



ROOTED
IN THE SPIRIT

DAILY DEVOTIONAL
PART 2

As we continue in this second part of our journey, we'll explore what it truly means to live a life rooted, built up and established in Christ, allowing His presence to shape every area of our lives. To be rooted in Christ means more than simply knowing about Him—it means abiding in Him, consistently drawing from His strength through prayer, worship and His Word. Just like a tree's roots anchor it deep into the soil to grow and flourish, our spiritual roots need to go deep into the presence of God. When we grow roots in Christ, we'll naturally bear fruit reflecting His love, His power and His character.

Jesus modeled this truth throughout His life. His public power—His teachings, His healings, His authority—was the overflow of His private time with the Father. His greatest works came from His deepest moments of abiding in prayer.

In this devotional, we'll learn to abide more fully in Christ, recognizing that strength and fruit result from our private prayer life. Let's commit to growing deeper roots in the Spirit so that we can bear fruit that honors God and impacts the world around us. Remember, when we bear roots, we grow fruit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a horizontal line and a cursive 'J'.

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DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

"... Our Father in heaven..."

Matthew 6:9b (NLT)

- **What do You want to say to me today as my Father?**

"... may Your name be kept holy."

Matthew 6:9c (NLT)

- **What do You want to reveal to me about Your power today?**

"May Your Kingdom come soon."

Matthew 6:10a (NLT)

- **Help me make Your priorities my priorities today.**

"Give us today the food we need,"

Matthew 6:11 (NLT)

- **Is there anything specific You want me to do with my time or the people I'm around today?**

"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us"

Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

- **Reveal to me anyone I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness.**

"And don't let us yield to temptation..."

Matthew 6:13a (NLT)

- **Is there anywhere I'm vulnerable to temptation?**

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS US

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. **Acts 1:8 (NIV)**

I say this a lot to our church, but the same power that raised Jesus from the grave is the same power that lives and resides in us. One of the reasons I repeat it is that it's hard to truly grasp that truth. The reason Jesus could say it's better for Him to go is that the disciples were promised a gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Think about it: Jesus traveled in proximity to Jerusalem. However, after the Holy Spirit arrived in Acts 2, we get to carry the presence of God everywhere tangibly through us.

The Holy Spirit is not just a presence we feel in church or a fleeting emotion we experience in worship. The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers our lives. God has called us to be Holy, but the Holy Spirit *empowers* us to be Holy. When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts and begins to shape us into His likeness. He convicts us of sin, encourages us in times of weakness, and strengthens us when we're weary. I've never heard God's voice audibly, but thoughts that often pop up in our heads are the Spirit's conviction and promptings that help us live the life we're called to live.

One other way the Holy Spirit empowers us is to share the Gospel. Think about it. The power given to the disciples above was to be bold in sharing the Gospel. To believe the Gospel and share it with others is a work of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:8, the disciples weren't just given the power to have personal experiences or feel good about themselves—they were given the power to go and to *tell* others about Jesus. The same is true for us today. In moments of fear or uncertainty, the Holy Spirit gives us the courage to step out in faith, trusting that He will provide us with the words to speak and the wisdom to know when and how to share.

APPLICATION: Who has God placed in your life that needs the Gospel? Share with them. Pray for them. Invite them to church.

PRAYER: Ask the Spirit what He wants to say about His power today. Thank Him for what He shares.

SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRIT BEARS FRUIT

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

Does it overwhelm you as a Christian to think that the spirit of God, the very person of God, lives inside you? When someone comes over to visit, we often scramble to clean up our home and make it inviting. In my case, I throw everything in a closet until my wife catches me! The point is that we want our house to look great and feel inviting to our guests. We care about welcoming them in well.

Have you ever thought about your life as a home for the Holy Spirit? How are you welcoming Him? Is there dirty laundry of bitterness, greed or lust that you've left out? Even if we want to, we aren't the ones who put our lives together or make our lives Holy for the Holy Spirit. That's why He's called the Holy Spirit, and we aren't. When He comes into our lives, and we give Him access to our whole life, then He starts changing and cleaning things up. He takes the hate and gives us love. He takes depression and fear and gives us joy. The point is, He's the one who does this, not us. Your single job is to give Him access. Think about it: if you lock a door, a guest can't enter. When you hide things from the Holy Spirit, He won't change them. Your job is to be open and surrender; then, He will create fruit in our lives. How do you know if you're sensitive to the Holy Spirit? Is He bearing fruit in your life? If He is, He's at home and has access to your life. The fruit of the spirit is wholistic, meaning when you give Him access, He brings *all* of the things mentioned above and not just one. Keep the doors of your heart and life open to Him, and watch what He will do!

APPLICATION: Give the Holy Spirit complete access to your life today.

PRAYER: Tell the Holy Spirit today that you want to give Him your whole life and not a part of it.

INSENSITIVITY TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NIV)

I remember the first time I read this verse. It felt shocking that I could do something to affect the Holy Spirit's role in my life. To be clear, God alone changes us through the Spirit. Transformation is the Spirit's business, but you have a part to play. You can aid the work of the Spirit or pour cold water on it. Remember when, as a kid, you used to fold the hose pipe or pinch the line so the water would stop flowing? Once you let go, the water would shoot out with intense pressure. That illustration is a reminder that you aren't the one who's getting the water from the ground, and most of us never ran a line to connect our outside spigot to the water source so it would flow. But you can do something that affects the flow of the water.

Far too many Christians have twisted the Spirit's flow in their lives because of sin or disobedience. When we quench the Spirit, we cut off the flow of the Spirit in our life. If the Spirit is fire, then sin and disobedience are cold water. They don't mix well together. The danger is that we can grow spiritually stagnant instead of growing and becoming more like Christ.

Paul illustrates this same concept in Ephesians 4:30: *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* Just as we can grieve a friend by our actions or words, so can we grieve the Holy Spirit. We're told in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - *Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.* If sin grieves the Spirit, these things show us what we are to do to fan into flame the Spirit. The good news is when you remove the knot from the hose pipe, the water comes flowing out, and when Christians begin rejoicing, praying regularly and giving thanks, the Holy Spirit starts rushing through and out of us.

APPLICATION: Don't quench the Spirit's fire.

PRAYER: Spend time rejoicing and giving thanks for all circumstances in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit if there's an area blocking His flow in your life.

LISTENING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.

John 10:27 (NIV)

God speaks daily, but learning to hear and know His voice takes time and effort. We must train ourselves to be sensitive to His Spirit. Many would say they pray or talk to God, but prayer isn't just talking to God. Prayer is learning to listen to His voice. The truth is we need to hear from God more than He needs to hear from us. He loves to hear from us, as our Father, but His words are life for us. Listening reminds us that God isn't some far-off Father but that He's with us, right beside us, even as we read these words.

This passage speaks about God being our Shepherd. A sign that we're being rooted in the Spirit is that we're learning to listen to His voice. In the busyness of life, it can be challenging to hear the gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit. We live in a world filled with noise—the loud distractions of work, social media, news, the TV and even our racing thoughts. The good news is that the more you listen, the more you can discern His voice. It begins with a desire to hear His voice. We must see the importance of listening to God. I remind you there has never been a spiritually hungry person who God hasn't filled up, but they had to want it. In the same way, an ability to hear from God begins first with a desire to hear from God.

So, how do we cultivate a heart sensitive to the Spirit's voice?
Here are a few ways:

1. Seek God's Presence Regularly: Make it a habit to spend quiet time with God in prayer and Bible study. The more you immerse yourself in His Word, the more attuned you'll become to His voice. When you become friends with someone, you can think and even speak like them. You learn their voice. The same is true with God.

2. Practice Stillness: Just as Jesus often withdrew to isolated places to pray (Luke 5:16), we, too, need moments of solitude to connect with God.

APPLICATION: Today, practice making room for quiet moments with God so you can hear His voice.

PRAYER: Ask God to increase your longing for His voice and to give you a deep desire to spend time listening for Him to speak. Read John 10 and then ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

FINDING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NIV)

Do you realize that as you become a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit has given you different spiritual gifts that are to be used to build up the church and others? I think gifts are superpowered skills that allow you to take your natural talents, personality and the Spirit's unique gifts to build up the church. These gifts are not random. They're purposefully given. In the body of Christ, each person is needed, each gift is essential, and all of us play a role in building up the Kingdom of God.

As the giver of these gifts, the Holy Spirit distributes them according to His will and for the common good. This means that your gift, whatever it may be, is not meant for you alone. It's meant to bless and serve others. Whether you're gifted in leadership, teaching, healing, mercy, hospitality or wisdom, your gift is significant in God's plan. The key is recognizing that these gifts are tools to serve, not for personal glory or pride. Here are a few ways to determine what your gift is:

- 1. Prayer:** Ask God to reveal it to you and to give you wisdom and clarity. In your moments of silence, ask Him to guide you and open your heart to His calling.
- 2. Observe Your Skills and Passions:** Our spiritual gifts often align with what excites and brings us joy. Are you passionate about teaching? Do you have a heart for serving others? Maybe you're a great encourager or have a gift of leadership. Notice the activities that make you feel most connected to God's work.
- 3. Seeking Community:** Sometimes, we can't see our gifts. Let others confirm what they see in you, whether leadership, teaching, mercy, hospitality or another gift.
- 4. Introduce Variety:** Be courageous! Step out in faith and try serving in different areas. God often reveals our gifts through the opportunities we embrace.

APPLICATION: Make a plan today to start identifying your gifts to bless others.

PRAYER: Consider the list mentioned above and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the next steps to finding your gifts.

WALKING WITH THE SPIRIT

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.
Galatians 5:16-17 (NIV)

I love this verse. It shows us that the best way to overcome the sins of life is to learn to walk with the Spirit. Said another way, the best defense is a good offense. Don't try to quit sinning. Instead, fall more in love with God and stay by His side, and sinful desires will melt away. The key is walking in step with the Spirit.

Did you notice the Bible doesn't mention running with God? It always talks about walking with God.

Our lives are fast-paced and constantly moving, but we must learn to slow down and walk with God. I think about it like this...the Bible and our time with God help us go slow so that we can run fast. In life, we don't like to walk. We want to run, and we like to hurry. Whenever I'm at the airport, I love getting on the moving walkway because it helps me reach my destination faster. We hurry a lot unnecessarily. We seem built for speed, but God doesn't speak in speed.

Think about it: the average person walks 3.1 miles an hour, so let's say God walks at 3.1 miles an hour. If you're running all over and going 7 miles an hour, you're ahead of God. If you're at 2 miles an hour, you're behind God. So, where are you moving ahead of God? Where are you trying to make things happen where God isn't? Or where has God called you to be obedient, and you haven't caught up? God wants to continue speaking when you haven't been faithful to do what He's already asked. When you walk in step with God, everything seems to fall into place.

APPLICATION: Get in step with God today. Where are you ahead or behind Him?

PRAYER: Spend time in prayer asking the Spirit to reveal where you are ahead of Him and where you might be behind.

QUIET WATERS

He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake.

Psalm 23:2-3 (NIV)

David writes of God's love for us, relating His care to that of a Shepherd. Having been a shepherd, David understood the dedication and continuous care required to be a good shepherd. His experience and knowledge of sheep gave him the perfect metaphor for God's constant care for him.

Let's consider these verses from the viewpoint of a sheep.

"I realize I am one of God's most timid creatures, and I'm okay with that. I won't lie down to sleep until everything is completely calm, quiet and serene. I react so easily to little disturbances like a darting squirrel. I need calm. My shepherd makes me lie down in green pastures," said the sheep with a yawn and sigh that comes before a deep sleep.

"I'm frightened by noisy water. You know, when a river or stream whooshes, splashes and roars. A still stream is precisely what I need when I'm thirsty. My shepherd knows this, so he leads me beside still waters and refreshes my soul," said the sheep with satisfaction and a little sheep smile.

"I don't like being alone. I feel safe with my family. If I were to get lost, I would most likely panic, not knowing where to go. I would feel defenseless. My shepherd guides me along the right paths," said the sheep with a contented smile.

The Lord is our Shepherd, and we are His sheep. In His great love, He protects us and provides calmness, peace and order—a good environment for us to prosper and rest. And it's all for His name's sake—in accordance with His character. The Great Shepherd always knows what's best for His sheep.

APPLICATION: Sometimes we can try to be a shepherd when we're supposed to be sheep. Think about ways you might need to surrender and look to God. Is He your peace, contentment, refreshment, joy, guidance and protection? Do you trust Him for all these things?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank You for Your provision, protection and love. I thank You that I can trust You to lead me. I'm so glad You are my Shepherd and that I'm not doing this life alone. Amen.

STAY

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. **Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)**

This verse in Isaiah is so encouraging. It promises perfect peace. It's about wonderful things like trusting God and having a mind that's stayed on Him—but what does that mean? If a mind is stayed, it's paused, stopped, waiting, not distracted. It's lingering, focused—not frantically looking for help from other sources, but looking to the Lord, trusting Him with whatever the world brings.

How might we describe a mind that's stayed on God?

- A focus on God before circumstances.
- A steadiness that is unswayed by life's changes and interruptions.
- A mindset cultivated with intentional communication with God.
- A continuous surrendering of fears, worries and doubts to God.
- A peace that's built on trust in God.

I've had indoor dogs since I was a child. Having a dog around is calming to me. Anytime I've gotten a new pup, some training is typically involved. They must learn to sit, wait, lay down, come when I call, and stay—that's when I want them to stop. If they're sitting, I want them to continue sitting. If they're in a particular place, I want them to remain there.

Could this verse be as simple as that? Could it be that our minds are constantly moving, and we need to slow down and even stop to find peace? Our minds can be racing so fast that we speed right past what's most precious—our relationship with our Creator. Can we, in some way, train ourselves in this with God's help? When we settle our minds and focus on who God is, we'll grow in our trust in Him.

APPLICATION: Where can you find time to pause throughout the day to spend an undistracted moment with the Lord? When your mind becomes stayed and settles on Him, try lingering a little longer and see what peace it brings.

PRAYER: Dear Father, I want more moments with You. Please quiet my mind to be stayed on You. Overwhelm me with Your perfect peace in my mind and life as I learn to trust in You. Amen.

THE TENT

For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of His tent; He will lift me high upon a rock. Psalm 27:5 (ESV)

Look at all the Lord will do in this one verse! When trouble comes, He'll hide you, conceal you and lift you high upon a rock, out of harm's reach. God's Word is beautiful and comforting. And I love the illustration of a tent in this verse. It's not a literal tent as we know it. Its meaning in scripture is *God's presence*. In the Old Testament, the *tent of meeting* referred to the place where God met with Moses and the Israelites.

I love the promise that *He will conceal me under the cover of His tent*. It reminds me of family camping trips—first in a big tent, then upgrading to a trailer with AC! We had great times with camp neighbors—tubing, campfires, fish fries, and s'mores. One afternoon, a storm rolled in. Tent campers fled while we hunkered down in our trailer, hoping it would withstand the storm. The wind raged, leaves and branches pounded the sides—it felt like we might blow away!

When the storm finally settled, we stepped outside to find our trailer covered in leaves and the campsite in complete chaos. Before the tent campers returned, Dad, my brother and sisters, and I put one family's tent back together. When we were done, it appeared that everything else had been ravaged except for their tent. I don't think we ever told them what we did, so they must have thought theirs was the only tent protected through the storm.

I think that's how it is being under the cover of God's tent. Except under the cover of His tent, we do withstand the storm. God knew this world would bring us trouble, but He gives us shelter, protection and concealment. He is our Help and peace amidst the storm.

The New Living Translation says *He will hide me in His sanctuary*. The sanctuary is a holy place where God is present. The Hebrew word for sanctuary is *miqdash*, which means *sacred place*. How beautiful it is that God brings us closer to Himself when troubles come.

APPLICATION: Are you in the middle of a storm? Think about how God is drawing you close.

PRAYER: Lord, I'm so thankful for your Word, which promises that when life's storms arise, You'll conceal me under the cover of Your tent, bringing me closer to You. Amen.

PEACEFUL PLANNING

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty. **Proverbs 21:5 (ESV)**

Don't you love the wisdom of Proverbs? This verse highlights the contrast between two types of planning—*diligent* versus *hasty*. Of course, we'd all prefer abundance over struggle, so let's look deeper at what diligence and planning mean.

Diligence is about perseverance, staying faithful, and consistently trying to accomplish a goal. It requires hard work, attentiveness and a thorough approach.

Planning is creating a clear method, system or strategy to reach a specific goal. Whether mapped out in our minds, written in a journal, or organized in a spreadsheet. Planning sets the foundation for success.

What if we thought of our lives as businesses for a moment? A company doesn't map out its future in just one quick meeting—it takes people, ideas and time. That's why businesses often hold strategic planning retreats, stepping away from the office to gain fresh perspectives and strengthen relationships. But even those retreats require planning—booking travel, reserving hotels and organizing meals.

The truth is that almost everything in life requires some planning. Even in the morning, we take a moment to figure out how we'll spend the day—what to wear, what to eat, and what tasks to tackle. Planning is everywhere, in the big and the small.

If planning is required in many aspects of today and our future, how we plan will bring abundance or poverty. Rushed planning—when we're careless, impulsive or reckless—can lead to lack and struggle. When we hurry, we often skip seeking the Lord's guidance and wisdom. But when we plan with diligence—being thoughtful, persistent and purposeful—we invite abundance and clarity, asking God how to move forward best.

APPLICATION: What are you planning right now? Have you taken it to the Father? What if you had a strategic planning retreat with Him? Take a moment to jot down your current plans, then step away, pray and ask for His guidance. When you return, write down any new insights or directions you've gained.

PRAYER: Dear Father, help me slow down and look to You for all my life's plans. Help me keep You in the center of my life. Amen.

SAYING YES TO BEING STILL

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

Psalm 46:10 (ESV)

I had a career coach who would encourage me to ask, *if you say yes to that, what are you saying no to?* It’s not a verse or biblical concept, but I think this verse in Psalm 46 is somewhat similar. If I’m saying yes to being still, I’m saying no to something else. I might be saying no to getting to know the world better and yes to getting to know God better. For me, that might mean spending less time watching television and more time listening to praise and worship music or studying God’s Word. For you, it might be limiting social media or _____ (fill in the blank). Giving one thing up means we get something else. It’s an exchange. But with God, we trade mediocre for His best.

In the end, it’s about choosing what matters most. Sometimes, people we like invite us to do fun things, but we feel a nudge to stay back, rest and just be still. And that’s okay—if it gives us the rest we need or draws us closer to God rather than pulling us into exhaustion or isolation.

Psalm 46 is a powerful reminder of God’s strength—that He is our refuge, fortress, strength and help in troubled times. In verses 6-9, We’re invited to behold the works of the Lord throughout the earth, and it describes His demolishing weapons of war and how the earth melts by the sounds of His voice. Then we come to our verse 10...be still. Though everything is in chaos around us—the earth itself and the people on it—we can be still in complete trust that our strong fortress, our God, is mightily in control and will be exalted on the earth!

APPLICATION: Take a moment to look over your schedule for today or the weekend. Pray and ask God to guide you on what to keep, postpone or let go of. See if He’s leading you to replace something with rest, a walk outside, or time encouraging a friend who could use your support.

PRAYER: Father, You are so mighty. Help me learn how You want me to be still. Help me leave all the rest to You. Amen.

A DIFFERENT TO-DO LIST

I will study Your commandments and reflect on Your ways. I will delight in Your decrees and not forget Your word.

Psalms 119:15-16 (NLT)

Are you a list-maker like me? Right now, I have a lengthy list of things to accomplish. Sometimes, I set deadlines, but for the most part, I check them off one by one. There's a certain satisfaction that comes with striking items from the list. I feel like I'm one step closer to freedom from having a list and the demands I place on myself. I revel in the accomplishment and the closure that comes with it.

When you read the verses above, do they feel like a to-do list? Here are four things that stand out to me...

- **Study** > Your Commands (God's instruction to guide our behaviors)
- **Reflect** > Your Ways (God's example of love, forgiveness, etc.)
- **Delight** > Your Decrees (God's wisdom, commands, rules and law)
- **Remember** > Your Word (God's spoken or written message, Scripture)

What do these four activities have in common? They happen in quiet moments. Studying, praying or meditating on God's direction for your life takes time and requires focus. Reflecting on His ways and recognizing His handiwork in your life can happen in small moments throughout the day, yet it takes deliberate contemplation. Delighting in or being thankful for God's guidance can be a short conversation with Him or moments of praise and worship. Reading, recalling and cherishing scripture usually happens in personal moments with the Lord.

This isn't a checklist to complete and forget. It's a continuous, repetitive practice that many Christians include in their *quiet time*. It's a time set apart to be with the Lord, just as you would make time to deepen a friendship, grow closer to someone, or enjoy their company.

APPLICATION: Have you set aside time each day to meet with the Lord? If so, you might find this different yet powerful to-do list helpful. If not, take a moment to ask Him when and how He might want to spend time with you.

PRAYER: Lord, help me find quiet moments to get to know You better. Give me a curiosity to study Your commands and a renewed love for Your Word and Your ways. Amen.

STOP AND REST

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. **Exodus 20:11 (NIV)**

Throughout Scripture, we see a pattern of rest. It was present in the Garden of Eden, given as a commandment to the people of the Old Testament, and practiced by Jesus, who called His followers to make rest an integral part of their lives. If we're not careful, we may impose our assumptions on the meaning of rest, missing the beautiful intention behind this set-apart day.

Let's begin with what the Sabbath isn't—it's not just a day off. It's not a time to lounge around aimlessly or tackle unfinished chores. It's not meant to catch up on tasks outside the 9-to-5 or squeeze in more work. If the Sabbath isn't about productivity or passivity, then what is it?

Two key Hebrew terms used in Scripture provide insight into the rest God calls His people. The first is *Shabbat*, which means *to rest from labor*. It's shutting down the computer and clocking out. *Naukh*, the second Hebrew word, means *to rest, settle and dwell*. This rest is about presence and connection—like unwinding with family or lingering at dinner with friends.

We see both forms of rest in the Old Testament when God gives His people the Ten Commandments.

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested (naukh) on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath (shabbat) day and made it holy. **Exodus 20:11 (NIV)**

We *Shabbat* so that we can *naukh*—we cease work so that we can dwell with God and others. This challenges the modern idea of a day off. It's not about laziness or strict religious rules but about embracing God's invitation to delight. In our busy lives, we must intentionally choose to stop *and* rest. The Lord knows and understands how easily chaos can consume our time and attention. In His kindness, He provided the Sabbath. It teaches us to live from a place of delight and connection with Him and others.

APPLICATION: Plan this week for a day to stop *and* rest. What do you need to do to prepare? What can you add or take away from this designated day to make it one of rest?

PRAYER: Father, thank you for being a God who rests. It's amazing and a demonstration of Your power and faithfulness. Teach me how to enter into Your rest. In Your name, Amen.

THE DAY SET APART

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.”

Exodus 20:8-10a (NIV)

For the people of Israel, when God gave them the Law, their entire lives had been oriented around work. For four hundred years, the people of Israel had been subjected to the burdensome toil of slavery in Egypt. When the Lord took His newly freed people to the base of Mount Sinai and gave them the Law, He wasn't doing so to put more burden on them. He was teaching them how to *live*.

The Lord understood humanity's tendency to overwork, strive endlessly, and get lost in pursuing what's next. Today, our days off often become catch-up days filled with unfinished tasks. Even good things—our jobs, families, and service—can become burdensome when our priorities are out of order. Our souls become exhausted when our lives drift from God's original design. This was the state of God's people when He taught them a new way. In a paradoxical command, He established a new rhythm: rest.

The Sabbath is more than an antiquated rule to be observed legalistically—it's an invitation to *life*. Sabbath rest is multifaceted: It's an invitation to physical and spiritual rest, worship, delight, trust, honor, joy, remembrance and more. Sabbath is about being with God, His people, His ways, and His thoughts. It honors God's authority, faithfulness and provision in our lives. It's a sign of deep trust, declaring that His faithfulness is so magnificent that we can afford to rest from all our efforts. It is a declaration of love and priority—a day to remember that God has freed us from what once enslaved us so that we may dwell with Him forever. How could a day like this not be holy?

If God's priority were mere productivity, commanding His people to rest would make no sense. But He is, above all, a relational God. In His kindness, He established rhythms of rest and delight to keep His people anchored in Him. The Sabbath was always intended as a gift. This was true for Israel, and it remains valid for us today.

APPLICATION: How does learning that the Sabbath is about delight change your perspective on this day? What can you do on your Sabbath to engage more with God and others and rest from a place of delight?

PRAYER: Father, thank you for teaching me to live from rest. Teach me to embrace and experience true delight. Renew my heart and mind through the joy of Your presence. In Your name, Amen.

GOOD SOIL

The LORD said to Moses at Mount Sinai, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD.'" **Leviticus 25:1-4 (NIV)**

Observing how God created nature gives us little glimpses into what rhythms our hearts need to be healthy. Any avid gardener is concerned about the state of their soil. They understand that a thriving crop depends on the soil condition in which it's planted. Good soil isn't perfect soil. Rather, good soil comes from consistent tending over the seasons and decades. Good soil is rhythmically worked, cultivated, fertilized and *rested*.

A season of rest is essential to the health of the soil and the production of good fruit. The Lord taught His people this when He created seasons and implemented intentional Sabbath years for the land. Though it may seem as if nothing is happening on the surface, the reality is that soil at rest enters a time of renewal and preparation. As the ground rests, its energy is restored, seeds begin to germinate, beneficial organisms are built up, harmful bacteria are destroyed, moisture is conserved, and erosion is reduced—all setting the stage for abundant growth in the coming seasons.

To say in a simplified way,

- Rest prepares.
- Rest connects.
- Rest heals.
- Rest reveals.
- Rest protects.

This reality of nature teaches us fundamental truths for our hearts. Rest is essential for our hearts to be open and receptive to the Word of God and His ways. Rest provides our hearts space to connect, listen, delight and just be with God, self and others. Just as the land requires seasons of stillness to remain fertile, our spiritual health needs a sabbath. When practiced alongside other spiritual rhythms—prayer, confession, faith, hope, celebration, service, evangelism and others—our hearts are transformed into good soil.

APPLICATION: Think about a time—past or present—when a moment, day or season of rest prepared, refreshed, healed or protected you. Thank the Lord for those times, and ask Him to teach you to live from a posture of rest in all you do.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for not being in a hurry. Every season of life I go through with You has intention and purpose. Teach me more about Your ways. In Your precious name, I pray. Amen.

LORD OF THE SABBATH

"But you would not have condemned My innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!" **Matthew 12:7-8 (NLT)**

When Jesus declared He was Lord of the Sabbath, the Pharisees scrutinized Him and His disciples. Before this declaration, the Pharisees had accused Him and His disciples of breaking God's law by picking grain as they walked through a field on the Sabbath. If true, it would have been a serious offense.

According to the Law of the Old Testament, the Sabbath was to be observed with intention and reverence—a day set apart from everyday work to rest with God. Scripture indicates that violating the Sabbath had serious consequences. However, over time, religious leaders added numerous rules. By Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees, over 60 additional regulations had turned the Sabbath into a day of strict religious rigor.

Jesus responded to the accusations with authority. In Mark's account of the confrontation, Jesus affirmed His authority over all things, including the Sabbath, stating, *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27).

What is Jesus saying here? Is He abolishing the practice of the Sabbath, giving His disciples a free pass to do whatever they'd like? Jesus wasn't nullifying the Sabbath—*He was restoring it to its original purpose*. It wasn't the plucking of grain that violated the heart of the Sabbath, but the man-made rules that offended the heart of God.

Sabbath has always been about connection. It is meant for the benefit and well-being of people, not the other way around. It's a day designed for delight and joy. The Sabbath is a blessing, not a burden.

In a sincere effort to follow God, we can observe the Sabbath outwardly yet miss its purpose. Refraining from work does not make a day a Sabbath—*abiding with God does*. The Pharisees had lost sight of this, adding rules that turned a day of joy into a heavy obligation. The invitation to Sabbath was and always will be, an invitation to gladness.

APPLICATION: What about the practice of Sabbath feels intimidating or a burden? Make a list and invite the Lord to change your perspective.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for restoring the heart of the Sabbath. Thank You for not making it a day of burden but of joy. As I practice Sabbath this week, will You reveal the delight You've intended for this day? In Your name, Amen.

DAY OF DELIGHT

The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between Me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” **Exodus 31:16-17 (NIV)**

We are privileged to live in a weekend-centered culture, where society revolves around the 9-to-5 workweek. Phrases like *living for the weekend* and *working for the weekend* imply that Monday through Friday is merely a necessary evil to reach two days off.

If we're not careful, however, two habits can form. The first is getting caught in a relentless cycle of work and toil, only to escape into 48 hours of disconnection. The second is filling time away from work with more obligations, leaving little room for rest.

As followers of Jesus, our lives are filled with paradoxes: We die to ourselves so that we may live, weakness is strength, and receiving is always better than giving. Sabbath is yet another paradox to which believers are invited. The Sabbath is not another day to be filled with household tasks or work. It's not a day of religious obligation, rituals, disassociation and disconnection. No, the Sabbath is a day of *delight*.

Dan Allender says in his work *Sabbath*: *“Sabbath is not about time off or a break of routine. It is not a minivacation to give us a respite so we are better prepared to go back to work. The Sabbath is far more than a diversion; it is meant to be an encounter with God’s delight.”*

What does this day of delight look like? The dictionary defines *delight* as a *profound sense of joy, pleasure, and satisfaction*. What we do on the Sabbath should reflect these feelings. It looks like slow mornings, devotional time with the Lord, playing with your kids, coffee with a friend, worship, long dinners or movie nights. It includes anything that brings rest, connection and communion. The Sabbath is more than a day off—it is a time to dwell with God and others. When we embrace the Sabbath as intended, our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies find true rest.

APPLICATION: What can Sabbath practically look like for you and your family? Make a list of the things you enjoy— life-giving activities. Then, begin incorporating those as Sabbath in the weeks to come.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for making the Sabbath a delight. Help me discover what a truly delightful Sabbath day can look like. You're wonderful, and I'm excited to be with You. Amen.

SEVENTH DAY REST

“By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.

Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV)

For the original audience to whom the scripture was written, numbers held great significance. In Hebrew tradition, seven represents completeness, perfection, and divine order, signifying something brought to its fullness. The creation account has a little wink to God’s intended design for our lives. On the seventh day of creation, all was completed and fulfilled. And there, God *rested*.

For the previous six days, God had ended that day of creation with the phrase, *“There was morning and evening, and God saw that it was good.”* But not on the seventh. Instead, the seventh day received a blessing. Rather than creating more, God consecrated the seventh day as holy *because* of the rest He took. On this day, all was complete, whole, lacking nothing. There was no sin, no separation between humanity and God, just delight. It was pure and beautiful.

If we move on too quickly, we’ll miss something beautiful. The added blessing, instead of the previous concluding phrase on the seventh day, serves as a holy wink—signaling that all work after the seventh day was meant to flow from rest. Nothing could be added to God’s finished creation. Our lives were always meant to come from a place of abiding, connecting and delighting in Him.

In the Kingdom God designed, we work *from* rest, not *for* rest. Even after the fall and the arrival of sin in the world, God, in His kindness, offers a glimpse of our true purpose by observing the Sabbath. The Sabbath foreshadows the ultimate rest found in Christ, where those in Christ will experience perfect peace. It reflects both the seventh day of creation and the promise of heaven. It’s also a day to remember that, even in this life, we can abide in uninterrupted communion with God. More than a break from work, the Sabbath reminds us of what we were made for and will one day fully experience.

APPLICATION: We work *from* rest, not *for* rest. How can you practice hourly, daily and weekly moments of rest this week? Allow those moments of rest to fuel everything you do.

PRAYER: Father, Your kingdom is wonderful. Teach me what it means to dwell with You in the rest You always intended for me. You are a marvelous Creator, and I love You. Amen.

POWER OF THE WORD: CREATIVE POWER

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **Genesis 1:2-3 (ESV)**

God spoke the world into existence. He gave a command, and creation obeyed. Light came into existence and pierced the darkness. Read further into Genesis 1. Each day, God speaks something else into existence. Land and sea parted, mountains formed, plants sprouted from the ground, living creatures populated the world, and God filled Adam's lungs with the breath of life so Adam could breathe it back into creation.

All of creation is formed from words. Like Adam, God's breath has filled our lungs and given us life. In turn, we can breathe that breath back into creation. God's words have power, and so do ours. But we live in a fallen world.

Words have the power to create and the power to destroy. Have you experienced the pleasure and delight of someone's face lighting up when you complimented them? At that moment, you created encouragement, hope and joy. On the other hand, have you experienced the heartbreak and disappointment of someone's face falling when you put them down? In that moment, you discouraged or maybe even destroyed encouragement, hope and joy.

We've been on both sides of this phenomenon. We've experienced the creation born from someone's encouraging words and the destruction of someone's discouraging words. James had a sobering respect for this reality, which is why he's so critical of the tongue in James 3.

What impact are our words having on the world around us? Are we using our words to create a better world for people, or are our words destroying more than we realize?

APPLICATION: Ask God to reveal the heart behind your words. Reflect on your conversations the last few days and ask God about the impact of your words. When you think of examples of creation, thank God for that opportunity to speak life. When you think of examples of destruction, repent and ask for God's healing in that area of your heart and for the person you hurt.

PRAYER: God, thank You for the gift of Your breath. Thank You for entrusting me with the creative power of Your breath. Please help me be careful with my words, use them wisely, and build others up with what I say. Amen.

POWER OF THE WORD: LIVING POWER

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)**

In Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel accounts for the advent of multiple languages. Man, in his pride, bands together to build a tower to reach the footstool of the heavens, and God thwarts this endeavor by confusing the workers with different languages. How surreal would it be to be mid-conversation, suddenly unable to understand the other person because they're speaking Mandarin?

The Bible was written in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Each of these languages is considered dead, meaning no longer spoken in the world (Aramaic being a possible exception in select communities). The chances of you walking by a person conversationally speaking ancient Hebrew with their spouse are slim to none.

Despite how many languages have come and gone or been transformed or absorbed into new languages, humanity still studies the ancient languages of the Bible. Secular scholars and observers would say it's for historical purposes, but a believer knows the truth: God's Word endures. It's alive.

God is speaking into the hearts and minds of those who are receptive to Him. Lives are being changed, people are being transformed, and those who were dead are walking into life, into relationship with the God who speaks. He speaks in the world, the church, the people around you, and to you personally. What is He saying to you today?

APPLICATION: Is there an area of your life where you feel God has been trying to get your attention? Maybe it's a pinprick in your conscience, a conversation that keeps popping up with people without your prompting, or a Bible verse that keeps coming to your attention. Thank God for speaking and ask to hear His voice clearly on whatever that thing may be.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for being a God who speaks. Your Word isn't dead and distant but *living and active*. Help me remember that today and tune my ear to hear what You're trying to tell me. Amen.

POWER OF THE WORD: ENDURING POWER

...for *“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.”* And this word is the good news that was preached to you. **1 Peter 1:24-25 (ESV)**

One of the most amazing things I have ever seen is the cherry blossoms blooming in Japan. The Japanese word for these trees is sakura, and they bloom in the spring, between March and April. The wind carries sakura petals into the streets, fields and streams, and beautiful petals paint everything pink for about two weeks. Then, the experience is over, dormant until the same timeframe the following year. The experience is magnificent and bittersweet because of how quickly it comes and goes.

Sakura season is a nationwide celebration in Japanese culture. Families and friends bring blankets outdoors to sit and have viewing parties. March and April are two of the busiest travel months for Japan because of tourism. Stores sell sakura-flavored drinks, candies and ice cream. Many parents have even named their daughters Sakura after the beauty of the petals. The culture holds its breath for the sakura season each year and uses it as a time to meditate on the beauty and transience of life. It's considered a transcendental experience.

Sakura season makes a lasting impression, but it has an expiration date. The following year, the trees will bloom again, but none of the petals will be the same. Last year's petals are dead and gone, replaced by this year's flood of pink. The new petals may look the same, but they're not.

“The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” God's Word remains forever. It is constant, trustworthy and eternal. Every word God says, every breath from His mouth that's translated to language remains forever. When those words condemn someone to Hell, it's terrifying, but for a son or daughter of God, those words are what we cling to in life. His promises endure despite the season, the conditions of our lives, the winds that blow, the enemies that attack and the death that comes for us all.

God's Word is more beautiful and powerful than sakura, and we can place our hope, joy and future in everything He says.

APPLICATION: Where do you need the truth of God's Word today? Take a moment to reflect on where your heart needs the firm foundation that only God's Word can provide. Find a verse that applies to your soul's need, and pray it over yourself today. Ask Him to help you understand your heart.

PRAYER: God, help me to cling to every word You speak. Thank You for giving us the Bible, and give me a heart that hungers for Your Word and trusts it wholeheartedly. Amen.

POWER OF THE WORD: PURPOSEFUL POWER

...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:11 (ESV)

Words have power. We've all experienced this in many ways. If you own a company or are in a leadership position, you issue directives with the expectation that your team will fulfill them. If you're a parent and you tell your child to pick up after themselves, you expect your child to respect your instruction. If you ask a question, you do so with intent and the expectation of an honest answer.

But we've also experienced the disappointment and frustration of our words falling flat. Your team or employee fails to honor your request. Your child disrespects you by ignoring the chore. You ask the question, but the answer rings hollow. We've experienced these scenarios, and we've also been the employee who missed the mark, the child who disrespected our parents, and the one who gave a hollow answer.

God always knows exactly what His words will accomplish. He understands the power of every word that exits His mouth. He knows whether an expectation will be fulfilled, whether a command will be respected and whether a question will be answered truthfully. The heart of the recipient and the outcome of His words are already known.

We need to be purposeful with our words to accomplish our goals, manage our kingdoms and discern truth, but our attempts are imperfect, and we often fall short. God, however, never speaks needlessly. He never makes word salad or rambles, has a slip of the tongue, never loses His train of thought, and never says anything He doesn't mean. When you read His Word and communicate with Him, find comfort in knowing that every word is purposeful, honest and necessary. And He's always speaking to you.

APPLICATION: Think of a conversation you know you'll need to have. Whether heavy or light, serious or fun, ask God to clarify your words. Ask Him for a heart that wants to speak the right words and receive words well.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for being a God of communication. Thank You for speaking to the world and to me. Please give me ears to listen. Give me wisdom with my words so they more closely resemble Yours. Amen.

POWER OF THE WORD: SHARED POWER

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
Acts 1:8 (ESV)

Our culture values independence. In a (healthy) workplace, management values employees who can make decisions, troubleshoot problems, navigate challenging situations and produce results without needing someone to hold their hand. A (healthy) parent’s goal is to raise children to become adults, to walk alongside and teach them how to transition from childhood and adolescent dependence to adult independence.

Independence is necessary and valuable to pursue, but it’s poison for the soul when we apply it to our relationship with God. In fact, there’s a word the Bible uses to describe our attempts to break our dependence on God—sin. Biblical logic rejects the idea of us being independent from God, and scripture fiercely reinforces our need for codependence on our Creator.

In our culture, the older you get as a human being, the more independent you should be. The older you get as a Christian, the more dependent on God you should be.

Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross, rose from the grave and restored our connection with God through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:1), and through His death and resurrection, He shared the power of the Holy Spirit with us. When we meet the living God and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we relinquish our independence to share in the Word’s resurrected power.

But God doesn’t give us His power to make life magically easier or to fix our problems. God’s power is provided with the expectation that we’ll be a light for the world around us and share the Good News of what God has done for us with a world in need.

APPLICATION: The Christian life is one of surrender. What area of your heart are you keeping independent from God? What’s a step you can take today, no matter how big or small, to start giving that area to God?

PRAYER: Lord, grow my trust and dependence on You. Reveal parts of my heart and life where I rely on my power instead of the power You gifted me through the Holy Spirit. Help me to walk in that power to share who You are with a world that desperately needs You. Amen.

POWER OF THE WORD: WORKING POWER

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

When we become part of God's adopted family, we have work to do. God gives us a new family, a new identity and a new purpose. Thankfully, He doesn't give us all these gifts and leaves us to figure it out alone. God is fiercely and relentlessly dedicated to every step in transforming us to look more like Jesus.

Philippians 2:13 drives this reality home and shows that God knows our hearts well. God gives us the *power to do what pleases Him*. In yesterday's devotion, we discussed how He gives us the Holy Spirit to transform us from within and guide us in God's will. But God also provides us with the *desire* to do what pleases Him. A crucial part of the transformation process isn't just to do what God wants but to *want* to do what God wants.

If we're being honest, we often struggle to trust that God knows what He's doing. It sounds absurd to say that *God doesn't know what He's doing*, but our actions communicate this belief whenever we sin or choose our way over His. God must rewire our brains to acknowledge and believe His way is right. This is a process that takes time and continued effort.

The late Dallas Willard was considered by many to be a giant of the faith. Many have benefited from his books and teachings over the years. Just before he died, someone asked him what a person should do if they wanted to grow spiritually. His response was simple: *Do the next right thing you know you ought to do*. It's simple, but this is how we grow in our desire and power to do what pleases God.

APPLICATION: Practice this today. When you need to make a decision, whether you think you know the correct thing to do or not, take a moment to ask God's opinion before doing it.

PRAYER: God, thank You for giving me the desire and the power to do what pleases You. Give me a heart that wants to please You in every decision and circumstance. Help me delight in delighting You. Amen.

BEING...

Since you are precious to me, you are honored and I love you.

Isaiah 43:4 (GW)

Are you a *doer*? Are you always working from a *to-do* list? If you are, you probably get a sense of accomplishment from doing. Crossing off the last line on the list feels fantastic! We get to see and experience the results of our work.

However, how are you at just *being*? You might struggle because it feels like you're wasting time since you aren't *doing* anything. What benefit does *being* have anyway? Being can be the entryway to hearing God's voice. You may be asking, *but how*? Psalm 46:10 says, "*Be still and know that I am God...*" The word *know* in this scripture means *experience* or *being aware of*. So, when we're *being*, we can experience or be mindful of God.

Have you ever watched a sunrise? You may notice the darkness in the minutes before the sun rises. Slowly, the sky begins to light up. You might hear birds or other wildlife rustling about. For me, the sound of the ocean waves crashing against the beach is a part of my story. Then, you begin to see the sun cresting over the horizon. Ultimately, the sun becomes visible, and the day starts! That entire experience may take 10 minutes. But there's satisfaction in taking the time to be still and enjoy it.

That's how God wants us to be with Him. At first, we might not notice anything. As we stay in the moment of being still, we begin to become aware of God. Ultimately, God has something for us when we are still—it's Himself! What a blessing it is to have those moments with our heavenly Father.

APPLICATION: Take 5 minutes today and practice *being*. Ask God what He wants to reveal about Himself and then be still. Don't worry if your mind wanders or you feel restless. Those are normal responses if you're unfamiliar with this exercise. If you want to set an alarm for 5 minutes, do it. At the end of 5 minutes, or longer if you have time, thank God for His willingness to be with you!

PRAYER: Father, thank You for always *being* with me. Help me to become more aware of Your presence in my life. Give me opportunities to spend quiet time with You and realize Your love for me is not dependent on what I *do*. Amen.

WAITING...

The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

Lamentations 3:25 (ESV)

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has to be the most feared and unpopular place on earth for anyone who needs to get their driver's license or pay vehicle taxes. I've often seen a line snaking out the DMV door and down the sidewalk. Everyone is waiting for their number to be called. Usually, the looks on people's faces and body language communicate frustration and annoyance. It's difficult to wait with a good attitude. It's just challenging to wait—period.

Sometimes, that's how we approach God when waiting for Him to answer a prayer or provide direction. We have things to do and places to be. Our to-do list runneth over! Yet, these waiting times are often opportunities to hear from God. God doesn't stop communicating with us when we're waiting. Sometimes, He's louder and more evident during those waiting times. Sometimes, He wants you to pray for someone. Sometimes, He will provide wisdom and discernment about a situation in your life.

What if we could learn to wait on the Lord with a good attitude? With expectancy? With gratitude? Maybe we'd be surprised by the blessings we receive. Perhaps we'll look forward to waiting. You may even get to wait on the Lord the next time you're in the DMV line.

APPLICATION: The next time you're waiting for something, possibly in line at the DMV, ask the Lord who or what He wants you to pray for. Pay attention to anyone or anything that comes to mind during this time. Once you sense someone or something, pray. Thank God for leading and guiding you. See how your waiting time becomes a praying time.

PRAYER: Father, I do not like to wait. Please help me with impatience. Reveal Yourself to me as I wait. Please show me that my waiting has value and a purpose. I am thankful You are always with me, even as I wait. Amen.

LISTENING...

I will listen to what God the LORD says; He promises peace to His people, ...

Psalms 85:8 (NIV)

Noise. It seems like everywhere we go, there's noise. People talking on their phones (on speaker, mind you, and in public). Loud music from a car stereo. Horns beeping as road construction snarls traffic. Kids yelling from the backseat. Political pundits are trying to convince you of their opinions of the state of the nation...and it's only 9 am!

Seriously, how are we supposed to have *quiet time* with God? While it may *sound* (pun intended) difficult, we can frame our minds to help us listen: *Intention*. Imagine being lost, so you stop at a gas station for directions. You tell the person at the register you're lost and trying to reach a particular place. They respond with, *Oh, I know where that is. Here's how you get there....* What's your *intention* in that moment? Listening to the directions to get where you want to go. You'll pay close attention to what's said even if music is playing from the store speakers and the bell rings each time the doors open. Your listening ability goes up because you need what's communicated to you. That's the attitude we need when approaching God for direction.

Will the noise ever stop? Probably not. Can we practice being intentional in listening for God's voice? Absolutely!

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes today to intentionally get with God. Let Him know that you want Him to speak because you're listening. Ask Him what's on His heart. Write down anything you sense He communicates to you. Thank Him for His willingness to talk with you.

PRAYER: Father, help me to listen for You. Still me on the inside so I can focus on Your voice and the peace that You provide. Please show me where I can be intentional with my time so I can spend it with You. Thank You for the gift of Your love for me as You show me more of who You are. Amen.

STANDING...

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.
1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NIV)

1961. Ben E. King released a song that's now one of the most famous ever. The familiar lyrics begin with, *When the night has come, and the land is dark, and the moon is the only light we'll see. No, I won't be afraid. Oh, I won't be afraid. Just as long as you stand, stand by me.* **Stand By Me** is an encouraging song about having someone special to go through rough times with you. A movie by the same name came out in 1986 that highlights the friendship of four boys. Having people stand by you when things are rough is a comforting thought.

Charles Albert Tindley. Who is that, you may ask? He wrote the hymn **Stand By Me** in 1905, which inspired the Ben E. King version of the song. Tindley's hymn focused on the Lord standing by him as he went through storms, tribulations, failures, persecution and growing old. What a comforting thought that we have a Lord who remains with us in our challenging times.

What's our response to this hymn? We praise God for standing with us for sure! We also need to stand. We learn to stand on what we know to be true even if our circumstances try to convince us otherwise. Our faith in the One who is faithful gives us courage and strength.

APPLICATION: Ask God to show you times when He was standing with you. Thank Him for being with you even when things are challenging. Let Him teach you to develop your faith in Him as you stand with Him. Share your faith with a friend and listen to their journey of faith.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for standing with me throughout my life trials and tribulations. Remind me of Your never-ending love for me and all those times you stood beside me. Strengthen me to stand on Your truth. I praise You for Your goodness. Help me be an example of Your eternal faithfulness. Amen.

WALKING...

As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus Himself suddenly came and began walking with them.

Luke 24:15 (NLT)

Back in the 1980s, when malls were an epicenter of activity, many folks would show up in the mornings to walk. Groups of walkers would convene inside the mall as the stores were opening. Lots of chatter would occur as the malls came to life each day. Half an hour of walking, a cup of coffee at the food court, and then off to whatever the rest of the day had to offer. Relationships developed as people walked with one another and got to know each other as they exercised.

Luke 24 is an excellent example of how Jesus can bless a typical day in the simplest ways. Two men were walking on the road to Emmaus, discussing a life-changing topic: Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. Then Jesus appears and joins them on their walk. As the walk ends, the group stops to break bread together. Then, the men become aware that the stranger walking with them is Jesus. They're delighted! They shared how their hearts burned within as they walked and talked with Jesus. Being with Jesus changed them. They were so inspired by their walk and talk that they returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples. And it all started with a walk.

APPLICATION: If you can, invite some folks to walk around the loop here at Brookwood. Before walking, pray for the Lord to guide your time together and ask Him to be with you. Then, walk and talk with each other and see what develops. As you end your walk together, thank God for this time together.

PRAYER: Father, I am so thankful that You're involved in the simple aspects of my life. Make me more aware of You and Your presence as I go through my day. Help me stop and talk with You as I recognize my heart burning within, just like the men on the road to Emmaus were aware of You. Amen.

RUNNING...

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.

Proverbs 4:12 (NIV)

Many years ago, my father and I entered a 10K race at St. Simmons Island in Georgia. Having grown up at the beach, I knew the scenery would be beautiful. There's nothing like a sunrise or sunset by the ocean. When we showed up at the starting line, no one was there. We checked the confirmation email and the address. We had the right place, but it was deserted. Finally, someone came in a truck to tell us things were delayed. Long story short, my father and I helped them get everything set up. What I found interesting was that the start of the race was also where we would end the race.

The race started, and everything was fine until the last mile. Signs were pointing us where to run. As I rounded a corner, I was running through someone's backyard and having to push bush limbs away from my face. I was ducking so tree limbs didn't hit me. As a result of the course, I ended up with some scratches on my legs and arms.

Life sometimes feels that way. We start, and everything is good, but then we find ourselves running for our lives. The difference between my running story and your life story is this: God has already marked out the race for you. He's already selected the course. You have to focus on Him and then run the course. Enjoy it!

APPLICATION: Take an inventory of the activities that fill your week. Seek God for clarity concerning which ones are a part of your race and which aren't. Ask God to strengthen you to run the race He's planned for you.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for going before me and marking the race You want me to run. Develop perseverance in me as I follow You. Please give me the focus to run my race, not anyone else's. Allow joy to grow in me as I run with You. Amen.

GRACE GIFTS

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us...

Romans 12:6a (NIV)

Have you ever received a gift you felt was undeserved? Maybe it was too extravagant, too thoughtful or at a time when you felt utterly unworthy. That kind of gift leaves a mark.

Spiritual gifts are like that. They aren't rewards for good behavior or spiritual performance. They're given out of the overflow of God's love for us. Paul reminds us in Romans that our gifts come *according to the grace given to each of us*. Grace is God's undeserved kindness, freely given, and He doesn't distribute it based on status, talent or background.

This means *your* gift—encouraging others, teaching, serving or leading—isn't something you have to prove yourself worthy of. It's something you humbly receive and faithfully use. When we understand that our gifting is grace-based, we stop striving to be someone else and start embracing how God uniquely shaped us. And just like grace, spiritual gifts aren't about us—they're for others. God didn't gift you to impress the world. He gifted you to *bless* it.

APPLICATION: Take a few minutes today to reflect on how you naturally serve or bless others. What do people often thank you for? Don't dismiss it - it might be precisely the gift God wants to grow in you. Instead of looking at others' strengths and feeling less than them, thank God for how He's uniquely designed you. Then, ask Him how you can use your gift this week to show grace to someone else.

PRAYER: Gracious God, thank You for the gifts You've placed in me. I didn't earn them, but I receive them with gratitude. Show me how You'd like me to utilize the gifts You've given to reflect my love for You. Amen.

SERVICE UNTO GOD

'But be sure to fear the LORD and faithfully serve Him. Think of all the wonderful things He has done for you.'

1 Samuel 12:24 (NLT)

It's easy to treat our spiritual gifts like personal talents or accomplishments. We might use them to gain approval, recognition or influence. But spiritual gifts aren't hobbies to master or platforms to build—they're sacred tools entrusted to us under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

1 Samuel 12:24 reminds us to *faithfully serve Him* and remember all He's done for us. When we consider the goodness and faithfulness of God, it refashions our motives. It's not about receiving applause—it's about offering back to God what He's freely given to us.

Serving under God's authority means we hold our gifts with open hands. They're not tools to control but expressions of gratitude. Our faithful service flows from worship and appreciation—not obligation. When we remember His wondrous deeds, we become more courageous in exercising the gifts He's given us.

APPLICATION: Spend time today reflecting on a few *great things* God has done in your life—moments of provision, comfort or transformation. Write them down as reminders. Then ask, *How can I serve You faithfully in response?* Whether in a church setting, a conversation or a quiet act of kindness, let your service this week come from a grateful, whole heart.

PRAYER: God, You have done amazing things in my life, many of which I may never fully comprehend. Help me always remember Your faithfulness. Let my gifts be used as an offering of worship, not for personal attention. Teach me to serve You with a full and faithful heart, always remembering who You are and all You've done. Amen.

SEALED BY THE SPIRIT

...When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13b-14 (NIV)

There's something profoundly comforting about knowing you're secure—like when you finally find a job offer in writing or hear your name called when a reservation is confirmed. It's the assurance that you belong.

Paul describes the Holy Spirit as a seal and a deposit. *From the moment* we believe in Jesus, He marks us as His and gives us the Holy Spirit—not after we become good enough at faith, but at the moment our faith begins. And with the Spirit comes gifts for ministry and service to the church.

This is a vital truth, especially for those who feel unqualified. Spiritual gifts aren't for a select few with Bible degrees or long church resumes. They're for every believer. If you've trusted Christ, the Spirit has sealed and gifted you. You don't need to wait to get spiritual enough to be used by God.

Author Francis Chan once wrote, *If it's true that the Spirit of God dwells in us and that our bodies are the Holy Spirit's temple, then shouldn't there be a huge difference between the person who has the Spirit of God living inside of him or her and the one who does not?*

You're not empty. You're not powerless. You have been filled and equipped by the very presence of God.

APPLICATION: Take some time to accept the truth that you're sealed by the Holy Spirit. Reflect on how that changes the way you see yourself today. Instead of waiting to be more qualified or confident, ask God to show you where your gift is needed. Step into service with the quiet confidence that comes from knowing Who lives in you.

PRAYER: Holy Spirit, thank You for marking me as God's own. I don't want to live like I'm still waiting for something more. Help me believe that You've already equipped me for what You're calling me to do. Please fill me with boldness, humility and a willingness to serve. Amen.

DIVERSITY OF GIFTS

But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where He wants it.
1 Corinthians 12:18 (NLT)

Have you ever tried to complete a puzzle with a piece that didn't belong? No matter how hard you press or twist it, it won't fit. But when the right piece goes in, everything clicks into place.

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians remind us that the same is true in the Body of Christ. God has placed each part, each person, and each gift *just where He wants it*. That means your presence is intentional. Your gift is unique to you. You were created on purpose for a purpose.

Sometimes, we get caught comparing ourselves to others, wishing we had their abilities, positions or influence. But God's creativity knows no bounds. The Church was never meant to be full of duplicates but a diverse, unified whole. Your unique gift is essential!

When we appreciate the diversity of gifts in the church, we stop competing and start cooperating. We realize that our differences are strengths (not threats). The more varied the parts, the more beautiful the body of Christ becomes, just as God meant it to be.

APPLICATION: Take a moment to consider one gift you see in someone else that's very different from yours. Instead of feeling threatened or envious, thank God for it. Then, reflect on how your gift might complement theirs. Ask God to help you embrace your role in His Body. Look for opportunities to strengthen and encourage others as you serve together.

PRAYER: God, thank You for the beauty of Your design. I praise You for how You made me and for the unique gifts You've placed in others. Help me stop comparing and start celebrating. Show me how my role fits into the greater good of Your church. Amen.

HUMBLE CONFIDENCE

Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else.

Galatians 6:4 (NLT)

If you've ever scrolled social media and felt like everyone else is more gifted, more influential or more spiritual than you, you're not alone. It's easy to fall into the trap of comparison. But God calls us to a better way: honest, humble self-assessment.

In Galatians 6:4, Paul challenges us: *pay careful attention to your own work*. In other words, focus on what God is doing *in you* and *through you*. Sober self-assessment avoids inflating or deflating your worth. It's about being clear-eyed and open-hearted about who God has called **you** to be.

There's freedom in knowing you're unique. God's not looking for duplicates. He's looking for faithful servants willing to grow where He's planted them. Your gifts may not be flashy or public, but that doesn't make them less vital, especially in God's eyes!

We honor God when we accept our role with gratitude and live it out with integrity. Clarity about your gift leads to confidence. That confidence is not in yourself but in the God who gave you the role.

APPLICATION: Today, reflect on your strengths and where you sense God has used you. Write down areas where you may have compared yourself to others. Confess those quietly and ask God to help you see yourself honestly—neither puffed up nor diminished. Celebrate the gift He's given you, and ask how you can use it today.

PRAYER: God, give me a clear and humble view of myself. Help me stop comparing and start trusting how You've designed me. Let me walk in confidence. Not from pride but from knowing I belong to You and have a place in Your Kingdom. Amen.

BUILT TO BUILD OTHERS

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. **Proverbs 27:17 (NLT)**

Spiritual gifts aren't trophies to display. They're tools to use. God's design has always been about community. He gives us gifts not so we can shine alone but so we can strengthen each other.

Proverbs 27:17 offers a vivid picture: iron sharpening iron. It implies friction, intention and purpose. Something powerful happens when we engage our spiritual gifts in relationships with others. We grow, and so do they. We become sharper, more useful and more aligned with God's purpose.

Sometimes, using your gift will look like encouragement. Other times, it may mean offering wisdom, prayer or service behind the scenes. But no matter how visible or invisible your gift may feel, it has an impact. You were meant to share it.

In a culture that often says, *Do what makes you happy*, Scripture nudges us to ask, *How can I help fulfill what God is doing in someone else's life?* Your gift is part of someone else's breakthrough, growth and healing. Be generous in sharing it with others. When we view our gifts through the lens of, *How can I use this for someone else?* instead of *How can this gift benefit me?* we begin to mature into our purpose.

APPLICATION: Think of one person who could use encouragement, support or help right now. Ask God to show you how your gift can build them up. Then follow through, whether it's a text, a coffee, a prayer or lending your time or skill. Small, faithful steps can have an eternal impact on the lives of others.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for making me a part of something bigger than myself. Help me see the needs around me and respond with the gifts You've given. Use me to sharpen, uplift and support others. May my life be a tool in Your hands to build up the people You love. Amen.

THE SACRED AND BEAUTIFUL SANCTUARY

So all the work that King Solomon had performed for the house of the LORD was completed. Then Solomon brought in the items his father David had dedicated—the silver, the gold, and the furnishings—and he placed them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD. **1 Kings 7:51 (BSB)**

The landscape of much of the ancient Near East was desolate, dry and bare. It was uninviting and a very difficult place to live. The environment was a reminder that when Adam and Eve sinned against God, He cursed the ground and promised that working the field would forever be painful toil. The land would continually be fraught with thorns and thistles (see Genesis 3:17-19). Jerusalem had no natural resources, fertile land or major trade routes. God's people lived in houses made mainly of mud, stone and straw. In contrast, surrounding and more powerful nations lived near sources of water. They had livestock and herds of animals for tilling and planting fertile ground. There was a distinct difference between the two ways of life.

In Solomon's time, however, stood a thing of beauty. Splendid and glorious. This was the temple that would far surpass those of surrounding nations. It was a reminder of the blessings of the Promised Land, which was situated along the Mediterranean Sea. A grand temple in the middle of such a barren place would have made it all the more beautiful.

For many, 1 Kings 6-7 can be challenging to read. At first glance, it appears to be a list of building supplies. Cedar, gold, silver and bronze. Roofs, foundations, pillars and flooring. There are descriptions of the intricate details of carvings and symbols. However, these chapters are more than architectural drawings and building specs for a local contractor. Beyond their value, these materials were also symbolically significant. They represented the purity, divinity and glory of God. The use of precious metals and elaborate furnishings was intended to reflect the majesty and holiness of God, as seen in the detailed descriptions of the Tabernacle in Exodus.

What a sight to behold.

APPLICATION: Modern church buildings pale in comparison to Solomon's temple. But God's glory never fades or ceases to exist. Read 1 Kings 6-7 and ask God to help you picture the temple and experience His holiness and majesty.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I long to be filled with awe of Your majesty and beauty. I don't often think of these things. I pray You'd help me see You more as You really are. Amen,

DWELLING WITH GOD IN THE SANCTUARY

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

Psalms 27:4-5 (NIV)

Throughout the Old Testament, the sanctuary is often (more than two hundred times) called the *house of the LORD*. God wasn't confined to a particular location, but the idea of *house* gave God's people the image of a dwelling, a place where God could be found and experienced. This passage describes David's primary goal in the sanctuary: to experience God as His dwelling. It was more about God than an actual building, which makes sense since the temple wasn't built until the time of Solomon, David's son.

Notice several key points in today's passages. David made dwelling with God his highest priority: *this only do I seek*, he says. He longed to experience God continually, *all the days of my life*, he expressed. To him, seeing God required more than an occasional glance. Rather, he *gazed* - took time, slowed down, didn't rush. The word translated *beauty* describes something that moves the beholder to its loveliness, its pleasantness. It's a beauty the LORD has within Himself. David was also convinced God would meet him, not just in a general sense, but personally. He was sure God knew his circumstances and would protect him from all the hardships of being a nation's king. He had a posture of trust, dependence and humility.

This is a good reminder to seek God always. He alone can provide refuge and safety. It's a reminder that going to church, praying and reading the Bible are meant to be more than religious activities—boxes to check. May we seek God with all that we are and all that we have so that we might experience him as our dwelling.

APPLICATION: Let's follow David's example this week, gazing upon the beauty of the Lord and experiencing Him as our dwelling—the place where we find refuge and safety. Carve out a more extended time this week to simply be with God.

PRAYER: Lord, You are my refuge. I long for shelter in these challenging times. Help me move beyond religious ritual and draw my heart to gaze upon Your beauty. Amen.

SANCTUARY: GOD'S PRESENCE

However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me, says the Lord, or where will My resting place be? Has not My hand made all these things?" **Acts 7:48 -50 (NIV)**

In Scripture, the word sanctuary means a sacred place. It's a place made holy by God's presence. A sanctuary is any place where God is.

During the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, God instructed Moses to build a portable tent, the Tabernacle, as a visible dwelling for the presence of God. It was a reminder of God's covenant with Israel and emphasized that God was with His people even during their wandering. The Ark of the Covenant, a sacred chest containing the Ten Commandments, was housed within the Tabernacle. God and His Word were with them as they traveled. After the Israelites settled in the Promised Land, King Solomon built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem, a permanent and grander structure than the Tabernacle. It was a declaration to the nations that God was with His people.

The temple, however, wasn't the only place God existed. He was and is everywhere. He cannot be contained. He is not in any house built by human hands. He is not confined to a church building. He always has been and always will be everywhere. Moses encountered God in the middle of the desert (Exodus 3:1-15). Samuel heard God's voice in bed (Samuel 3:10). Daniel's sanctuary for God was in his home (Daniel 6:10). Jesus was with God on a mountain (Luke 9:28), in an olive grove (Mark 14:32), and at a dinner table with friends (Mark 2:13-17). Paul found holy ground in prison (Acts 16:25).

Today's passage is amazingly good news. All of creation is God's sanctuary. We can encounter Him anytime, anywhere. We are, at all times and in every way, living in the sanctuary of God.

APPLICATION: Consider today that God is with you wherever you go. Pray while you're driving. Pray while you're eating. Be open to God's Spirit while changing a diaper or in a board meeting. Let's open our eyes and make ourselves available to the God who is everywhere.

PRAYER: God, sometimes I go about my day and forget You're with me. The places I go and the things I do have, in some ways, become mundane and ordinary. Help me experience Your presence all day today. May I see all of life as sacred because You are here. Amen.

JESUS IS OUR SANCTUARY

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
John 1:14 (NIV)

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.

Colossians 2:9 (NLT)

When John wrote that Jesus *made His dwelling among us*, this means that He *tabernacled* (or *pitched His tabernacle*) among us. Because Jesus is God, He embodies the beauty and splendor of God. In the person of Jesus, the physical temple is no longer the sole focus as it had been throughout the Old Testament. Jesus declared, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...* (John 2:19-21). He was speaking of the temple of His body. *Jesus is our sanctuary*, which means that Jesus, through His sacrifice and ongoing ministry, provides a place of safety, refuge and spiritual protection for believers, much like the ancient sanctuary in the Old Testament.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture of idols. Our attention can be drawn away from God in such subtle ways that soon, we feel lost and alone, wondering where God is. We often seek refuge apart from Jesus. We're prone to worship (give our time and life to) all sorts of things other than Jesus. *Jesus is our sanctuary*, which means He is God's new and true dwelling place. In Him, we are safe in life, safe in death, safe in judgment, and safe in eternity.

Today, let's remember that Jesus is the true sanctuary. He is the new and true dwelling place of God, where God's presence has been fully realized.

I am a pilgrim in the world, but my home is in God. On the earth I wander, but Christ is my sanctuary. **Charles Spurgeon**

APPLICATION: On a notecard, write *Jesus is my sanctuary*. This may sound strange at first, but over time, allow this simple idea to become an anchor of truth for your soul—a daily reminder that Jesus brought God's full presence to earth.

PRAYER: Thank you, Jesus, for bringing the fullness of God into this world. You are my true protector. My perfect peace. You are everything my heart truly longs for and everything I truly need. I pray You'd bring more of your fullness into my life today. Amen.

SANCTUARY: THE VEIL HAS BEEN TORN

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and gave up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

Matthew 27:50-51 (NASB)

In the Bible, the *veil* refers to the curtain that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies). It was a massive curtain, described as 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 4 inches thick, so heavy that it reportedly took 300 priests to manipulate. It was crafted from fine linen and interwoven with blue, purple and scarlet yarn threads, a combination of colors often associated with royalty and divinity. It was hung by gold hooks on an acacia wood frame, which was overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:31-33). It features skillfully embroidered cherubim (*guardians of the sacred* or *angels of mercy*), representing God's presence and power.

Though more than a piece of material, it was a physical, visible barrier representing the separation between a holy God and sinful humanity. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and only on the Day of Atonement. It was a reminder that our sin separates us from God and that we need a Savior.

The Gospels record that the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus, being the perfect priest, means that believers now have direct access to God. Jesus bridged the gap between the divine and human, emphasizing His role as the mediator between God and humanity.

This is the greatest news ever. Because the veil has been torn (forever open), we have direct access to God. Because of the work of Jesus, we can come boldly into God's presence (Hebrews 10:22-25). Those who believe in the Son of God find forgiveness of sin and are brought back into full union with God.

APPLICATION: Today, resist keeping Jesus at arm's length. Draw near to Him often. Seek His presence continually. Go to Him boldly and encourage those around you to do the same.

PRAYER: Lord God, I thank You for making a way. Thank You that the veil is torn and I have complete access to You. I long for greater and more ongoing intimacy with You. Just like You tore the veil, I pray You'd break down any barrier in me that keeps me from loving You. Amen.

SANCTUARY: THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:16 (NIV)

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)

Today's passages teach us that we are God's temple (His sanctuary, dwelling place). When we come into a saving relationship with Jesus, He sends His Spirit to live in us. He resides in us. He desires to make His home in us. We are, in a very real sense, the presence of God in this world!

The idea of being a dwelling place for God is true in at least two ways. First, we are individually God's temple. This refers to our personal responsibility to grow in purity and live with integrity. Jewish tradition holds that it took *thousands* to move the Tabernacle (the portable tent of God). Today, it only takes one. If you are a follower of Christ, you're God's living temple—His presence in this world.

Second, we who are joined together in one family as *the church* are a place of God's presence. This refers to the importance of unity, being like-minded and having the same purpose. Local churches are meant to be God's presence in the community and in the world. May Brookwood represent Jesus more and more to the people around us.

APPLICATION: God has already prepared your heart to be His divine building. Seek to represent Jesus to the people around you. Be careful with your words and thoughtful with your actions.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You have called me to Yourself and made me a member of the Church, Your Body. I am a living stone in a living temple, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and empowered to be Your vital presence in the world. Transform me to be more like You. Give me a heart of compassion for those who are hurting and lost. Amen.



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