possess this one matchless pearl (Matt. 13:45-46). Your relationship with God places an immeasurable value on your life. The treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge are available to you through Christ (Col. 2:2-3). His love now fills you. His incomprehensible peace surrounds your heart and mind (Phil. 4:7). When Jesus dwells in your life, everything available to Christ dwells within you (Eph. 3:19).

Paul was comparing our lives with the clay pots commonly used in his day. The contents of the earthen vessels, not the containers themselves, were of great value. The jars would become chipped and broken and would deteriorate over time, but nobody thought of the jar—they were interested in its contents. Paul noted that our great possession is that which God has placed within us. When people focus on us, they see a frail, imperfect, and deteriorating vessel. Nothing that comes from our flesh is worthy of praise. Our bodies are aging and losing strength (2 Cor. 4:16). Only as we allow God to fill us and renew our inner self will people see a treasure of immeasurable worth.

Don't focus on outward appearances and physical strength, for these deteriorate. Rather, allow the Holy Spirit to convince you of the infinite treasure that is within you because of God's presence.

Question to Consider (5-10 minutes)

Conclude your devotional time by sitting quietly before the Lord. Ponder the question below. Ask the Spirit to speak to you and record your thoughts in a separate journal.

- How can you allow the Holy Spirit to convince you of the infinite treasure that is within you?