

A CALL TO



CONSECRATION

D E V O T I O N A L



“We will **GROW**
and help
people **GROW**
to become
more like Christ
Jesus.”

—Pastor Adam Jones

Day 1

A CALL TO CONSECRATION

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 devotion seems tedious, time consuming, or inconvenient. This devotion is a call to consecration—a journey toward transformation. As we embark on this mission to go above and beyond 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 29:12-14a 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).

One of Peerless Road Church’s core values is to GROW. Every person who desires to partner with PRC through membership intentionally learns what makes Peerless Road Church a dynamic church through a class titled, “Becoming Peerless!” In this class, there is a specific section where we identify our mission to “grow.” We identify that “We will GROW and help people GROW to become more like Christ Jesus.” 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, His world, His vision, His mission, His Son—Jesus—His Spirit, and so much more with you. 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—it is just prayer or communicating 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!

PRAYER:

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.

—Pastor Adam Jones

Day 2

CHANGE

Change comes into our lives as often as waves crash onto a shoreline. There was a time in our history where it seemed like the culture around us would change over several years, if not decades, but that is not the case anymore. Like the ocean waves, change is consistently overwhelming us, and is constantly coming toward our direction. The apostle Paul felt this pressure as well, and undoubtedly he knew that the church in Rome was facing some of the same challenges that we are facing today when he wrote his letter to the Romans. In Romans 12, he urges them not to conform to the pattern of the world that was speedily changing around them, but rather be transformed by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform their minds by renewal daily.

The apostle Paul starts out with a powerful reminder of what we need God to do in our lives, but in verse 3, he does not allow the reader to simply skip over the first two sentences he has just penned. *“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned”* (Romans 12:3 ESV). As we go through this devotional, and period of consecration, it is

my hope that we will take Paul's advice and take a sober self-assessment of ourselves. A sober self-assessment will require us to willingly and knowingly ask God to show us the innermost parts of our hearts and thoughts without prejudice on our part. King David took this to heart many years before when he wrote to his choirmaster in Psalm 139:23-24: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (KJV).

As we continue reading Romans 12:3, we find great hope packed in this verse for every Christian, regardless of how deep or shallow he or she feels that their relationship is with God. He urges us to examine ourselves "according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" each person. We are able to allow God to show us our heart through the level of understanding that we individually possess. No matter where we are on this journey of faith, the Holy Spirit is able to identify and then inspire us to go deeper in our pursuit to become an imitator of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER:

Dear God, You know me! You created me! You see me! Will You reveal my heart to me? I desperately want to be an imitator of who You are, please transform me!

—Pastor Adam Jones

Day 3

MORE OF HIM, LESS OF ME

"He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30 NIV).

John the Baptist was aware of the human condition. He understood that from birth we travel this earth collecting experiences that continuously contribute to the collection of who we are. Not who we are as in what we do but that deepest-level identity created by the accumulations of what life has offered, thrown at us, and what we have chosen. We

desperately need an emptying, but not merely to create void from the world, but rather to create space for the true identity we are each created to embody—the identity of Jesus Christ. We were created to receive and to be filled by the presence of God.

Without invitation, the world is imposing and crowding us continuously with the noises of life's circumstances. Each day we collect and fill our minds and hearts with what we place before us. When informed by the world, we fill up quickly but superficially. Instead, we need a supernatural filling, but first we need to make space, since we cannot shove God into our overcrowded minds and hearts.

Making ourselves less does not make God greater. He cannot be greater than He already is. He is the completeness of greatness. When John said, "He must become greater," he understood that as long as our own desires, opinions, and understanding are what fills us then we have made ourselves great in our lives, instead of God. Making ourselves less means that we move out that which competes for the throne of our lives, making space that only God can rightly and effectively fill.

As we in faith make space, God will faithfully fill every portion we offer. As He increasingly does so, that world-identity that we have collected along the way will be replaced with the perfect and whole identity for which we were created. This is becoming like Christ: moving toward His greatness in us by emptying ourselves of ourselves and being filled by His identity instead of our own. In this, we will become exactly who we were created to be.

PRAYER:

"Lord, help me! By the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen and empower me to make room for You in my entire being so You will become greater, and I will become less. Empower my life to be a faithful testament to who You are and Your greatness in a world that desperately needs You. All for Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen."

—Alicia Klepper

Day 4

MAKING SPACE

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Revelation 3:20 NIV).

“Here I am!” When we choose to make space for God, we will not need to wait long for Him to indwell our lives. We do this by opening the door at which He is already knocking. He does not come as a guest seeking how you may provide for Him; rather, He sits at the table of the deepest parts of who we are and welcomes us into the life that He has provided through Jesus.

How do we make space for Him? We must understand that this is a response not an endeavour. Just as our love for Him is only in response to His first loving us (1 John 4:19), our opening the door is in response to His knocking—that merciful pursuit of a jealous God. We make space by responding in faith to the nudges that move us to speak in kindness, forgive offenses, prefer others, quiet ourselves, pray, study His Word, surrender, welcome discipline, and repent, along with many other pulls at the heart that call us to become less so that He may become great in us.

As we surrender to Him the real estate of our lives that we have grown so accustomed to ruling, He will, through the power of His Spirit, equip us to evict habits, thought patterns, behaviors, attitudes, addictions, and tendencies that have kept us busily attempting to be king over ourselves. These are the parts of us that the world has formed, and the new Tenant, once invited in, sits at the table and transforms the atmosphere. In other words, when God moves in, the world cannot help but move out. That is the merciful nature of His all-consuming presence; He will not share space. And if we really knew best, we would not want Him to.

PRAYER:

“Lord, I thank You that the space You inhabit is holy. Thank

You for inviting me to be that place in which You dwell. Thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, who through His death and resurrection makes it possible for me to sit at the table of Your presence, assured of Your glad welcome! Help me, by Your Holy Spirit, to respond to Your drawing that I may become the likeness of Christ. Lord, make me less, so that You may be everything to, in, and through me. Amen."

—Alicia Klepper

Day 5

JESUS – OUR MODEL OF PRAYER

Martin Luther is credited with having said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." Charles Spurgeon stated, "True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance—it is far deeper than that—it is a spiritual transaction with the Creator of heaven and earth."

Jesus, our dear Lord, demonstrated fervent prayer before His disciples, which can be found in numerous incidences across the Gospels. He modeled the importance of private prayer more so than public prayer, not to say, however, He did not pray publicly. He even gave the spiritual injunction to go to our private prayer closet to commune with the Father and avoid being heard or observed by men when we pray (see Matthew 6:6).

It is noteworthy that most of Jesus' public ministry of deliverance and healing followed most often after He had *"slipped away to pray"* (Luke 5:16). When Jesus' disciples observed the tremendous successes of the Lord's ministry, one disciple asked Jesus to "teach us to pray." Andrew Murray wrote in his book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, "The disciples had learned to understand something of the connection between Christ's wondrous life in public and His secret life of prayer." Secret, private praying is germane to how



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—Martin Luther

Jesus most often modeled prayer. He teaches us even now to follow His example.

—Dr. Michael Plumley



Day 6

PRAYER – A CONVERSATION WITH GOD

It is best to understand that prayer has little to do with posture or length but more so with attitude. In sincerity, we must grasp that prayer, being a conversation with God, is framed by a holy reverence for who God is. Remember, God is entirely holy, and in His eternal presence, the atmosphere is constantly permeated by the angelic host repeating, *“Holy, holy, holy.”*

Therefore, Jesus, when asked by the disciples to teach them to pray, began by recognizing the holy estate of His Father. He started by saying, “Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” (Matthew 6:9-10 KJV).

So then, having an attitude of reverence and respect for the holiness of God, as well as recognition of His sovereign authority and will, we can do as Hebrews 4:16 encourages us: “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (NIV).

God is holy and sovereign, but never aloof. Conversation

with Him during our prayer time should be binary, that is, both speaking and listening on our part. God does respond during our private, secluded time and place with Him. "How does He respond?" you ask. He speaks His Word quietly into our hearts, minds, and spirits (a still small voice). He speaks into our thought patterns. He speaks by bringing to memory past experiences we have had with His presence. He invokes recall of sermons we have heard or devotions we have experienced. He inspires us with memories of interactions we have had with godly family and friends. These are just a few engaging, holy, and blessed opportunities God provides for our encouragement, strength, faith-building, and confidence.

Finally, author and minister Max Lucado says, "Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."

Praying, having conversation with the Father is a wonderful privilege. Pray on and pray BIG!

PRAYER:

"Thank You, sovereign Lord, that you give us opportunity to converse with You in prayer. Thank You that you hear, understand, and answer our prayers."

—Dr. Michael Plumley





"It has seemed good
to me to show the
signs and wonders
that the Most High
God has done for
me"

Daniel (4:2 ESV)

Day 7

CALLED TO REMEMBER

Humans tend to forget. Marketing experts know this, so they repeat a message many times to enable the target audience to remember it. That is the reason we need to hear only a note or two to start singing an advertising jingle. Those ad wizards! They spend millions of dollars to put them on blast until they become part of our thinking.

The fact is most people have to hear something several times to remember it. God knows this. He made us, after all. He will keep repeating His promises until we “get it.” Are you listening? He repeats His promises in His Word. He has gifted them to us, it says in 2 Peter 1:4, He has given us these *“great and precious promises”* (NKJV). And they are still speaking.

God repeats His promises in sermons. He has chosen preaching—even though it seems foolish (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21) to so many people—to repeat His promises and actually bring the power of God to us!

God repeats His promises in songs. Did you know it is a different part of your brain that processes music than the part that processes speech or reading? God is so smart! In His love, He is using every way our brains receive information to repeat His promises.

And the most intimate way God repeats His promises is through godly friends who share with us how God’s promises have been true in their lives. Daniel said, *“It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me”* (4:2 ESV). First Chronicles 16:8 instructs us to “Give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!” (ESV).

God repeats His promises. Let's listen and make the effort to remember. And then, let's make sure we repeat them to others.

—Rev. Marsha Robinson

Day 8

INTIMIDATION

Intimidation? What is it? How prevalent is it in our world today? How is it affecting our lives? Where is it manifesting itself in society today? Our government? The workplace? In people's driving habits on our highways and streets? Our communities? Our churches? In our society within our borders? Is there anywhere we can look and not be faced with intimidation by something or someone?

How important is this? How disabling can intimidation cause me to become? Does this disturb me? Does this cause me to take inventory of who I am and what I'm made of? What is Satan's reaction to how intimidation is affecting me? How is he weaponizing this against me? Am I living in defeat or victory as intimidation is all around me? Who has the final word concerning my situation? Don't I have that final word?

I either choose defeat or victory. I choose to place my trust, faith, and belief in God's Word and not listen to Satan's rumblings. I choose to live according to God's Word which is loaded with authority to be able to defeat Satan and his intimidation attempts.

The most important thing to remember is that I know who and whose I am. I am His, and He is mine. God will NOT allow anything to happen to me without His knowledge first. If it is well with my soul, there is nothing to fear. Nothing shall harm me without God's knowledge of it happening. Then he turns it into good for my good. God is my great Shepherd, deliverer, breath, keeper, power, wisdom, authority, and ability.

What more do I need? Isn't the choice mine? Isn't the choice yours?

Remember this: *"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from Me, says the Lord"* (Isaiah 54:17 MEV).

Maybe we should evaluate our living as we live past Sunday this week as to how much intimidation is affecting our lives? God's love is much greater than any of our fears. Blessings!

—Rev. Carl Corser



Day 9

HAVE IT ALL, LORD

When I think of consecration, my mind is drawn to unfathomable holiness. Humankind sees sin and quickly claims the label of “unholy people,” yet Christ looks through eyes of compassion to see dignity and purpose. We are completely known and loved by a God who stands and knocks at the doors of our broken hearts, longing to be invited in. But once our humble invitation is initiated, God wants more than the bite-size pieces of our life that we give Him; He wants our whole being. The wholeness we seek comes from a heart and life that are fully and vulnerably surrendered to Christ.

The Message translation beautifully illustrates a passage in Romans 12:1-2 titled, “Place Your Life Before God.” *So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you. Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.*

Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, developing well-formed maturity in you.

We are asked to devote our flawed and ordinary lives and actions to a sacred and holy God, consecrating ourselves to a divine will and purpose. Bethel Music writes a chorus that reads “You can have it all, Lord, every part of my world.” These lyrics embody our heart’s call to consecration. Invite Christ into your heart, surrender your life to Him, and He will use you to do exceedingly and abundantly more.

PRAYER:

Lord, I thank You for Your eyes of love and mercy that pursue

our underserving hearts. God, would You cover us with Your strength, courage, and peace as we long to experience Your presence in a new and fresh way. Help us, O Lord, to walk in obedience and to submit every part of our lives to Your will and purpose. We trust and believe that Your way is higher, and Your plans are better. Sovereign God, have Your way in our lives. You can have it all, Lord.

—Bailey Rogers

Day 10

THOUGHTS FROM AN AGING MASTERPIECE

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

And just like that...it was over! After 43 years of pastoring churches in 4 different states and 4 additional years of traveling ministry as an evangelist, I was suddenly retired. On that day in January of 2015 a floodgate of emotions and thoughts filled my mind.

Some people told me it was too early, and others even condemned me for what they thought was a breach of my ministerial calling. “You can’t retire from God’s calling on your life,” they said, “you are supposed to die with your hands on the plow.” The critics loved quoting that Luke 9:62 passage to me. But as Barb and I stood looking out the door of the church on that last Sunday, we knew in our hearts that we were doing what God was telling us to do. The future was unknown and not without some anxiety, but we listened and obeyed. And now after 7 years,

God has proven faithful in these aging years of our lives. To those who thought I was just quitting and getting ready to spend the rest of life golfing or fishing, I can count on one hand the number of times I have done either of those things.

I would love to do both of those things. However, I am not very good at golfing or fishing. I do not have the patience. But God has opened doors of opportunity for me to express my calling and giftedness in many new and very exciting ways. I knew He would, despite what the critics said.

The lessons that I have learned in these last few years have taught me that I am, "God's masterpiece." His work of art! He will continue to open doors of opportunity for me to express His calling on my life. My experience as one of the Chaplains at Legacy Village of Cleveland TN. has proven God's faithfulness to me. Aging has never stopped God from using anyone for His purpose. Just ask Abraham, the father of our faith. Sometimes God does his best work with older folk!

—Bishop David Riggs

Day 11

*RENDING

Welcome to Day 11, the official halfway point of this 21-day devotional. Have you felt yourself growing? Have you felt yourself being stretched by God's love and grace? 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. The 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).



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independence must be
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—Pastor Adam Jones

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 behaviour 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!

—Pastor Adam Jones

*Some material taken from Word for You Devotional Series

Day 12

LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS

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 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?

—Dr. Randy Howard



“As we love God by loving those others He has made, they will know and taste His love.”

—Dr. Randy Howard

Day 13

LOVING OTHERS IS LOVING GOD

This little idea comes from a book by Andy Stanley called, *Irresistible*. But actually Andy Stanley did not think this up. The last living Apostle, personally called and trained by Jesus, taught it to all his people in his letter of 1 John. The fourth chapter says it like this:

- *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8 NIV).
- *“Whoever does not love does not know God”* (1 John 4:8 NIV).
- *“Whoever lives in love, lives in God and God in them”* (1 John 4:16 NIV).

Think about this. John was the first writer to define God as love. No other tradition identified their God as love—not the Jews, not the pagans, not the myths, no one. As a matter of fact, those gods were often cruel, selfish, violent, and more.

Read those words above again and let them soak in. It sounds so soothing and even healing—this idea that our God is LOVE! But then John throws us another new idea.

John knew God’s love required a response. And I get frustrated reading 1 John because it is not a vertical response but a horizontal response. Again, John says,

- *“Whoever does not love, does not know God”* (1 John 4:8 NIV).
- *“Whoever lives in love, lives in God and God in them”* (1 John 4:16 NIV).
- *“Whoever says he is in the light but hates his brother is in darkness”* (1 John 2:9 MEV).

The litmus test John uses for living under the canopy of God’s love is how we treat other people. John makes horizontal love a requirement for our vertical love. That is frustrating to me.

I love to think about loving God—“just me and Him.” I love to

worship God—"just me and Him." It is so warm and cuddly. God loves me, and I love Him. I can get lost in this warm cocoon of loving God.

But John knew that this love is for sharing, so God inspired him to make our response commitment vertical. He is actually saying loving others is loving God.

And who are these 'Others?' They are people God has made. They are people God has placed in His image. They all have His breath of life. God loves them so much He sent Jesus to die for them. God yearns for all of them to taste His love for them. And how are they going to experience this?—That's it! As we love God by loving those others He has made, they will know and taste His love.

Let's go out today on a mission to love God! . . . How? By loving others!

—Dr. Randy Howard

Day 14

THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR AGENT OF LOVE

"And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5 NASB).

It may be a surprise to some that the Holy Spirit is God's point man for spreading His love all around.

I know we have enjoyed thinking about the power of the Spirit (see Acts 1:8). We love to talk about the gifts of the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 and 14). We ought to think a lot more about the fruit of the Spirit, because it is mentioned at times. But, let's think about this love function for which the Spirit is the key man.

Perhaps you read the devotions before this one. “Love God, Love Others” that showed us this is the heart and the whole of the Gospel. And “Loving God by Loving Others” showed us how critical the vertical call of this love is. But HOW are we going to do this?

Anyone who has tried to love people knows there are times when that is hard work. I love the missionary who said, “I would be a good missionary if it weren’t for those natives.” All of us ‘natives’ become hard to love so many times. We all have wrinkles in one way or another. It is the Spirit that is commissioned to come along in us and through us to empower love we could never give ourselves.

Can anyone remember moments where you were surrounded, and it seemed like permeated, by the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit? What did you feel after an experience like that?— That’s right! It was the love of God filling you genuinely. But as the Spirit touched you with that love of God, something else would happen.

We used to sing an old Christian song called, “Give Me That Old Time Religion.” The next line says, “Makes me love everybody.” You cannot describe it any better. As the Holy Spirit fills us with the love of God, the next expression is that love flowing out, as it naturally does, with love for everybody!

When I consider this central calling of the church to love, I realize that this love function of the Spirit may be the overlooked most important work of the Spirit, pouring out the love of God over our hearts. Without this, believers and the church could never fulfill their call to love (the Great Commandment) and thereby share this love (the Great Commission). Like Jesus said, “Everything hangs on this!” Can we pray today?

“Spirit of God, please pour the love of God over my heart afresh today.”

—Dr. Randy Howard

Day 15

LOVE IS THE BALANCE

It seems to me that in this time of great uncertainty, evil, and confusion, it might be good to evaluate our Christian walk by reminding ourselves who we are as God's people.

So, what is the secret to living a Christlike life? I believe that question can be answered only by the two greatest commandments: (1) To love God, and (2) To love our fellowman. God is not selective in His love, neither should we be.

We have great freedom in Christ, but we cannot allow that freedom to counter our responsibility to love biblically. In other words, love is always the balance between extremes. Galatians 5:13 says, *"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion of the flesh, but by love serve one another"* (KJ21). *We walk by faith and in the Spirit through love. Love, is, indeed, the greatest virtue God could have given us. "... God is love"* (1 John 4:8).

The law is fulfilled in one word. Please read Galatians 5:14-15. Love as Christ loved. Read 1 John 4:7-21.

PRAYER:

Lord, teach us to show the power of Your love that suffers with us in all things and gives us life in abundance. Let us never forget that Your Word declares: "There is no fear in love" (1 John 4:18). Let Your love be perfected in us we pray. In Your wonderful name. Amen!

—Bishop Vernon Van Deventer



Day 16

KNOWING GOD

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3 NKJV).

When we think of consecration, we think of dedicating ourselves to God. Merriam-Webster’s online definition contains this, “To devote irrevocably to the worship of God.” In order to do this, we must know God. So much of our time is taken up by life, its busyness—work, family, entertainment. Not bad things necessarily, but things, nonetheless, that take us from God. So much so, in fact, that sometimes we resent the hour or two on Sundays dedicated to Him. And yet God longs for us to know Him. This is life eternal; the Scriptures tell us, to know God. And Jesus Christ whom He has sent. How can we do that?

First, by being in His Word. The Bible is the tangible, physical, and real revelation of God. It shows the bigness of His love (as one song puts it—his reckless love of us); it shows

His miracles and power and judgment. Just as you spend time with your spouse or loved one, you need to spend time with God.

Second, you need the infilling of the Holy Spirit. We are born again of His Spirit, but the Book of Acts shows us there is also an infilling or baptism in the Holy Spirit. At one place, Paul asks those in Ephesus, *“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”* (Acts 19:2 KJV). *And the believers there said, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost”* (Acts 19:2 KJV). Paul goes on to explain about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We need His Spirit to know Him and to navigate this world.

Third, spend time in prayer—and not just asking for things, but listening and allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s will to you. He will show you things that need prayer, and He will open His

heart to you. By bowing humbly before Him, we move into a new intimacy with God we may not have had before.

Fourth, dedicating time to worship, praise, and thanking Him for His goodness and for who He is brings us into a place of intimacy with God that only His worshippers know.

If we want to be move forward in our relationship with God, doing these things will bring about dramatic change and a joy we all seek.

—Linda Rodante

Day 17

SACRED SEASONS

Night. It's almost strange that God, who is light (1 John 1:5), created night. On the first day of creation, God separated the light from the darkness, calling the light day and the darkness night. At the end of creating, He saw that everything, even night, was very good.

Why is there night? After all, at night we are more prone to stumble, more likely to get lost, more apt to fear. Trying to navigate at night is hazardous for ship captains, pilots, truck drivers, and ordinary travelers—not only because it is harder to see, but the human body is more likely to be fatigued and have slower reflexes at night.

God created us with circadian rhythms—a sort of 24-hour clock located in the hypothalamus of our brains. Night triggers a chemical response in our bodies that calls us to rest. God created us with the need to stop and recharge, both physically and spiritually.

We have all experienced the radiance of God in different ways. There are times it feels as if we are basking in the glow of God's goodness, the warmth of spiritual sunshine. We rejoice!



Read
God's Word.
Be **filled** with the
Holy Spirit.
Take time in
prayer.

—Linda Rodante

But if the earth turns, as it surely will, and the sun sets—on a relationship, or a job, or good health—remember: God created times and days and seasons. He consecrated each one by calling them very good. There is a purpose for them all.

The dark times in our lives can feel disorienting and cause us to fear. But, take comfort, weary one, your night is sacred to God. Do not try to do everything you were doing in the day. Rest.

And just as God created a lesser light to rule the night, to illuminate the earth by reflecting the sun's light just enough, He has created us to reflect His light, to shine with His truth, for those in the dark. We must remind them the sun is still shining. The morning will break. God created it to be so.

—Rev. Marsha Robinson



Day 18

DOUG AND JEAN: THE POWER OF GIVING

While my wife, Kristi, and I were serving as associate pastors at a church in Georgia, we had a fundraiser for our youth group. A very special couple attended this small church, and we had gotten quite close to them—Doug and Jean. Doug and Jean were looking forward to retirement when Doug was diagnosed with a rare disease that slowly took away his mobility. He was forced to leave his job as a forest ranger and soon began to spend most of his time in a wheelchair. Jean was also forced

to leave her job to care for Doug as his health began to quickly wane.

Soon, Doug and Jean were struggling to pay their bills and simply survive. The church took on some of their much-needed home repairs and began to help them financially in any way possible.

I preached one Sunday morning during our fundraising time. After the service, I noticed a line of people waiting to speak to me. In the back of the line, a couple caught my eye—it was Doug and Jean. Jean was pushing Doug in his wheelchair, and I saw tears in both their eyes. I was anxious to hear what they had to say.

Jean spoke up first and said, “Pastor Darren, we know you’ve been raising funds for the youth group, and we wanted to contribute. It’s not much, but it’s all we could come up with.” As she said this, Doug put both his hands on the arms of the wheelchair and began to push himself up. His arms and legs wobbled as he stood to his feet, using every last ounce of energy he had.

Once he was finally on his feet, he asked me to hold out my hands. When I did, he pulled out a small Ziploc bag full of change and dumped it into my hands. I was speechless at this point. Tears filled all our eyes as I mustered the best “thank you” that I could and helped them out of the sanctuary.

Later that afternoon I counted the change at my desk. It amounted to less than \$2. I began to understand a bit more about the widow’s two mites that day. I had seen something similar firsthand. It did not make much of an impact on our fundraiser, but it made a huge impact on my life.

I do not remember anyone else’s donation during that time, but I will never forget theirs.

PRAYER:

Lord, help me trust You fully in my acts of giving, no matter what they are. Let my faith shine through my obedience and stewardship. In Jesus' name, amen.

Further Reading: Mark 12:41-44

—Rev. Darren Schalk

Day 19

FERVENT PRAYER

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"
(James 5:16b KJV).

Prayer is powerful. James gives an example of prayer that is eye-opening. *"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit"*
(James 5:17-18 NKJV).

How awesome is that? Do we limit ourselves in prayer by praying small? Or thinking that our prayers are ineffectual when the Bible tells us the exact opposite? Look at Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:19. He prays that the Ephesians might "know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that [they] may be filled with all the fullness of God" (NKJV). Again, what an incredible prayer! Filled with all God's fullness!

Jesus challenges us to pray for big things as well as for our everyday needs. He taught the disciples (and us) how to pray: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done...give us this day our daily bread...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us." Both the physical and the spiritual are represented here. But if prayer is to be effective, the Bible teaches us to pray in the name of Jesus (John 14:14), in the will of God (1 John 5:14-15), in faith trusting that what we've prayed for will come to pass (Matthew 21:21-22), and to pray fervently.

Fervently means, “heartfelt, intensely, passionately.”

And James tells us not to pray for things just to fulfill selfish desires (James 4:3).

Elijah was not praying just to greedily get something for himself or to show Ahab the king how great he, Elijah, was. He prayed as God directed, and it came to pass. But this is the thing—Elijah spent time with God, seeking him, praying, being teachable, so that when God told him to do something, Elijah knew His voice and followed His commands. Read Elijah’s story in 1 Kings 18.

In today’s instant society, we sometimes want answers to prayer without delay, at the snap of our fingers, as if the God of the universe was our genie. He’s not. We need to take time to know the One who answers prayer, the Creator, our Savior, and soon coming King. Make a commitment today to seek him, to seek His face, and begin your prayers with “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

—Linda Rodante

Day 20

MOVING FORWARD

When you think of the word, forward, what comes to mind? Do you think of a particular direction of movement, or perhaps the position of a sports player in basketball or soccer? There are many different definitions and contexts in which the word can be used, but in this devotion, we will focus on the direction someone is facing.

As we emerge from this pandemic known as COVID-19, it is my belief that everyone is wanting to move forward toward a brighter day. We have heard words like “new normal” emerge, as well as “essential worker.” None of us ever imagined that these words would become part of our vocabulary, but then none of us ever imagined that we would live to experience a



pandemic either, but here we are. Jeremiah 29 offers us insight into how we can and should respond in moments like this.

The nation of Israel was heading into exile, and everyone wanted to shut down and stop living, but the prophet Jeremiah emerges as God's voice in the middle of the chaos. I see comparable similarities between the 28th and 29th chapters of Jeremiah and the times in which we are living now. For instance, there was a false prophet named Hananiah the son of Azzur who was proclaiming the judgment and exile that the prophet Jeremiah was proclaiming was not true and not going to happen. However, time revealed that Jeremiah was the true prophet because his prophecy came to pass.

In the midst of the times we are in now there have been many "prophesying" about certain events or people that simply have not come true. There seems to be much confusion and uneasiness among the people of God. The answer to the confusion that abounds is how Jeremiah responded with the truth of God's promises. Jeremiah confronted the false teachers with the truth and reminded the people that they were God's children, and He has never forgotten His children.



He would go on to challenge them to live and not die, have hope and not despair. Furthermore, he reminded them that God knew exactly how long this trial would last, and that there was a plan for the pain, and a purpose that came with a promise.

I want to encourage us all to read this account found in Jeremiah 28 and 29 and be reminded that God knows exactly where we are, how long this time will last. If we consecrate ourselves unto Him with our whole heart, we will find Him.

PRAYER:

*Dear God, thank You for reminding me that You always have a plan for my life. Through the seasons of my life, You are always there. No matter if I am going into, going through, or coming out of a situation, **You are always there for my good. Amen.***

—Pastor Adam Jones

Day 21

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

“Come, follow Me” (Luke 18:22 NKJV).

You may have heard the story of the farmer’s chicken who proposed to the pig that they make breakfast for the farmer. The pig cheerfully responded: “I’m in! What will we give him?” The chicken replied, “Eggs and bacon. I’ll supply the eggs; you supply the bacon.”

The pig’s countenance dimmed as he realized the ramifications of this proposal. He sadly replied to the chicken, “For you that’s a contribution; for me it means total sacrifice.” And the pig walked away. This barnyard fable serves as a meaningful introduction for discovering the depths of Jesus Christ’s exhortation to *“Follow Me”* (John 10:27).

First, following Christ isn’t simply about half-measures on your part, but total sacrifice of every part of your being. It’s “putting your skin in the game,” as the expression goes (think of the pig) and having faith God will supply your needs. It’s about giving up the past and giving God your entire life, saying it’s all Yours—every chapter and season of my whole life right now and into the future.

Second, Christianity is responding to the ongoing call to follow Christ and being set apart for discipleship. One must understand that becoming a disciple isn’t an event, but a never-ending lifetime experience. It doesn’t just happen. Over time we are tutored and molded—lesson-by-lesson and person-by-person.

The rich young ruler is an example of someone not wanting to fully commit his all to following Jesus. St. Luke’s Gospel tells the story in Chapter 18: *“So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me. But when he heard this, he became*

very sorrowful, for he was very rich" (vv. 22, 23 NKJV). Total commitment was more than this rich young man wanted to give.

An example of commitment can be found in a woman known as Granny Brand. She truly understood the meaning of commitment. When she was young, she told her mission board she wanted to be a missionary, so they sent her to India. After arriving in India, she met and married her husband, Jesse, another missionary to India. Together, they made a vow to God to reach five mountain ranges with the gospel. When Jesse died from yellow fever, four mountain ranges had not been reached for Christ. Granny saw this as her life's work.

Later, at 68 years old, when she reported to her mission board, they did not want her to return to India because of her age. She pleaded with them for one more term . . . even just one more year. Finally, they reluctantly granted her one more year when she promised them she would retire. At the end of the one year, she retired. However, she did not come back home; instead, she stayed in India and supported herself.

As she travelled from village to village, she rode a hill pony, camped, taught the people about Jesus, and even rescued abandoned children. The work was hard, and her body was becoming very frail as a result of fevers and broken bones, but she refused to give up. She praised God and turned a face of joy and gladness to the world.

At the end of 15 years, she saw her vow completed. She had planted a mission work in each of the five mountain ranges, plus two more. Despite falls, bruises, and even a broken hip, she went back to the mountain ranges—sometimes using bamboo sticks for support. When her son, Dr. Paul Brand, visited her, he found her looking younger than her age. He later wrote, "This is how to grow old. Allow everything else to fall away, until those around you just see love."

Granny Brand continued ministering to the mountain people of India until her final days, which were spent in a facility

where she was treated for torn ligaments. While undergoing treatment, Granny Brand passed from this life to her eternal home at the age of 95. She personified commitment.

Are we fully committed to following Christ? Are we giving our all? Or, are we like the chicken who was willing only to contribute to the cause? It is a matter to be prayerfully considered.

—**Nellie (Freeman) Keasling**

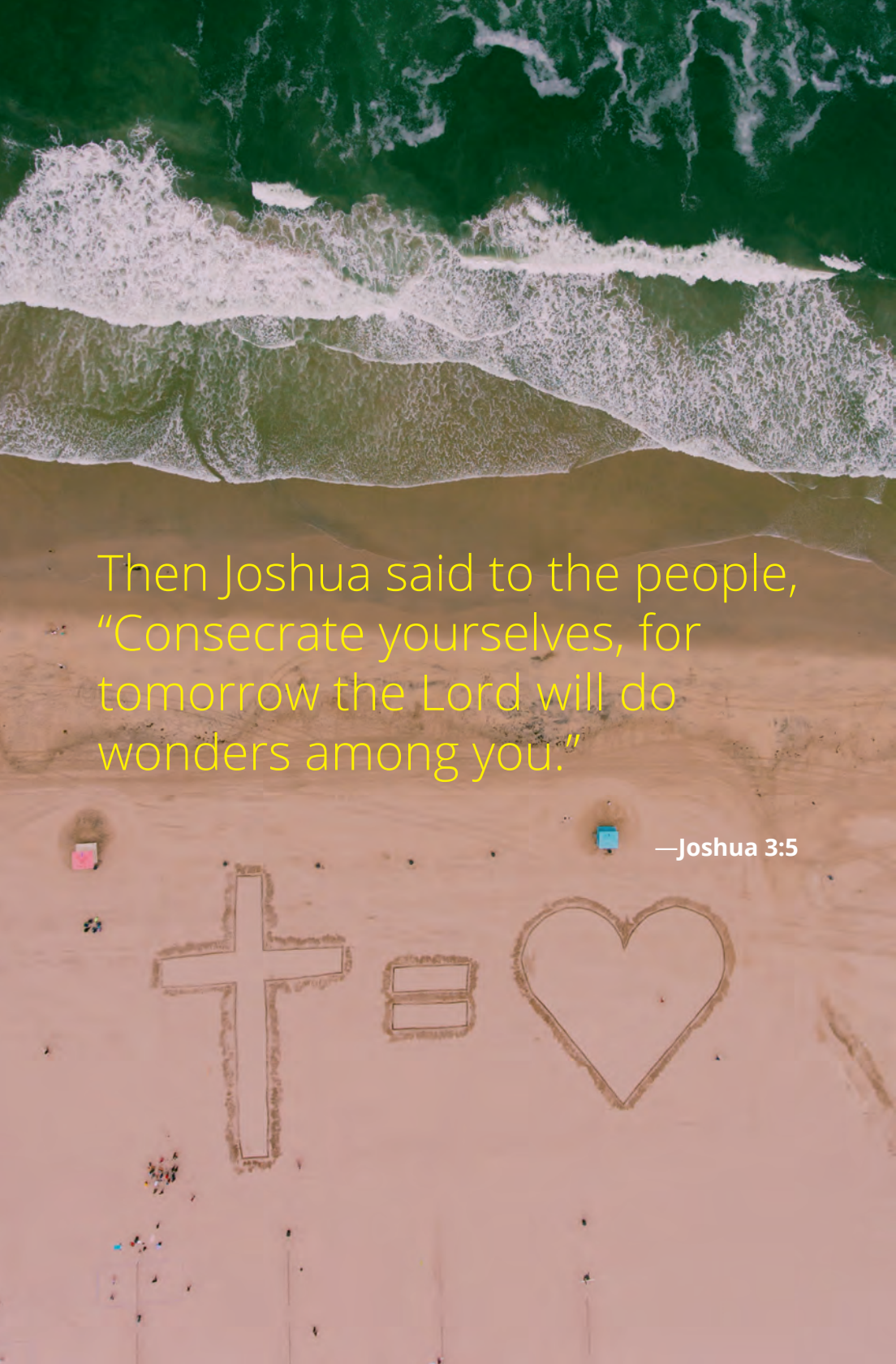
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is discipleship?

What is the difference in contribution and commitment?

Considering most Christians you know, what percentage would you say falls in the category of committed followers of Christ?

What is the cost of discipleship? _____



Then Joshua said to the people,
"Consecrate yourselves, for
tomorrow the Lord will do
wonders among you."

—Joshua 3:5



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