



MAKE ROOM

PEERLESS ROAD CHURCH DEVOTIONAL 2023

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Day 1 - Make Room

-Pator Adam Jones



Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37 NIV).

It all starts here, and I want to congratulate you for embarking on such a daring adventure. For many, taking time to read a devotional seems tedious, or time consuming. This devotion is *a call to “MAKE ROOM” for a deeper relationship with God.* As we embark on this mission to go above and beyond in pursuing God this year, we must be intentional to make an effort to seek God, knowing that He can be found! We are reminded of this in Jeremiah 29:12-14 which states: *“Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you”* (NIV).

We must *make room* for God while helping others make room for Him also. By being intentional to read a devotion every day, you are growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest keys to success in every relationship is communication. When you pick up a devotional and read from God’s Word daily, you are allowing your God to communicate with you. You are intentionally allowing time to be set aside for Him to share His thoughts about you. You are MAKING ROOM! He loves to communicate with you, and He loves it when you communicate back with Him. Although we try to think through the process, it is really rather simple—through prayer, we communicate with God. Be intentional over these twenty-one days, not just to request of Him, but take time to meditate on His words, and allow Him to speak back to you!

I look forward to answering the call to consecration with you during this year, and into a deeper relationship with God that none of us has ever experienced before!

Father, teach me how to pray. Help me to identify the gentle nudging of Your Spirit, and give me the strength, wisdom, and endurance to not ignore Your call to me. Teach me to love You in the way that You love me.

Day 2 – Make Room for Others

–Linda Rodante

It's easy to get busy with our own lives and that of our children or grandchildren. We used to hear the saying that people prayed for "us four, no more." In other words, that our prayers were self-centered. It's a fact we all live with—that our lives and those we love are most important. But God would have us look outside ourselves to others.

In John 13:34, Jesus gave us a new commandment—that we should love one another just as He loves us. Philippians 2:4 affirms that we should esteem others better than ourselves. 1 John 4 urges repeatedly for us to love one another. Matthew 5: 43-48 talks about loving our neighbors and our enemies. The Scriptures are packed with verses encouraging and commanding us to love others.

It often takes a conscious effort to stop and think about others—from the homeless on the street corner to the confused senior in the grocery aisle to the harried mom or dad shoving a buggy aside in the parking lot. But it is something we must do. People need our attention, help, and prayers. Often, they need salvation.

Jesus' last words were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. He has commissioned us as soldiers in His army. He has commissioned you. As a believer, you have a responsibility to others. Jesus came to seek and to save those that were lost, and we are commanded to share that message. We've been saved from eternal death, delivered into an everlasting kingdom, and have tasted of the riches of His glory. Our responsibility is to share that with others.



In Ephesians 6:19–20, Paul prayed “that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel . . . that in it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak” (NKJV).

In Colossians 4:3-4, he asks that “God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ...that [we] may make it manifest, as [we] ought to speak.” Making it manifest, meaning “making it clear and concise.” As we ought to speak. Ought, meaning “it is our duty.” If Paul prayed these types of prayers, how much more should we?

Lord, open our eyes to others, to their needs both physical and spiritual. Help us to stop running through life and really see people. Open a door for us to make known the gospel and give us the love and boldness that we require to step through that door to share the good news of salvation.



Day 3 – Make Room for Others by Listening

—Rev. Arietta Grimmer

An incident occurred to me when I previously lived in Cleveland, Tennessee, between 1979 and 1986. During that time, I took up jogging. One morning while jogging, I passed a young girl (in mid-summer) walking the opposite direction, with a coat on and carrying a backpack. As I jogged a little farther, the Lord nudged me to turn and go to her. I questioned what would I say? I kept jogging, and once again, I felt the urge to turn around and go to her. The next nudge was stronger; I turned around and started jogging toward her. I kept thinking, What am I going to say? The Lord spoke to my spirit and said: “Just listen, listen, listen.”

When I approached her, she heard me coming and stopped. When I stopped near her, she asked me, “If the police come, will you say you are my mother?” I told her no I will not lie for you, but I am here with you. Or something to that effect. I do not even remember the whole conversation. “Just listen, listen, listen” kept resounding in my mind. She had considered suicide that very morning. Her mother was to meet her—the reason she was running away from a home for children. We walked to Keith Street and she talked and, yes, I listened. Once we were on Keith Street walking, we both saw the police car coming, red lights flashing, making a U-turn, and stopping in front of us.

He quickly approached her and tried to put her in his car.

She refused. He asked me who I was, and I let him know, I was just a jogger.

He radioed the station and I heard him say, “She has refused to get in the car, and a concerned jogger is with her.” I asked her if I rode with her, would she go. She agreed to go. The officer permitted me to get in the back seat with her. I talked while she was calming down. Once at the station, the officer left us alone. I was able to witness to her. That day, while sitting in the police station, this young teen, six

months, from being 18 and able to leave the facility, gave her life to Christ.

Shema Is'rael (Hear, O Israel) is mentioned three hundred times in the Bible. He is saying to all believers: “It is very important to hear (listen).” Hear the individual when prompted to meet, and listen . . . listen . . . listen . . . and witness. You never know when there is going to be a moment when God wants to change a life, and you are about to be His mouthpiece. You just never know!



Day 4 - Make Room for God's Truth

—Linda Rodante

It's been a hard year for many—disasters, deaths, and tragedies. One such heartbreaking scenario is the three Idaho college students killed in off-campus housing. Steve Goncalves, the dad of one of the students, put out a plea for help in finding their killer. His words, "I have to have my justice."

Isn't that what we all feel like when someone has wronged, abused, or mistreated us— or someone we love? We want justice. But on the other hand, we shy away from God's justice. We want to do what we want, when we want, and dare anyone to say anything against it. We may not have violently killed anyone, but we may have slaughtered them with our tongue or Facebook post. Have we cut off someone for a slight offense never to forgive them? Or, have we stolen from a best friend or a store? Is our drug or pornography addiction killing, not just us but also those around us?

Doesn't sin, our sin, deserve the same type of justice and judgment this father is craving for his daughter? And yet . . .

Jesus came to earth so he could deflect that justice. Not that we deserve it, but He offers it freely. We mess up—often and terribly sometimes—but we have an advocate with our Father, Jesus Christ. He took our place on the cross, dying, then rising again for our salvation.

When we don't know this or don't accept it, then we are looking at judgment. Judgment is inherent in justice, which brings us to the title above—Make Room for God's Truth. Whether it is the fact that sin brings death, or the fact that, in Christ, all your sins are forgiven.

Where do we find truth? We find it in the Bible. Paul said to Timothy: "Study to show yourself approved" (2 Timothy 2:25 MEV). Daily Bible reading will change your life. Prayer, church attendance, and Bible study (both individually and in groups) all help us to know God's truth and to live better lives. The final step? Put what you learn into practice. James 1:22 tells us to "Be doers of the word and not hearers only" (MEV). And because the Word of God is powerful, it gives strength to step out of our chains and into the glorious life He offers.

Lord, we come to You today, knowing that in You, we have peace and love and forgiveness of sin. Your word gives light. Help me to make room for You today. Shine Your truth into my heart and help me to walk out the things that You show me.



Day 5 - MAKING ROOM: GIFTING IN ACTION

—Nellie Keasling

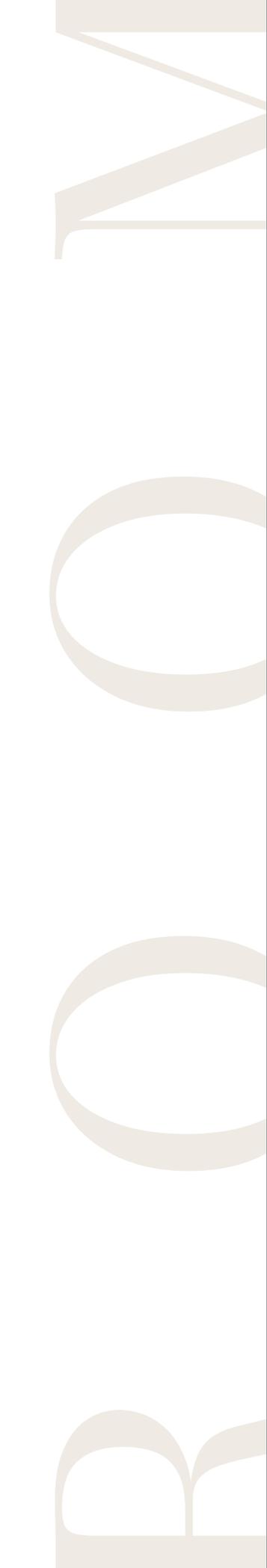
Jack Riemer tells the story of how a master violinist seemingly did the impossible. On November 18, 1995, Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert at Avery hall at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Getting on stage is no small achievement for Perlman, because he was stricken



with polio as a child. He has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches. To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, is an awesome sight.

The audience sat quietly while he painfully, yet majestically, made his way across the stage to his chair. Then he sat down, slowly putting his crutches on the floor, undoing the clasps on his legs, tucking one foot back, and extending the other foot forward. Then he bent down and picked up the violin, put it under his chin, nodded to the conductor, and proceeded to play.



But something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke. You could hear it snap—it went off like gunfire across the room. There was no mistaking what that sound meant. There was no mistaking what he had to do.

We figured he would have to get up, put on the clasps again, pick up the crutches, and limp his way off stage . . . to either find another violin or else find another string to replace the broken one. But he didn't. Instead, he waited a moment, closed his eyes, and then signaled the conductor to begin again.

The orchestra began, and he played from where he left off. And he played with such passion and such power and such purity as we had never heard before.

Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. But that night, Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing, recomposing the piece in his head. At one point, it sounded like he was detuning the strings to get new sounds from them which they had never made before.

When he finished, an awesome silence encompassed the room. Then, people jumped to their feet and cheered. An extraordinary outburst of applause arose from every corner of the auditorium. We were all on our feet, screaming and cheering, doing everything we could to show how much we appreciated what he had done.

He smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, raised his bow to quiet us, and then he said—not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive reverent tone—“You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left.”

What a powerful line! Perhaps, the lesson to be learned is to make music (or whatever our gifting is) with all that we have, and then, when that is no longer possible, make music—with God's help—with what is left. After all, we should give God the credit for our talents, gifts, and abilities. The victory is not ours, but God's.

Additional Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Ephesians 4:7-13

Ask Yourself:

- Why does God give believers spiritual gifts?
- What gifts or talents (T.A.G.S.) has God given you? Do you use them?

Dear God, Thank you for the gifts you have given me. Please help me to find ways to bless others through these gifts—ways which I may not have thought about. Help me to use my gifts and talents, and then, get to hear You say, “Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21 NKJV). Amen.

Day 6 – Making Room for the Old Fisherman

—Nellie Keasling

The anonymous story of an old fisherman took place many years ago in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. It is an excellent example of making room for a person in need.

Our house was directly across the street from the clinic entrance to Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. We lived downstairs and rented the upstairs rooms to the outpatients who came for treatment at the clinic.

One summer evening as I was preparing supper, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to see a truly awful looking man. I stared at the stooped and shriveled body, but the appalling thing about him was his face—lopsided from swelling, red, and raw.

Yet his voice was pleasant as he said, “Good evening. I’ve come to see if you have a room for just one night. I came for a treatment this morning from the eastern shore, and there’s no bus until morning.” He told me he had been hunting for a room since noon, but with no success—no one seemed to have a room.

I invited him to come eat with us when supper was ready; but he refused, showing me his food in a brown paper bag.

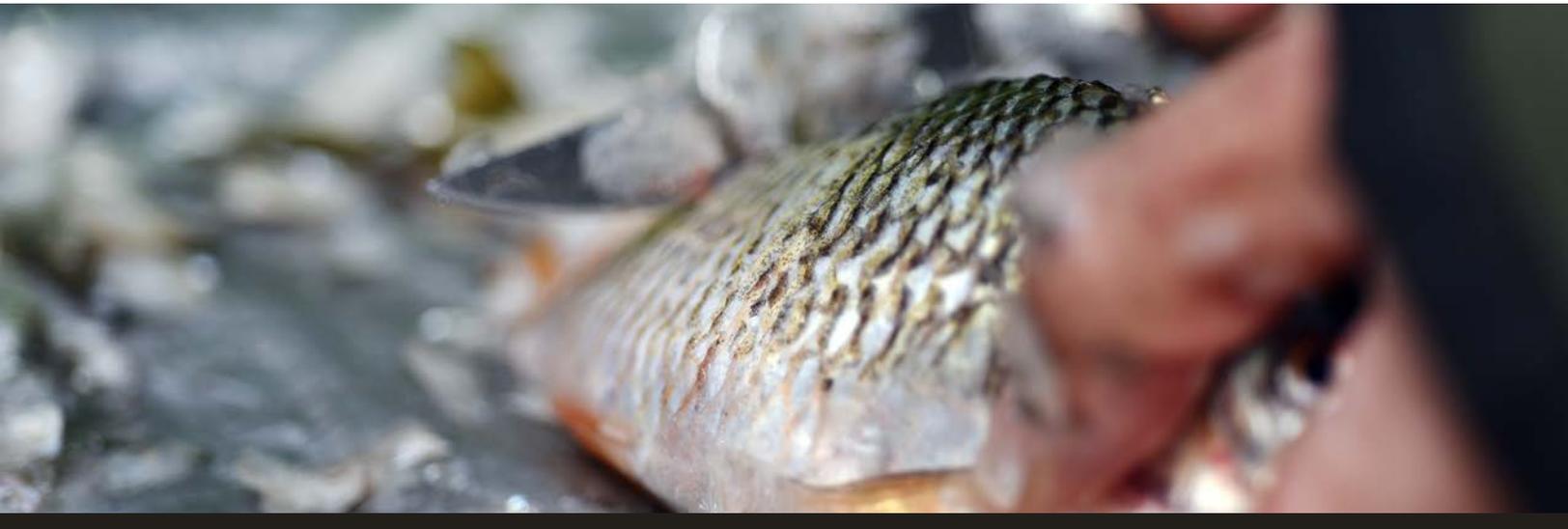
After I finished the dishes, I went out on the porch to talk with him for a few minutes. He told me he fished for a living, to support his daughter, her five children, and her husband, who was hopelessly crippled from a back injury. He didn’t tell it by way of complaint; in fact, he thanked God for giving him the strength to keep going.

At bedtime, we put a cot in the children’s room for him. When I got up in the morning, the bed linens were neatly folded, and the little man was out on the porch. He refused breakfast, but just before he left for his bus, he asked if he could come back and stay the next time he had a treatment. He assured me he would not cause any trouble—he offered to sleep in the rocking chair on the porch. I told him he was welcome to come again.

On his next trip, he arrived a little after 7:00 a.m. As a gift, he brought a big fish and a quart of huge oysters. He had shucked them that morning before he left so that they would be nice and fresh. I knew his bus left at 4:00 a.m., and I wondered what time he had to get up in order to do this for us. His gifts came as long as he continued his treatments.

Our family will always be grateful to have known him. We learned what it was to accept the bad without complaint and the good with gratitude to God.

This lady in Baltimore who took in the old fisherman surely has a special reward for making room for this stranger with a swollen face. She not only made room in her house for the old fisherman, but she also made room in her heart and showed compassion. Matthew wrote, “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (25:40 NKJV).



Additional Scriptures:

Matthew 25:21

Luke 19:17

Thought Questions:

1. Which need is most important—physical or spiritual?
2. Which should be given priority when ministering to an individual? Why?

“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (25:40 NKJV).

Day 7 - Knowing Who Is In The Room

—Bailey Rogers

This year, I wasn't planning to write a devotional. I am a senior in college and my current season of life has felt like a nonstop race to the finish line. As I contemplated my decision, I turned the radio to a worship station and immediately heard the song, "We Make Room." I find it fitting that this song also happened to resonate with the theme of this year's devotional book. Jesus is just like that, perfectly orchestrating intentional moments and divine experiences into our lives, and it is what fascinates me the most about His presence.

I am captivated by Christ's ability to subtly rest upon us in the mundane, while powerfully crushing and annihilating the enemies beneath our very feet; all in one breath. Christ is intimate and knowing enough to be with us in every moment, season, and circumstance, and yet He is personal enough to know our deepest needs and desires before a word even rolls off our tongues. Yet, He is also sovereign enough to slay the giants that come to steal, kill, and destroy our beings. So, do you know who's in the room? Do you know Him as provider, protector, or defender? Or do you know him as Father, comforter, or friend? Truthfully, whoever Jesus is to you, He is in whatever room you find yourself. You might feel His presence in the smile of a neighbor or in the kindness of a friend, or you might feel His presence

in the miraculous, bringing sight to the blind and making the lame walk again. But I am here to tell you, friend, that our God does both.

The Savior who knows your name and deepest intricacies longs to meet with you in a personal way. He stands and knocks at the door of your heart. How will you respond? Invite Him into your room and let his power rest upon you. In the Book of Psalms, Jesus reassures David by pledging salvation, deliverance, and protection to him. If you just know Christ's name and devote your life to Him, this will be a pledge to you, as well.

Psalm 91:14-16

"Because he is lovingly devoted to Me, I will deliver him. I will protect him because he knows My name. When he calls out to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble. I will rescue him and give him honor. I will satisfy him with a long life and show him My salvation" (HCSB).



Many of us view God with awe when we consider the biblical account of the creation. Consider a being that exists with the exclusive power of speaking things into existence—and they are!! It's beyond human comprehension—yet it is!! It requires absolute faith on our part to grasp this truth. We seem to measure Him with the enormity of what He has done and created. Big, enormous, grand, even outrageous for us to comprehend!! Therefore, we think we can only approach this enormous, eternal being with only our large and impossible tasks.



Day 8 - A God of Small

- Dr. Michael Plumley



But, let's consider God's Word and see Him as the God of the small. Following the majesty of the creation and from the very beginning of God's relationship with mankind in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:8 speaks of Him as, "... the LORD God ... walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (NIV). This is not meant to diminish the enormity of our God, but rather to express His ability to come down to our level and meet us where we live. So important is His relationship with us that Psalm 139:13 states, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (NIV).

From our individual beginning in the womb across and through our entire life, He pursues relationship with us always and says in Matthew 19:14, “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’” (NIV). Jesus made time to spend with children in order to bless them, and throughout our lives, he desires the same with each of us.

The Old Testament gives the account of the prophet Elijah and his response to a threat on his life from Queen Jezebel. After an enormous display of God’s greatness and power through Elijah when He (God) annihilated the 450 prophets of Baal. Yet Elijah felt abandoned, fearful, and alone. This enormous God came to Elijah to encourage and sustain him in “a still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12 KJV).

In the New Testament, Jesus expresses God’s love, care, and concern for us when he compares God’s watch care over us to that of a blade of grass, the tiny sparrow, the lily of the field, as well as even the number of hairs on our head. These are small things, indeed, yet God places great importance on them.

Since He is then a God of small things, 1 Peter 5:7 says. “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (KJV). His care for us isn’t determined by our perspective of the “size” at all because He is the God of smALL things!! Let Him handle it for you!

Day 9 –A Talk From a Tulip

—Connie Disbrow



Now, you’ll have to admit, there is nothing really beautiful about an ugly, old shriveled-up tulip bulb. That’s what I kept saying to myself as I lay in my cold, dark bed. There I was, stuck away, down under the earth. No one could see me. As a matter of fact, they walked all over me and never even knew I was down there. What was even worse, I couldn’t see anyone or anything.

Can you imagine not being able to hear the robin sing or to look up into the soft, blue sky? Can you imagine dirt and damp and dark, day after day? For me, life was pretty miserable. I was sure that someone, somewhere, had made a big mistake.

What good is a dried-up tulip bulb buried six inches under the ground? I couldn't talk to anyone; there wasn't anyone around. I couldn't bring happiness to anyone; What happiness is there in a cold, dark tomb? I couldn't nod my head and smile at anyone; my head was in a weird, circular position. I couldn't even spread a sweet fragrance through the air. There wasn't much air down where I was, and besides, I just smelled like dirt. There was no earthly purpose for me. So I decided I would just lie there in my silent bed and rot my life away. So, this was the beautiful life of a tulip! Some life!

Oh, I knew what other flowers were like. I knew about the red velvet dress of the rose. I knew about the pure white of the lily and deep purple of the violet. I knew about the golden marigolds that lifted happy faces to the sun and about the graceful gladioli that nodded with the gentle breeze. I knew the sweet smell of the lilacs and delicate beauty of the pansies. Other flowers were happy. They were beautiful and they made others' lives happy and beautiful. What had happened to me? Why hadn't God made me like all the rest? Why had He put me in this awful place? And I had always wanted so much more for myself!

And so, I complained my days away, and very soon I began to feel that I was rotting inside. Little roots of bitterness were beginning to sprout from my heart. My own dark little world was closing me in. I felt hopeless and trapped and very unhappy.



Then one day . . . God, who knows about the sparrows and the flowers, began His miracle in this unhappy, shriveled-up old tulip bulb. Through the heavy weight of earth above me, I seemed to hear a whisper—Wait and see. I have something very special in mind for you. Just trust me . . . wait and see.

After that, my bed was just as cold and damp and the blackness around me was just as dark, but the roots of bitterness were dying, and in their place I felt a shoot of hope. Maybe, just maybe, God really did know what He was doing. Maybe, just maybe, there was more in store for an ugly old tulip bulb than rotting its life away six inches below the ground. I tried very hard to be patient and wait.

As I waited, I began to hear voices I had never heard before. I heard voices of love and of care. I began to feel things going on within me—things I had never felt before. Then that glorious day finally came when, before I knew what had happened, my head slowly pushed through the blanket of dirt above me. I looked up into the sunshine of God's care, and then I knew why God had made me an ugly old tulip bulb and had stuck me down deep within the ground.

Then I knew that He had not made a mistake. Through me, He had shown a miracle of His power. He had changed an ugly, bitter, unhappy tulip bulb into a beautiful, sweet happy flower.

And even now, sometimes, when the wind blows so strong that I fear it will break my stem in two, and the rain pounds so hard against me that I feel I will never be able to stand up straight again, I remember His miracle of life in me . . . then I am strong. And I know too, that very soon the warm happy days of spring will fade, and that days of cold and dark are ahead for me. But this time, I will know God has a purpose for the days of darkness. For through them, He is making me into a more beautiful tulip.

Day 10 – Celebrating the New Year

—Catherine Payne, D.Min.

The New Year has always been a big celebration in our family. Images pulled from my earliest memories include a house full of friends and family, lots of food, and “sparklers” (you know the sticks that light up the night with flames of brilliant light!).

During the evening hours, conversation usually revolved around resolutions and remembering special events of the quickly expiring year. Around midnight, we would crowd into the family room to ceremoniously view the television’s version of the changing of the guard as we joyfully joined in the countdown!



As the new year arrived, the house would empty as guests spilled out to the front yard to join the rest of the neighborhood. My heart screamed with excitement as boxes of sparklers and packages of matches were broken open. The annual lighting ceremony was about to begin. Most of the time the adults only offered assistance and encouragement to the children as we would fill the dark sky with a blinding light.

I don't think I will ever forget the impact those sparklers had on me. I had been given the gift of another year of life from my Father. I never knew what the year would hold for me. As a child, that uncertainty, that darkness, was unsettling. And yet, year after year, the brilliant light

of the sparkler penetrated the darkness, and for me, charted a course of step by step faith. If such an ordinary stick could invade the cold darkness with brilliance, then my small life could be safely entrusted to the Father's hand and will . . . and could, maybe even be used for His glory!

Perhaps you have found spiritual "sparklers" that testify God's grace in your life. Celebrate "light penetrating darkness" with your own lighting ceremony in this first day and month of the new year and renew the commitment of your heart to be used for the glory of God. May He grant each of us a blessed and brilliant New Year!

Read: Psalm 27:1; 112:4; and Isaiah 42:16





Day 11

Day 11 – Still Making Room

–Pator Adam Jones

Welcome to Day 11! You are at the halfway point of this 21-day devotional. Have you felt yourself growing? Do you feel like you have made room for God in you life?

Over the last few days, we have taken long, hard looks at the parts of us which keep us from returning fully to Jesus. We can declare our desire to yield fully to Him, but we must remove barriers. Pride, selfishness, and independence can create separation and walls

that keep us from fully returning to Him, despite our best efforts. These walls of pride and independence must be replaced with the only thing that can make these walls fall—surrender. It takes humility and yielding your will to His. Scripture refers to this as “rending.”

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing!” (Joel 2:12-14 NIV).

The rending of the clothes in Scripture was an expression of extraordinary uncontrollable emotion, chiefly of grief, terror, or horror. It is not mentioned as part of ordinary mourning throughout Scripture. It was reserved for a time of deep emotional turmoil. Joel does not forbid such extreme outward behavior of repentance, as long as it is accompanied with the inward affections. Because it is what takes place on the inside—the rending of the heart—that leads to true repentance and emptying yourself of sin and love for sin. In other words, your experience with God should “cut to the heart.” It should lead to a deep desire to give up everything else and follow after God with your whole heart!”

Think About It:

- What does this concept of rending mean to you on a personal and spiritual level?
- If Satan were to try to keep a separation between you and Jesus, where would he focus?
- Knowing this is where you think you are most vulnerable, what will you do to protect yourself from this attack or deception?

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for Your many blessings upon my life! More than the blessings, thank You for sending Jesus Christ into this world just for me. Remind me that You love me just the way I am, but that You refuse to leave me where I am. Amen!

Day 12 - Destine to Fly

—*Connie Disbro*

I work in a building about 300 feet long. About halfway down the parking lot every year we have a bird nest under the awning at the shipping dock. Each spring a Mama bird comes to build and reinforce her little home, making it safe and protected from the winds and rains.

One day I noticed two baby birds had left the nest, had made it to the end of the dock ramp and were on ground (a significant drop). They were just hopping around and didn't look like they even had their full feather coat yet.

I knew I probably should leave them alone, but I did not see Mama bird around, so throughout the day I would go out to "check" on them. They would wander a little



bit and then come back to that corner at the end of the ramp. Late afternoon I didn't see them and worried something had happened to them. They were no longer in a warm nest up high, safe, and protected from cars, people, rain, or other animals looking for a little treat.

I left work about 8 o'clock. It was still daylight so I checked one more time. One of them was in the corner sitting on a piece of piping at the drainage. The other had traveled about 40-50 feet alongside the building. Both would hop, spread their little wings and get a little higher...a little farther. I pulled my car up so I could sit and observe them.

Big Boy (the one that was 40 feet away) would spread his wings and try so hard to get up on a flight of stairs at another dock. Little Sister (the other one) seemed content to sit on her perch and watch.

At the end of the building is another loading dock with railings about 4 feet and 6 feet up on a three-step access. Big Boy would fly to the top of the first step. Jump off and try it again. After several attempts he finally flew from the ground to the top step. From there he would try to fly to the railing . . . fall back . . . try again . . . fall back and try again. When he did make it to the lower railing he sat there for a few seconds, hopped off back to the ground and began his flight training again—this time to reach the top railing. Over and over he would spread those little wings, take flight . . . and miss . . . until FINALLY he made it! He was at the highest point! I don't know if he was excited, but I cheered him on!

Now for Little Sister. Well, she would hop from the ground to the pipe and back again. Finally, in a series of hopping and "flying" she made it to the other end of the building where Big Boy was! She seemed content, or maybe just worn out, to stay at the bottom step, while Big Boy hopped around on that top railing as if to say "YOU can do it too, Sis, I did! Just keep trying and don't give up." I thought Little Sister would be OK with the

encouragement of Big Boy and with her own determination to do what she was destined to do—FLY!—so I went home.

I thought about Big Boy and Little Sister. All those weeks in that little nest. Mama protecting and feeding them. I wondered if Mama kicked them out of the security of that nest, or if they just knew it was their time. Either way, it seemed they were on their own now . . . Mama not there. I wondered if they had observed her coming and going . . . taking note of how awesome it would be some day to spread their own wings and fly. I wondered if they were frightened when they took that first jump (or push) from the nest, knowing they would not be back.

I went home that night thinking just how wonderful all creation is and how God really does take care of His own. I thought about how amazing those little creatures were—designed so perfectly they knew what was required of them to reach their destiny. They just knew they had to take that first plunge.

How frightening it is for us sometimes to realize that we too are destined to fly! Maybe not with wings of feathers, but with wings of the Holy Spirit. It isn't always easy to trust that when we step out of that comfort zone, God will be there just as He always has been. Sometimes, we do a little hopping around until we learn that God has a perfect plan for us. If we just spread those wings, He has already created us to FLY.

The next morning I looked for Big Boy and Little Sister. They were no longer on the ground. They were no longer on the 3-step landing. They were no longer on the highest railing. **NO . . .** they were perched on top of the awning at the end of the building . . . singing their triumphant song! They were doing what they were destined to do—fly and sing praises to the One who protects them, provides for them, teaches them



how to rise above and soar, love and nurture them. Yes, they were doing what they were created to do—soar and sing praises to their Creator!

If God the Creator loves and cares for the birds, He surely loves and cares for me! He will attend to my needs too each time I learn to fly.

“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26 ESV).

Just as the birds of the air fulfill the plan of the Creator for them . . . I may have to start over, or hop around a bit, or start at the bottom railing more than once . . . but all the time knowing I can trust Him for His plan is perfect for me too.

Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (NIV).

And, thus I can sing! Psalm 146:2 says, “I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live” (NIV).



Day 13 - The Miracle of the Water Heater

—David Riggs, Chaplain
Legacy Senior Living



Some of life's best lessons come from the most mundane moments. I like to shave in the morning in our laundry room. It has a nice big sink and a good storage cabinet above the sink where I keep my shaving supplies. The water heater is near the sink, so the water gets hot quickly. While going through my morning shaving routine, I looked over at the water heater and asked: "How old are you?" It was a rhetorical question. Now the miracle was not that the water heater answered my question. If it had, then I would have an amazing tale to tell. That only happens in animated films. I started calculating the heater's age. I personally brought this device to life 22 years ago. The average lifespan of an electric water heater is 10 to 12 years, but mine is double that average. Now here is where the mundane became the miraculous! God spoke! Unlike the water heater, He speaks! He spoke to me through His Word—the Bible. I remembered a story in the Old Testament about the children of Israel and their 40-year trek in the desert



of Sinai. It can be found in Deuteronomy 29:5. "For forty years I led you through the wilderness, yet your clothes and sandals did not wear out" (NLT). In another place (Nehemiah 9:21), it says that "their feet did not swell." Talk about a miracle...no swollen feet!

With inflation climbing to almost double digits, gas prices reaching record levels, retirement funds and savings shrinking quickly, God reminded me that He is my source! I'm driving a 10-year-old car that runs great. My tires are lasting longer than normal. I have enough shoes to last a lifetime, I really do like shoes! And the water heater is the greatest miracle of all! It has survived 6 grandchildren's frequent visits and long stays with long hot showers over the last 22 years. It continues to amaze

me with its lifespan. While miracles come in various forms, don't overlook the mundane ones that are right under your nose. Make room in your heart this year for the voice of God. Spectacular miracles still happen, but don't overlook the simple ones that are there if you are looking and listening.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care . . . so don't be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29, 31 NIV).

Day 14 - Me And The Tree

—*Connie Disbrow*

I stood in awe of Tree and said to her, “Look at you standing there so majestic still clothed in all your leaves. Many of them haven't even changed colors yet. Look around and see the other trees have shed their leaves and are preparing for winter.”

It was a beautiful fall day; the sun was shining. Tree responded with a gentle whisper as the breeze softly floated through her branches, “I know, but I love my leaves and they look so good on me.”

“But Tree, don't you know shedding your leaves is a part of the circle of life for you. Your Creator designed you to let them go to conserve water and energy for your next season.”

Tree simply nodded her branches and said, “Do I have to? I love how they look on me and maybe they will give me warmth in the winter days ahead.”



“Oh, but Tree, they will sap your energy and the substance you'll need to get you through the winter days ahead. This season is for you to rest, restore, and prepare for a new wardrobe coming in the spring. You need to draw in the nutrients from the leaves now, then let them go, so you will have prepared yourself for winter.”

She just looked at me quietly allowing the breeze to blow through her branches still holding on to her leaves. “I really do not want to let them go. I am old and I may not remember what I looked like before they were gone. What if they do not come back?”

I reassured her she was designed by her Creator to fulfil a purpose and she should not question His design or His purpose.

During the night I woke to a loud crash on my roof top. Stepping outside in the morning light, I found that in letting go of her coveted leaves Tree lost more than either of us expected. A huge portion of herself succumbed to the winds, split away from her trunk, and let go from her forever. I am sad and I know she must be too.

“I am sorry, Tree. I did not understand how difficult it has been for you to hang on to all that you were. You were only required to release your leaves. I did not know there were other things going on inside you.” I did my best to comfort Tree, realizing perhaps her Creator knew she could not stand the coming winter season and allowed her to release that which no longer supplied the nutrients necessary for the next phase of her life.

I am sad for her. I am, however, glad that only a portion of her is lost and that my house was able to withstand the impact of her loss. She is still beautiful. She is still a creation of the Master creator. She still has purpose, and perhaps letting go has saved her life for another season.

In order to move forward to the next season or the abundant life God has called us to live, there must be a process of letting go. We each have our own personal journey to discover the things in our lives, our past, our struggles that need to be released so we can move forward in following God's perfect plan.

Philippians 3:13-14 says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (KJV).

Day 15 – Rise Up— Making Room

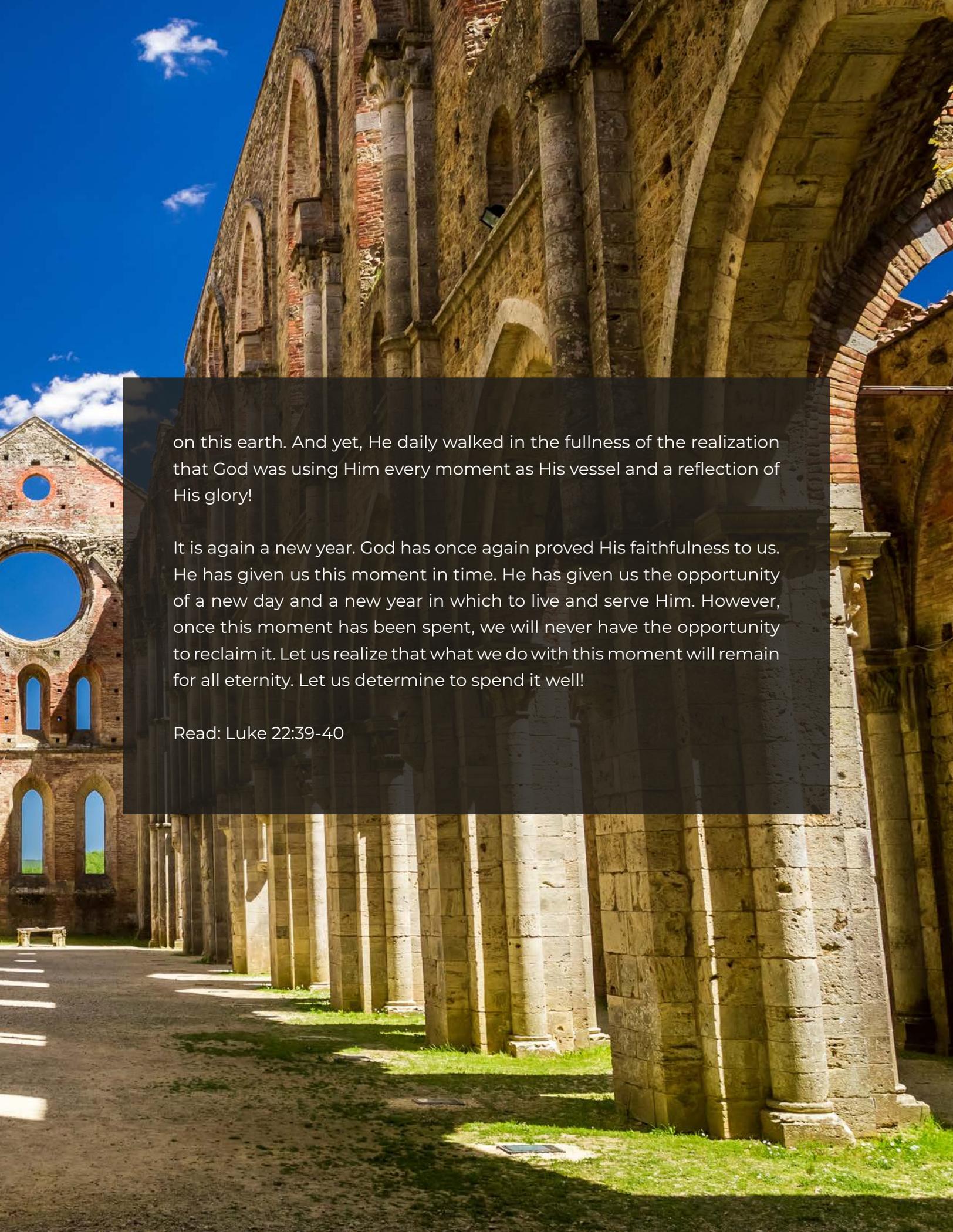
—Catherine Payne, D.Min.

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35 KJV).

Jesus surely is the example that we must follow in overcoming busyness. As we read the record of His life, we discover the complications of His scheduling. He dealt with travel plans, mentoring, and supporting 12 full time ministers and many other part-time ministers. He was constantly involved in the demands for His time and energy as a teacher, healer, deliverer, and nationwide evangelist. He was sought after as a guest to parties and festivities. Crowds pushed in just to touch Him or get a glimpse of Him. And yet, in all of this busyness, one of the most significant disciplines we discover in Him was His faithfulness to make room to spend time in prayer and fellowship in the presence of God. Repeatedly, we find Christ separating Himself from the crowd and the busyness of schedule to dwell in, and discover anew, the awesomeness of His Father.

Christ may have made some resolutions. The Scriptures teach us that He recognized and participated in the activities of holidays. The Word bears out that He always kept in mind the plans of His future purpose





on this earth. And yet, He daily walked in the fullness of the realization that God was using Him every moment as His vessel and a reflection of His glory!

It is again a new year. God has once again proved His faithfulness to us. He has given us this moment in time. He has given us the opportunity of a new day and a new year in which to live and serve Him. However, once this moment has been spent, we will never have the opportunity to reclaim it. Let us realize that what we do with this moment will remain for all eternity. Let us determine to spend it well!

Read: Luke 22:39-40

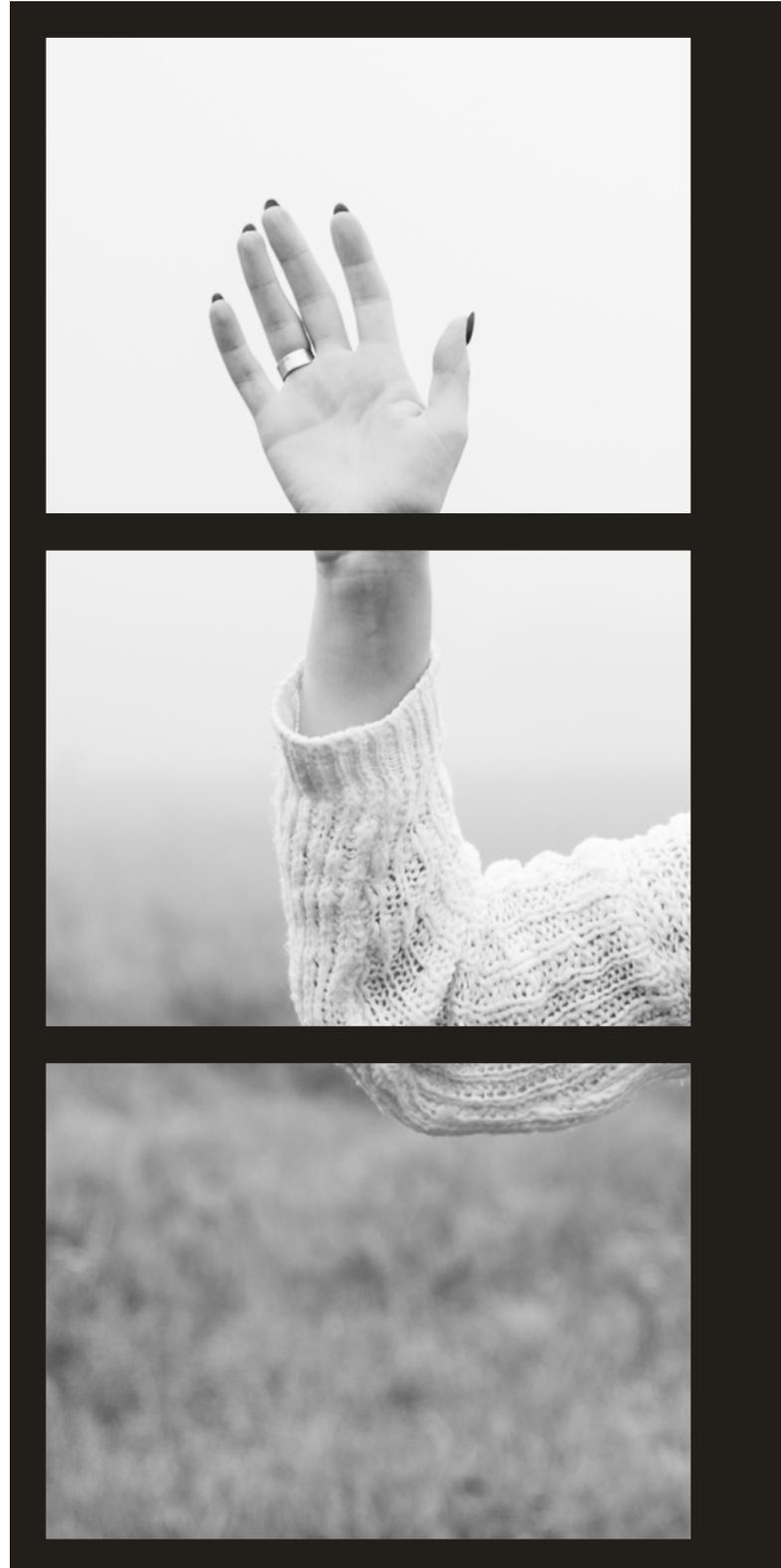
Day 16 – Exchanging Anxiety for Peace

—Brian T. Sutton, D.Min.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
—Philippians 4:6-7 NIV

The apostle Paul’s incredible encouragement to the Philippians, to pray in every situation, is an invitation for all of us. Recognizing we are prone to be anxious, he admonishes us to present our requests to Jesus, so we may receive his peace. When we come to Jesus in prayer, we have an opportunity to empty ourselves of anxiety, fear, doubt, or worry. We don’t pour these anxieties into a hole and bury them. We surrender them to Christ. When we surrender them to Jesus, he transforms our anxiety into peace, displacing our fear and empowering us with faith.

Anxiety works against faith and often derails God’s work through us. Each time God offers an opportunity to walk in faith, the enemy of our soul offers all the reasons why we





should not. The choice is then ours to trust God or respond to fear. Our proximity to a problem often leads us to overestimate its' magnitude, while underestimating the power of God. Anxiety can happen when we view our circumstances without looking through the lens of faith. Faith rises in us when we commune with our Heavenly Father in prayer.

Though anxiety has always been with us, it may be more prevalent now than ever. Our thoughts can drive anxiety, which can bring on attacks of panic and fear. However, when we enter prayer as conversation and communion with God, his presence provides assurance, and we can exchange anxiety for faith.

Jesus invites us to abide with him. He is calling even now. His arms are stretched to us. Receive his peace today

PRAYER:

Father, in the name of Jesus, we surrender our fear and anxiety to you, in exchange for your peace. We ask for spiritual eyes to see your invitation to commune with you. May your Holy Spirit abide with us as we walk in faith.

Day 17 - The Old Test Tree

—*Rev. Carl Corser*

How is it going friends? Is life treating you well?

If someone were to ask you, "How are you doing," what would be your response? I'm fine? I'm doing great? Not so good?

Living Past Sunday is not an easy task. Our lives are tested in so many different ways that we never know what to expect from week to week. Some weeks will be filled with tests and trials that become quite difficult while other weeks will be filled with joyous living.

How are our lives affected by the difficult times? In what ways do these effects show in our lives? How deep are the scars from life's difficulties? How deep are the injuries from the pain and suffering that has occurred in our lives?

I saw a tree that has endured many weeks of weather. It was bent sideways and curled around something awful. It is clear that this tree has endured tough circumstances in its life and now has big scars to bear. Some weeks were beautiful sunshine while

others were filled with drastic life altering results. Still, it is growing and clapping its hands, making noise unto the Lord as the winds of life blow through its leaves.

God created this ole tree and has kept it through all of the weather conditions it has had to endure. It's alive and changing with the seasons as it was created to grow.

So, it is true with our lives. We may have many scars from our life's difficulties and mistakes that affect us the rest of our lives, but we are still walking upon this beautiful earth and growing. God is still God and has not, isn't, and will not ever fail us. He is our Great Shepherd. He is Jehovah-Jirah, our everlasting provider.

No matter how crippled we may become in our lives, we still are his creation and have his full commitment for ample provision for every need we have as we Live Past Sunday. He will never forsake us.

May the Lord bless and keep you. May his face shine upon you as you look towards him for strength. May you Live Past Sunday every week with the confidence that God will take care of you.



Day 18 - When Life is Hard

—David Riggs, Chaplain
Legacy Senior Living

In one of the Peanuts comic strips, Charlie Brown is trying to help Lucy cope with one of life's many problems. Charlie Brown says, "life has its ups and downs." Lucy's reply is classic, "I don't want ups and downs, Charlie Brown. I want ups, ups, and more ups." Don't we all!

What we do with the hard things in life will determine the quality of our lives. While reading Genesis, I saw how Abraham built many altars in his lifetime. Most of those altars were built with stones, which to me became symbolic of the hard things that we go through in life. Death, divorce, financial setbacks, betrayal by a close friend, and the list could go on and on. These things are like stones dropped into our lives. What we do with these stones is important. When observing how we handle these stones, one of three things will happen.

1. These stones of life will be collected and stored in a box of resentment and anger. They will be pulled out periodically, put on display so everyone around will know how hard life has been.

Usually these words will follow, "you don't know what I've been through." Holding on to them will guarantee nothing but misery!

2. These stones, or hard things, will often be used as weapons to be hurled at people around us. We will throw them randomly hoping to do damage to those who have damaged us. But in the process, we unfortunately hit innocent people who happen to be near us. And those people that we desperately need to help us on our journey, will stop coming around when stones start flying.

3. These hard stones of life will be laid down, and an altar will be erected. This altar of surrender and remembrance will mark the spot where we gave it all to Jesus. After all, He is an expert at building altars out of hard things.

So, what will you do with all those stones that have dropped unexpectedly into your life? The choice is yours. But take it from someone who has used all three of the above stone collection methods. Number three has worked best for me!

"There he (Abraham's grandson Jacob) built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother" (Genesis 35:7).

Day 19 – Follow Me

—*Dr. William Lamb*

I love to go to the beach although I do not get to go very often. The normal activities like sun tanning, swimming against the current, playing volleyball or frisbee, building sandcastles; although those seem fun for most, these are not what woos me to the surf's edge. On the other hand, fishing is great but still a rarity when I make it to the coast. So, you might be asking why do you like the beach, William? I'll tell you.

Aside from capturing serene photos of sunrises and sunsets, breathing the salty air and listening to crashing of the waves, my favored experiences at the beach are running along the coast either wearing shoes or barefooted. I have run beaches in Honduras, Mexico, Spain, Hawaii, Jamaica, Bahamas, and on the east and west coasts of the United States. In all these places there is one common truth. The footprints you make, in the sand, will fade away at the changing of the tide.

On eleven occasions¹, in the Gospels², Jesus uses the words “follow me” to invite his disciples to travel along with him. In each of these encounters, the invitation provides few details of what is ahead for those who follow. It is simply an invitation to leave

what you are currently doing and step into the unknown. Through the volumes of history, we now see that those who followed the Christ were met with adversity and accusation. They were also blessed with provision and promise. Provision for the journey and promise for eternal life.

In this world, culture is like the waves rolling across the footprints in the sand, along the coastlines of life. What one person sets in order might be uprooted by another or what one person says might be dissolved when culture's tide changes. So next time you see a footprint in the sand, know that it will soon fade away.

However, following the Christ can be a surety in an ever-changing tide and requires four steps of faith. First, place your trust in what you know but can't see. Second, trek into the unknown with confidence. Third, build your hope on the rock and not on the sand.³ Fourth, be stronger than the tides of culture.

As you journey through these weeks of consecration and devotion, do so with confidence in the Creator. He remains faithful, always.

¹ This number changes depending on the version you read.

² Matthew 4:19, 16:24, 19:28; Mark 1:17, 10:21; Luke 5:27, 18:22; John 1:38, 1:43, 8:12, 21:19.

³ Matthew 7:24-26



Day 20 - Love God Love Others

—Dr. Randy Howard

John Wesley had this for his life's motto. That is pretty significant because the idea comes straight from Jesus and His words are in red in our Bibles. Matthew 22:34-40 says,

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus

replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV).

All of us at times feel like Christianity can be difficult to live out. And if we Christians feel this way just imagine how

WHICH IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT?

people in the world beyond Christianity may think. To some of them, Christianity is confusing, to others it is difficult, to many it seems archaic, to others it seems old fashioned, and to many it is rigid, even harsh.

We know many of these feelings come from Christianity when it has been misapplied and lived out badly. But in spite of all that, John Wesley is onto something that can help us all demonstrate the most beautiful and attractive quality of Christian faith—love. Wesley takes us to the core of this whole idea of faith and life in Jesus by simplifying down to four words what Christian history has come to call Jesus' Greatest Commandment.

In a nut shell, it is "Love God, Love Others!" I know many even in the ranks of the Christians are going to say it cannot be

that simple! Some are going to say what about this favorite "pet scripture," or that favorite "pet doctrine?" But Wesley did not make this up. These are the recorded words of Jesus. Wesley simply boiled them down into a neat package we could carry around every day—"Love God, Love Others."

What would happen if the Christian world—all in unison—began to live this out consistently before our confused world every day? We might be amazed as the world stops thinking Christians are the "haters, the critics, or the finger-pointing accusers." And we might be even more amazed as our own lives begin to be filled with so much more love, then joy, then peace, and followed by contentment, purpose, assurance, and more.

Could we give this motto a try today?

What would happen if the Christian world—all in unison—began to live this out . . . ?



Day 21 – God’s Faithfulness

—*Catherine Payne, D.Min.*

It is fairly easy to identify the New Year. We envision an old, bent man carrying a sickle walking from sight and a small round baby suddenly appearing. We join others in resolving to do things differently than we did last year, the television is swamped with weight loss and self help commercials, loan companies offer relief from holiday spending, and most people begin dreaming up plans for some great accomplishment by year’s end.

I, too, find myself caught up in the planning of “someday accomplishments” and often miss the joy and surprise of just everyday living. Everyday living includes opportunities to watch the unfolding of a spectacular sunrise, to catch a leaf sailing in the wind, to hear first-hand the song of a nightingale, and to enjoy the delight of a child’s laughter. In His sovereignty, God provides moments of intense spiritual awakenings as we discover more of His awesomeness.

One conflict with God’s delightful design is the busyness that we crowd into our day. We become so involved in daily routine and scheduling that we miss the joy of God’s fellowship. We fail to realize that God chooses to use our vessels as His instruments and for an expression of His glory. God’s Word supports the daily exercise of God’s faithfulness in our everyday lives.

Last year is now history. Time lost to the busyness of the day may never be reclaimed. However, we can learn from the mistakes of yesterday. As we begin the new year, let us determine to make room, to be more sensitive to the call of God as He calls us into times of intimacy and fellowship in His presence.

Read: Lamentations 3:21-23



2 KINGS 7:51

When all of the work which king Solomon did on the house of Yahweh was completed, Solomon brought out the holy objects of his father David, the silver and the gold and the vessels, which he put in the treasury **ROOMS** of the house of Yahweh.



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