Journey: 30 Day Devotional

This 30 day series of devotionals is designed to complement the 7-week Journey New Believer's kit or be used to supplement your church's discipleship program. Its purpose is to help people who commit their lives to Christ to be immediately mentored to strengthen and deepen their newfound faith. If the 7-week devotional is too long, we've condensed it to this 30-day variety to give you more flexibility to fit your church and your congregation. As with all things CMU, ultimately, the goal is to see lives changed and continue to change as your people take their faith to the next level!

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 1 of 30

Devotional:

When the Bible says "do not" it's time to listen, right?! It might remind you of the times when you were a kid and your mom or dad said in a very clear, strong voice, "do not," followed by whatever you did wrong. What's interesting about this "do not" is that it's something none of us want anyway. Who wants to be anxious? Who says, "Yes, I'd like a little more worry in my life with a side of anxiety!" Yet God commands us here to not be anxious about some things...no, about nothing! God wants you to be anxious about nothing.

Let's be honest. That's impossible, right? But here's what we are to do so that we don't have to be anxious--pray and be thankful. Prayer and thankfulness are the actions, and faith is the attitude. It's giving God all your worries through an act of faith by praying and verbalizing your gratitude for his goodness in your life.

What are you worried about right now? It might be a long list! That's okay. But take a few minutes to think about the top 2 or 3 things that concern you the most. The things that make you afraid when you think of an undesirable outcome. It could be in your family, your marriage, your finances, your spiritual life, or all of the above! Give them to Jesus in prayer.

Take a moment to focus on the Lord and eliminate distraction. Find a place away from the noise of life. Move your thoughts away from the "to-do list" and place them on God. Take five minutes just to think about the goodness, faithfulness, and love of Jesus in our lives.

Prayer:

Jesus, today I want to receive from you. I want to sit at your feet, so to speak, and learn from you. Speak to me today, Lord. Show me your ways and guide me along your path that I might experience who you are in a greater way. Help me to soak in your Word today and be changed for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Scripture:

- Philippians 4:6

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 2 of 30

Devotional:

In John 14, Jesus speaks about his return to heaven after his death on the cross. He told his disciples he would come back and get them and take them to the place where he would be (aka heaven). Jesus tells his disciples, "You know the way to the place where I am going."

To that, one of Jesus' disciples named Thomas asked Jesus, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" This is when Jesus responds with, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

When it comes to life's basic needs, knowing where to go, knowing the truth about life, and then experiencing a satisfying life about sums it up. Jesus is reassuring a concerned group of disciples about his departure from earth and says what should fill the gap between now on earth and where you will be one day is himself--Jesus. It's Jesus who shows us the way when we're lost. It's Jesus who provides truth in the middle of confusion, and it's Jesus who is the real, satisfying life all of humanity needs!

But, that gap -- the one between "now on earth" and the point when we will be with Jesus forever can get filled with all kinds of stuff--people, work, entertainment, social media, challenges, surprises-both good and bad.

Jesus offers himself as the one who fills the gap. He is the one who should meet our ultimate needs between now and then. How is Jesus filling the gap in your life? Is he the way you go in life? Is he your truth rather than the world's truth? Is he so involved in your everyday life that you could say he is your life?

If not, clear your mind and focus on Jesus. The text messages can wait. The calls and emails don't need to be responded to right now. It's time for you and Jesus to meet. Push all the distractions aside and set all your thoughts on Jesus. At first, it's hard, but work at it -- trust me, it gets easier!

Prayer:

Jesus, today is all about you! I want my life to reflect your goodness and love to those around me, so right now prepare my heart and mind to hear from you. Give me the spiritual eyes and ears to learn from you. Thank you in advance for what you're going to show me! In Jesus' name, amen!

Scripture:

- John 14:1-6

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 3 of 30

Devotional:

Two simple verses in today's Bible reading describe something very powerful for us. It is a great restoration for humanity. It's our moment of redemption described in three sentences. What was lost in the beginning with Adam and Eve through sin is now reopened. The chains on the gate to the Garden of Eden are open again. An opportunity to know and be with God is here again.

But how is that made possible? It's through Jesus. It's through faith in him. His work on the cross and the power of his resurrection is what broke the chains of sin and death. When we exercise faith in him, this power is activated in our lives. It results in a new birth, a spiritual birth for our souls. This is a birth that comes with rights too, as verse 12 says, because we become children of God. It's pretty crazy to think that we are children of the Creator of the universe! The apostle John echoes this gratitude in 1 John 3:1.

Not everyone accepts the invitation to be with God, but those who do experience a new life in him!

This truth should give us gratitude in our hearts for what Jesus has done for us. Whether you've been walking with Jesus for two days or two decades, this should never get old. Take a few minutes and meditate on the privilege it is to be a child of God. Think of the rights you have because you have a relationship with the most powerful, infinitely good, beyond description Being in all of existence. You might need more than a few minutes.

Where could you go to have some quiet time? Find a spot where you're alone, just you and Jesus. No kids! No phone (except to read this and put it on do not disturb). Close your eyes and think about how God has worked in your life. Think about how big he is and how big his love is for you.

Prayer:

God, my heart's desire is, first, to meet with you before I do anything else today. My passion and focus are on you today. My focus will be to walk with you every step of the way. Help me to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Lead me and use me for your honor! In Jesus' name, amen!

Scripture:

- John 1:12-13
- 1 John 3:1

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 4 of 30

Devotional:
Today's bible reading comes from the last book in the Bible and is a vision that the apostle John had while in exile for his faith. In the vision, Jesus speaks messages to different churches for John to pass on. Today's message was for the church in Laodicea.

Jesus was disappointed with many in the church because they had become indifferent about their faith. Life had become convenient and as a result, they were complacent. Jesus invites them to return to an active relationship with him.

Indifference can be a temptation for all of us. We can fall into the temptation to get busy with life and forget about the most important relationship in our lives. Interestingly, Jesus uses the activity of eating here as a metaphor. Usually, it's only those closest to us with whom we eat. It's this space Jesus wants in our lives -- a real, active, close relationship.

If possible, find a space outside -- maybe a walking trail or back deck. Put yourself in God's creation. Let your focus turn to the beauty and incredible design of how God put the world together.

Prayer:
Lord, I thank you for creating this amazing world. Thank you for giving attention to every detail. Thank you also for creating me. You created me with value, purpose, and meaning. Thank you for helping me to connect with you today!

Scripture:
- Revelation 3:14-22 (memorize v. 20)

Memory Verse: *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.* (Rev. 3:20)

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 5 of 30

Devotional:

In today's reading, Jesus is teaching his disciples what it means to be one of his followers. He's specifically talking about living a fruitful life full of good works for his glory. He uses a metaphor that would have been familiar to his listeners.

Just as a branch cannot survive or bear fruit unless it's connected to the tree, so we as Jesus' followers cannot do good works unless we are connected to him.

Notice it says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." This doesn't mean you can't do good, but rather, we can't do good for God apart from staying connected to Jesus.

There's a lot of good in the world, but the question is, is the good you're doing honoring to the Lord? As you connect with Jesus, his power will flow through you, just like all the necessary nutrients needed to bear fruit in a tree. Branches can't help but bear fruit as long as they're connected to the tree. In contrast, if it's not connected to the tree, a branch cannot bear fruit no matter how hard it tries.

The same is our reality as Christians. We must stay connected to the source who alone can work through us to do good works that honor God. Following Jesus is where we can find true satisfaction.

Imagine taking all your concerns, tasks, deadlines and fears, and putting them into a mental box. Close the box and lock it. Now just focus on the Lord.

Prayer:

Lord, my attention is on you. All my concerns are locked away in a box. Right now, nothing is going to get my time but you. All I want is you, so today, lead me in your truth. Guide me down your path, and teach me your ways. Thank you for what you're going to do. Amen.

Scripture:

- John 15:1-8 (memorize v.5)

Memory Verse: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* --John 15:5

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 6 of 30

Devotional:
Today's reading is like a small Gospel capsule. It summarizes God's intentions in sending Jesus to the earth. Jesus, who never sinned, not even once, would go to the cross and bear the sins of the world.

Why would the innocent suffer for the guilty? It gives us the answer in this verse. It's the "so that" phrase. It was so that we might become the righteousness of God. Why is that important? If we are ever to reconnect with God, we must deal with sin. God dealt with sin once and for all through Jesus.

When given a gift, the bigger the gift, the greater the gratitude, right? This Gospel, the gift of salvation, is the greatest gift we could ever receive. What should our response be each day to this amazing gift? How could we show gratitude for such a gracious God? What should our actions look like today to say thank you to our loving God?

Today might be a busy day with lots to do, but remember to take time to sharpen the ax, metaphorically. If you'll quiet your heart and spend time with God at the start of your day, you'll slice through this day much better than if you didn't take time with God.

Prayer:
Lord, help me to set aside all the things that I need to do today. Help me focus on your truths and open my heart to what you might say to me. Put my thoughts on you without distraction. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture:
- 2 Corinthians 5:21

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 7 of 30

Devotional:

In today's reading, the "Word" spoken of here is referring to Jesus. Jesus, in a literal sense, is the spoken Word of God. Words can reveal and make sense of something by describing it, which is what Jesus did. Jesus is the visible representation of the invisible God (Hebrews 1:3).

When God spoke the world into existence, there was Jesus as the active force to make it a reality. Jesus is 100% God, but also 100% human. God's "Word" in the flesh is who we know as Jesus (Romans 8:3).

Jesus has a unique characteristic highlighted by this verse. Jesus is full of grace and truth. These usual opposing views are brought together by Jesus and lived out in his earthly ministry.

There are two sides to this "grace and truth" idea mentioned in this verse. One side is, how do you *receive* grace and truth? The second is, how do you *give* grace and truth?

Have you received his full grace--the love and forgiveness of sins? If not, accept his complete love for your sins by simply asking him today. Are you also listening to his truth? Are you being obedient to his voice?

Then are you extending grace to others? Are you loving others the way God has loved you? Are you also standing for truth? Not in the form of a judge but as a beacon of light for others to see the way to God?

Take some time to be in complete silence. Quiet your mind from all the noise of your day. Place all your energy into listening and preparing your heart for what God might speak to you.

Prayer:

Lord, you are welcome here with me. I invite you to come and speak to my heart. You know everything about me, and yet you still love me. Thank you for your acceptance and freedom to be with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture:

- John 1:14
- Hebrews 1:3
- Romans 8:3

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 8 of 30

Devotional:
If you want to see someone's true character, take away all the benefits of doing something. Let them know there's no guarantee that doing the right thing will give them a benefit.

This is what we see here with God. God's love is so great that he would send his Son to die a terrible death even though we were still sinners at the time. In other words, God had no motivation from our love for him because there wasn't any. We love sin more than God. He was simply motivated by his love for us. It was a demonstration of his great love.

If God would love you and me that much, what should this say about ourselves? If you struggle with self-doubt, this is for you. Nothing should give us more reassurance than the most powerful Being in the universe demonstrating such great love for us. If such a valuable Person is assigning such value to you, then why wouldn't you do the same?

Take the next few minutes to think about God in eternity. Think of what heaven will be like. The Bible describes it as a place where angels worship him both day and night. He is also described as unapproachable light. It's a place of complete perfection. Shut out the challenges and trials of this earth and put your complete attention on Jesus.

Prayer:
Lord, show me your heart today. Help me understand your ways and uncover anything that needs to change in me. Help me to love others the way you love them. Use me today as your instrument in the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture:
- Romans 5:8

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 9 of 30

Devotional:

Scripture is the written Word of God. There are other times when God speaks that are not a part of Scripture, but the Bible is the most authoritative. If you want to know who God is, how he works, and what he wants, just read the Bible.

This verse explains some of the functions of the Bible. It's good for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. It's not much different than parenting, except kids don't come with a parenting manual!

It's pretty amazing to think that if you want to hear the voice of God, you don't have to go far! It's all written down for us. What are some times that God is speaking to you through the Bible? Read Psalm 1 as another point of reference to the value of the Word of God.

It's time to refocus. It doesn't matter if it's the morning, evening or your lunch break, take a few minutes to think about God. Bring to mind how he's been faithful to you. Think of his power and love for you.

Prayer:

Lord, I recognize that today is a gift from you. Help me to steward this gift and use it to bring you honor. I want to bring a smile to your face. Let me see how you're working and let me be a part of it.

Scripture:

- 2 Timothy 3:16
- Psalm 1

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 10 of 30

Devotional:

There are times we all need a little help. When we don't know what to do or how to get there, it can feel hopeless. The Apostle Paul is writing to the Romans here and encouraging them with the truth that there is one who is continually fighting on our behalf.

The Holy Spirit fills the gap when we don't know what to do. When we have prayed and prayed and yet there seems to be no answer. In those moments when you start to wonder if this is all real, the Holy Spirit steps in and helps us.

Have you ever felt hopeless? Have you felt like God wasn't listening? You wouldn't be the first. There have been many people in the Bible who have experienced this, and if you've walked with God for any amount of time, you have probably experienced it yourself.

You may not have known this grace is available to you as a believer, but it is! When you don't know how to pray for a situation, ask the Holy Spirit to go to work for you. He is God and knows every aspect of every circumstance. He can intercede on your behalf and make up for when your heart is weary and your faith is weak.

It is time to leave everyone and everything behind and look to the Lord. This is best done in a space by yourself in a room or outside on a deck. Close your eyes and let your thoughts clear. Bring to mind how God has worked in your life.

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you that you are good and you do good. There is no one like you in all creation. Open my mind and heart to your Word and help me understand your ways. Thank you Father for what you will do today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture:

- Romans 8:26

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 11 of 30

Devotional:

This verse is from a song written by King David. He wrote this song because the Ark of God, which represented the presence of God, was being brought back to Jerusalem. This Ark of God (a box that contained several artifacts of God's miracles) represented God's being with the people of Israel. The Ark wasn't God, but simply a symbol of his presence.

David was a great warrior, and yet he drew his strength not from his sword, but the Lord. It was important to David to have the presence of God with him and all of Israel. This is why he took the time, money, and energy to bring the Ark back to where it belonged.

Relying on our own strength will never get us very far, but looking to the Lord will give us the strength we need. Is seeking God's presence built in your daily routine? This 30-day devotional is a good start, but keep going and let this turn from 30 to 40, 50, 100!

Notice this verse says to seek God's face. We sometimes only seek God for what his hands can give us; however, he first wants us to seek his face. Take a few minutes to just seek to know God more. Thank him for all he has done. Thank him for who he is. Ask him to continue to reveal himself to you throughout the day.

This is a moment to focus on the Lord and eliminate distraction. Find a place away from the noise of life. Move your thoughts away from the "to-do list" and place them on the Lord. Take a few minutes just to think about the goodness, faithfulness, and love of Jesus in our lives.

Prayer:

Jesus today I want to receive from you. I want to sit at your feet so to speak and learn from you. Speak to me today. Show me your ways and guide me along your path that I might experience who you are in a greater way. Help me to soak in your Word today and be changed for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Scripture:

- 1 Chronicles 16:11

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 12 of 30

Devotional:

The world can be a very dark place. There are so many opinions and so-called truths, but Psalm 119:105 tells us that God's Word is like a flashlight (or lamp if you lived back then). It is a tool and helps people find their way when their mind, wisdom, and strength aren't enough to navigate life's journey.

What is guiding you along the path of life? How hard would it be to walk a path in the middle of the night without any lights? It would be really difficult, right? Yet, we can go through life without God's Word lighting the way.

God offers us truth to help us know the way. He offers truth for our families, our marriages, our work, our church, our morals, our calling, and more! It's all there; we just have to hear God's Word by reading it!

It's time to clear the mind and focus on Jesus. The texts can wait. The calls and emails don't need to be responded to right now. It's time for you and Jesus to meet. Push all the distractions aside and set all your thoughts on Jesus. At first, it's hard, but work at it, and it becomes easier.

Turn to Psalm 119 and begin to pray the Psalm. It has 176 verses in the whole chapter, so if you don't get through all of it, that's okay. Just ask God to help you apply the verses to your own life. Oh, and when it says, "law" it just means God's Word or what God wants us to do.

Prayer:

Jesus, today is all about you! I want my life to reflect your goodness and love to those around me, so right now prepare my heart and mind to hear from you. Give me the spiritual eyes and ears to learn from you. Thank you in advance for what you're going to show me! In Jesus' name Amen!

Scripture:

- Psalm 119

Memory Verse: *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* (Psalm 119:105)

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 13 of 30

Devotional:

Hope is a powerful concept. It can transform our perspective on the grimmest of circumstances. If we have hope, there's energy for today to face the challenges ahead; however, when you have no hope, it's like all of the life is sucked right out of you.

The Apostle Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus and wants them to know the hope we have in Jesus. He is speaking to Christians, which tells us you can know the Lord and not fully know the hope to which he has called you!

The hope he speaks of is that last clause of this verse, "the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people." It's the day when we receive the inheritance of heaven, our final destination. It's this hope that gives us the strength to face today's challenges.

How is the hope of heaven, the inheritance that Jesus will give us one day, giving you strength? Is it influencing your decisions? Is it impacting how you treat others, or how you spend your time and money? This hope should change everything about our lives for the good!

Ask God to help you see the power of this hope. Ask him to help you to think often of the hope of heaven. Ask him to fill your heart with real anticipation for this inheritance that Jesus has promised all of us who have trusted in him. Then pray this verse for two other people you know.

Prayer: God my heart's desire is first to meet with you before I do anything else today. My passion and focus are on you today. My focus will be to walk with you every step of the way. Help me to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and fill my heart with anticipation of the inheritance you promise your children. Put the hope of heaven in my thoughts today. Lead me and use me for your honor! In Jesus' name, amen!

Scripture:

- Ephesians 1:18

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 14 of 30

Devotional:

The author of this Psalm, David, is looking forward to a place to connect with God. This idea of the house of the Lord is simply a place to meet with God. It's to go where God can be found and worship and learn from him. It's David's desire for the Lord that leads to the emotion of his excitement.

Does going to church give you joy? For you is it something to look forward to or not? David was filled with joy because he knew the house of the Lord would be where he could find God.

The church is the same. While it's true that as Christians we have the Holy Spirit living in us, it's also true that there is something special about connecting with God in a community of other believers. Are you excited to go to church today? Who could you invite to church?

If possible, find a space outside, maybe a walking trail or back deck. Put yourself in God's creation. Let your focus turn to the beauty and incredible design of how God put the world together.

Then, take a few minutes to pray for your time at church this week. Pray that God speaks to you when you attend. Pray that you can connect with God unhindered. Also, pray for those serving at the church. Pray for the kids' workers, the hospitality team, the worship and production teams. Pray for people to come to know Jesus!

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for creating this amazing world. Thank you for giving attention to every detail. Thank you also for creating me. You created me with value, purpose, and meaning. Thank you for helping me to connect with you today!

Scripture:

- Psalm 122

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 15 of 30

Devotional:

God is speaking to Joshua in today's passage. Joshua became the new leader of God's people after Moses died. This is no small task on Joshua's shoulders. He must not only lead the people into the Promised Land, but he must also lead the Israelite army into battle.

If you read all of chapter 1 you'll notice God tells Joshua not to be afraid. God said that because Joshua had never led the people of God without Moses and he knew Joshua's concern. He never conquered the promised land. He never tried to establish a nation. God knew exactly what Joshua needed to discover the leader within him and overcome FEAR, so God spoke three WORDS of encouragement over him.

It would be God's words that would give Joshua the courage and strength he needed on a daily basis to lead the people of Israel.

How are God's words impacting you even in this 30-day journey? We are halfway through -- how has the Word of God influenced the way you think? How has it impacted your confidence level? For Joshua, it would be the difference between success and failure. It has that power over us as well.

Imagine taking all your concerns, tasks, deadlines, fears and putting them into a mental box. Close the box and lock it. You'll unlock it later, but for now, it's time to focus on the Lord. Take 5 deep breaths in and then out.

Prayer:

Lord my attention is on you. All my concerns are locked away in a box. Right now nothing is going to get my time but you. All I want is you, so today lead me in your truth. Guide me down your path, and teach me your ways. Thank you for what you're going to do. Amen.

Scripture:

- Joshua 1:8
- Isaiah 40:29
- Isaiah 41:10
- James 1:5
- 1 John 1:9
- Deuteronomy 31:8
- Jeremiah 29:11
- Philippians 4:19
- Romans 8:28
- Romans 10:9

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 16 of 30

Devotional:

You might be familiar with Psalm 23 because of the famous line, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me." While this line might be the most familiar, the entire psalm is filled with an expression of God's great love.

This final verse of Psalm 23 personifies goodness and love as something that follows David the author. Usually, we are the ones chasing goodness and love for ourselves, but here you have goodness and love doing the chasing! This is a beautiful picture of God's goodness and love in pursuit of us.

Then David caps off the psalm with a declaration that he will be in the house of the Lord forever. David's response to all of God's favor is to be close to God.

Did you know God's goodness and love are chasing you down? Sometimes we can run from it though! Have you stopped and let God's goodness and love catch up to you? Maybe you're busy with this or that and you've outrun some of God's favor. Today take some time to meditate on God's goodness and love in your life, and you'll probably find even more catching up to you.

Today might be a busy day with lots to do, but remember to take time to sharpen the ax so to speak. If you'll quiet your heart and use this 30 minutes well, you'll slice through this day much better than if you didn't take time with God.

Make a list of how God has been good to you in the last 30 days. Think of your family, your health, your career, your emotions, your finances. How has God been good to you in those areas and others? Then pray over those items. Thank the Lord and if some still need a breakthrough, then pray that God helps you.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to set aside all the things that need to be done today. Help me focus on your truths and open my heart to what you might say to me. Put my thoughts on you without distraction. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture:

- Psalm 23:6

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 17 of 30

Devotional:

Jesus is clarifying the Old Testament law. Some were interpreting it to mean that you could love those close to you, but it was okay to hate your enemy. Jesus is saying yes, we should love our neighbor, but we should also love those who don't love us. He goes as far as to say we should love even our enemies and those who persecute us.

At the root of this is the fact that this is a demonstration of God's love. God loves those who hate him and persecute him, so God's people should reflect that kind of love.

Hopefully, you don't have too many enemies, but maybe you know people you don't agree with. Jesus says to love them. This is the highest, most noble act you can do for someone else. Not only that, instead of attacking those who persecute you, you are to pray for them. Why? Because this is how God has treated us. When we were enemies of God, he loved us. When we refused his love, he intercedes for us. Who needs love from you today?

Think of a few people that you might not get along with or have even hurt you. What do they need? How could you pray for them? Be specific and genuinely pray for them.

Take some time to be in complete silence. Quiet your mind from all the noise of your day. Place all your energy into listening and preparing your heart for what God might speak to you.

Prayer:

Lord, you are welcome here with me. I invite you to come and speak to my heart. You know everything about me, and yet you still love me. Thank you for your acceptance and freedom to be with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture:

- Matthew 5:44

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 18 of 30

Devotional:

Going without food is hard! Ever fasted for a day or two? It's really, really hard. In today's reading, Jesus had gone 40 days without eating. Can you believe that? Forty days! Most of us get hungry every four hours!

Satan is tempting him to eat food, but Jesus responds with the Word of God. Jesus is saying there's more to us than the physical. He's saying that if someone wants to survive, they have to do more than put food in their mouth. They need to eat spiritual food for their spirit person.

He's also saying that spiritual food comes from God. Jesus is demonstrating that if we want to be at our best, we have to feed our spiritual person not just our physical body.

How is your spiritual person doing? Do you have spiritual fatigue? Do you find it hard to hear from God or to be motivated to pray or read the Bible? Sometimes it just takes diving in to jump-start your spiritual life. Get some extra spiritual calories today by reading a little more and praying a little longer.

Take time to pray about your spiritual health. Use this list as a guide:

- Spiritual discernment (hearing God's voice)
- Spiritual purity (holiness)
- Spiritual worship (gratitude)
- Spiritual service (loving others)
- Spiritual passion (zeal for God)
- Spiritual faith (trust in God)

Take the next few minutes to think about God in eternity. Think of what heaven would be like. The Bible describes it as a place where angels worship him both day and night. It's a place of complete perfection. Shut out the challenges and trials of this earth and put your complete attention on Jesus.

Prayer:

Lord, show me your heart today. Help me understand your ways and uncover anything that needs to change in me. Help me to love others the way you love them. Use me today as your instrument in the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture:

- Matthew 4:4

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 19 of 30

Devotional:

This is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible! There's no condemnation for those who know Jesus. Right before this verse, the apostle Paul talks about the struggle that we have with sin. We can be at war sometimes with our sinful nature, but this verse empties the power of sin.

Paul has purposefully placed these words right after the acknowledgment of the struggle with sin. It's to give us hope. It's to help us know we're free. It's to point out the truth that sin doesn't have power anymore!

But here's the question, do you live like that? Do you still live condemned even though you are free? Knowing our sins are forgiven and the debt is paid, we can let hope, gratitude, and faith drive us to stop sinning. It's with this understanding of what Jesus has done for us that we are armed with all we need to overcome sin.

What are your struggles? Is it anger, fear, lust, greed, gossip, jealousy, envy? Whatever your challenge is, take a few minutes and pray for God's help. Ask God to show you that you are not condemned for your sin, but you're free and forgiven.

It's time to refocus. It doesn't matter if it's the morning, evening or your lunch break, take a few minutes to think about the Lord. Bring to mind how he's been faithful to you. Think of his power and love for you.

Prayer: Lord, I recognize that today is a gift from you. Help me to steward this gift and use it to bring you honor. I want to bring a smile to your face. Let me see how you're working and be a part of it.

Scripture:

- Romans 8:1

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 20 of 30

Devotional:
Today's verse is a bit sobering but also motivating. God has standards, but not to be a killjoy or because he doesn't want you to have fun. God has standards because he loves you, and he loves others. When we go against God's truth, we either hurt ourselves, others, or both.

Jesus said all of God's law could be summed up in two commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. And, love your neighbor as yourself. This is where God wants us to focus and his warning is clear that this will be the standard he wants us to live by.

How are you loving others? Not according to someone else's standard but God's standard. Are you loving your wife like Christ loves the church if you're a husband? Are you obeying your parents if you're a student? Are you honoring your employer? How can you show love to others today and fulfill God's standard of love?

Take a few minutes and think of ways that Jesus loved others. Then pray about how you can do those same things for those around you.

It is time to leave everyone and everything behind and look to the Lord. This is best done in a space by yourself in a room or outside on a deck. Close your eyes and let your thoughts clear. Bring to mind how God has worked in your life.

Prayer:
Lord, I thank you that you are good and you do good. There is no one like you in all creation. Open my mind and heart to your Word and help me understand your ways. Thank you Father for what you will do today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture:
- Hebrews 4:12
- Matthew 22:37-39

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 21 of 30

Devotional:

There are three commands in today's reading. Notice that it starts with the word "Be." It's a command to be like or do what follows.

First, the Bible is saying to be joyful in hope. It's important to note that joy is coming from hope and not from other temporary things like money, pleasure, or fame. It is hope that should make us happy.

The second thing we should be is patient in affliction. Notice again that it doesn't say patient when everything is going great but in affliction. One of the characteristics of true faith is the ability to keep calm in the middle of opposition.

Then finally, we should be faithful in prayer, meaning we should be continually praying. Prayer is simply an expression of dependence on the Lord. This should mark the life of every Christian.

These three commands could each almost be their sermons. But let's again take each and apply them.

The first: we should be happy because we have hope. Jesus came and gave us hope. Yes, things can get bad on this earth, but Jesus gives us hope today and then for tomorrow and eternity. Is this how you view life?

The second: be patient when life is bad. We often can't help what happens to us, but we can help how we respond to it. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the same patience Jesus showed us on the cross. He patiently endured the punishment of the cross for us. When things don't go your way how do you respond?

Finally: are you faithful in prayer? One of the biggest challenges can be to have a consistent prayer time. Hopefully, you've been on track with your daily prayers during this devotional so far! Keep with it and faithfully pray for those who need it.

Divide up these three categories and pray that God would help you in each area. Then take five minutes to pray for those who are needing to be strengthened in these areas.

This is a moment to focus on the Lord and eliminate distraction. It involves finding a place away from the noise of life. It means moving our thoughts away from the "to-do list" and placing them on the Lord. It means taking five minutes just to think about the goodness, faithfulness, and love of Jesus in our lives.

Prayer:
Jesus today I want to receive from you. I want to sit at your feet so to speak and learn from you. Speak to me today. Show me your ways and guide me along your path that I might experience who you are in a greater way. Help me to soak in your Word today and be changed for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Scripture:

- Romans 12:12

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 22 of 30

Devotional:

There are three illustrations in today's reading that teach us a spiritual lesson. These are written from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, his young apprentice. Paul is teaching Timothy some spiritual leadership lessons that can help us too.

The first is about a soldier not getting sidetracked from the mission. The second is about being a person of integrity; one who is trustworthy. Finally the third is about plain hard work; Paul is showing Timothy there's no way around giving your all to this mission for God.

The first lesson is all about staying focused on what God has called you to do. Is it to be a mom, a teacher, a pastor, a leader, all of those? There are lots of good things in life, but when good things take us away from the best things, they are no longer good.

The second lesson is about being a person of integrity. We all know of people who cut corners to get ahead, and sometimes they succeed. There's one problem with that when you're a Christian -- God is watching. If we want to honor the Lord and receive his blessing, we have to be honest, kind, trustworthy, keep our word, and do the right thing. This isn't about perfection, but an honest effort to get things right and to make things right when we don't. When we do this, God blesses us.

Finally, God is honored when we work hard. Though he can do it all himself, he has left some of the work for us to do. This is our opportunity not to earn salvation, but to say thank you for God's faithfulness to us!

Divide up these three categories -- focus, integrity, and hard work -- and pray that God would help you in each area. Then take five minutes to pray for those who need to be strengthened in these areas as well.

It's time to clear the mind and focus on Jesus. The texts can wait. The calls and emails don't need to be responded to right now. It's time for you and Jesus to meet. Push all the distractions aside and set all your thoughts on Jesus. At first, it's hard, but work at it, it'll get easier.

Prayer: Jesus today is all about you! I want my life to reflect your goodness and love to those around me, so right now prepare my heart and mind to hear from you. Give me the spiritual eyes and ears to learn from you. Thank you in advance for what you're going to show me! In Jesus' name Amen!

Scripture:

- 2 Timothy 2:4-6

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 23 of 30

Devotional:

In today's passage, Paul is appealing to his audience to understand why they have been given freedom in Christ. It's not to sin, but to not bear the burden of a bunch of religious rules.

The Galatians, to whom Paul is writing, were being told they needed to follow the Jewish law in addition to faith in Jesus to be saved. Paul refutes these teachers' errors in this letter of Galatians.

Paul is summing up that Jesus did away with all the do's and don'ts that have nothing to do with truly being holy. However, he points out that there is still sin and we should still avoid those actions.

Freedom is amazing! Who doesn't love freedom! But with freedom comes responsibility and the Apostle Paul is simply appealing to his audience to use the freedom for good, not evil. Remember that freedom is no replacement for love. Freedom is only part of the Gospel. Love is another part. This is why Paul says, to "use your freedom to serve one another in love."

How are you using your freedom to care for and serve others? What could you do today to help another see God's love shine through you?

Take five minutes to just listen to God. Quiet your heart and ask him to reveal someone to you that you could serve today. Then pray about that situation.

Prayer:

God, my heart's desire is first to meet with you before I do anything else today. My passion and focus are on you today. My focus will be to walk with you every step of the way. Help me to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Lead me and use me for your honor! In Jesus' name, amen!

Scripture:

- Galatians 5:13

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 24 of 30

Devotional:

In the Jewish religion, the high priest was supposed to be the mediator between God and the people in the Old Testament. This high priest was to represent the people to God. He would offer a sacrifice to cover the people's sins and pray for them.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus has become the high priest between God and everyone who has accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. He offered Himself as the sacrifice to forgive our sins. Since it's Jesus and not a flawed human working on our behalf, we can trust his work between us and God and thus hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Has your faith ever wavered, maybe in a season of difficulty? Maybe life got busy and God wasn't a priority anymore. Maybe you felt like God didn't make sense. Maybe you lost something you loved.

This is why Jesus is so important. He is working on your behalf. He is your heavenly high priest who represents you to the Father. You are free from religious rules, so you can have a real relationship with a real God.

Jesus took care of your sin debt, so you can move on with your life and find freedom in him! So when you want to give up, just remember that Jesus has already done the hard work for you. Let your response be trust in him.

What areas are you struggling to trust in Jesus? Is it your marriage, your finances, your health, your careers, or your kids? Take this time to pray about those areas and allow God to build faith in your heart in these areas.

If possible, find a space outside, maybe a walking trail or back deck. Put yourself in God's creation. Let your focus turn to the beauty and incredible design of how God put the world together.

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for creating this amazing world. Thank you for giving attention to every detail. Thank you also for creating me. You created me with value, purpose, and meaning. Thank you for helping me to connect with you today!

Scripture:

- Hebrews 4:14

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 25 of 30

Devotional:

The Apostle Paul utilizes a since/then statement. He's saying since this is true, then we should do this. The since really starts in the first part of verse one of this chapter, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ..."

Our life transformation isn't from trying harder or discovering more rules to follow, but from the fact that we have been raised with Christ! It's this event that has changed everything for the Christian. It's this truth that gives us the power to do the then statements.

What motivates us to act like Jesus is important. Since we are a new people in Christ, we can have compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

How are you doing in those areas? Are you being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient? If you're struggling in those areas, look at what Jesus has done for you. He has given you a new heart, a new mind, a new life! It's this understanding that we can then launch these acts of obedience.

Take each of these characteristics (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience) and assign them to a person in your life. Take this time to pray about how you can be compassionate toward the person assigned to those characteristics, and then for the rest do the same.

Prayer:

Lord my attention is on you. All my concerns are locked away in a box. Right now nothing is going to get my time but you. All I want is you, so today lead me in your truth. Guide me down your path, and teach me your ways. Thank you for what you're going to do. Amen.

Scripture:

- Colossians 3:12

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 26 of 30

Devotional:

In today's reading, Isaiah is highlighting that plants are fragile but not the word of the Lord. In contrast, it's strong and can endure difficult circumstances. It can stand the test of time and criticism from man.

Ideas, traditions, philosophies come and go, but God's truth will continue. It should be no surprise since it's God who created all things and therefore gives us the ultimate truth.

If God's word endures all things and outlasts everything else, where then should we place our trust? It only makes sense to put our confidence in things that last. Do you trust God's word about salvation? What about the provision? What about answering prayer?

Find a place to seek the Lord and ask him if your trust is truly in the Lord. Ask Jesus to help you place more trust in his words than the words of others. Recount some moments in the past where God has helped you.

Today might be a busy day with lots to do, but remember to take time to sharpen the ax, so to speak. If you'll quiet your heart and if you use this time with God well, you'll slice through this day much better than if you didn't take time with God.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to set aside all the things that need to be done today. Help me focus on your truths and open my heart to what you might say to me. Put my thoughts on you without distraction. Thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture:

- Isaiah 40:8

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 27 of 30

Devotional:

Being raised with Christ is what your spirit did when you believed in Jesus. The same resurrection experience that Jesus had was your experience on the inside when you believed. Jesus came to life and so did you when you trusted in Jesus. But Jesus didn't just rise from the dead; he ascended to heaven.

Paul is connecting what we should do with what Jesus did. In other words, we should let our mind and heart rise to heaven just as Jesus did. Not only because we are going there one day, but because that is where Christ is; the One who we should be focused on.

Where we set our heart has a huge impact on our life. What if today you made an intentional effort to focus on Jesus each hour of the day. It could be a prayer, a moment of meditation, listening to worship, or 60 seconds of thanking Jesus.

Look at your schedule today and pray that God helps you to see him in every hour of the day. Pray for each meeting, every activity, every mealtime that God would become the focus. Pray that God would remind you of his great love throughout the entire day.

Take some time to be in complete silence. Quiet your mind from all the noise of your day. Place all your energy into listening and preparing your heart for what God might speak to you.

Prayer:

Lord, you are welcome here with me. I invite you to come and speak to my heart. You know everything about me, and yet you still love me. Thank you for your acceptance and freedom to be with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture:

- Colossians 3:1

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 28 of 30

Devotional:

Sin loves to be hidden because when it's hidden it can grow. But when we bring our sin to the light, we have the opportunity to deal with our struggle and receive healing from the Lord.

James isn't saying this is necessary for salvation, but rather for freedom from the bondage of sin. Today,s scripture also isn't saying that we should confess to everyone but to someone. For you, it could be a close trusted friend. It could be a mentor or a small group. The idea is that you get it out in the open so you can receive healing.

Is there something you need to confess? Maybe you don't have a big sin in your life, but you need to start being more open with someone about your life.

Also, you can be that friend to someone else who is struggling. James says the result of helping others is an effective prayer for us. When we confess our sins, we are walking uprightly with the Lord and are powerful and effective!

Do you have someone you can open up to? If not, pray about who that person can be. If you do, take some time to pray for that person. Pray for their family, their career, their future, their relationship with the Lord.

Take the next few minutes to think about God in eternity. Think of what heaven would be like. The Bible describes it as a place where angels worship him both day and night. He is also described as unapproachable light. It's a place of complete perfection. Shut out the challenges and trials of this earth and put your complete attention on Jesus.

Prayer:

Lord, show me your heart today. Help me understand your ways and uncover anything that needs to change in me. Help me to love others the way you love them. Use me today as your instrument in the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture:

- James 5:16

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 29 of 30

Devotional:

In today's reading, David makes a connection between trusting the Lord and not being afraid. He's specifically talking about the fear of others.

Interestingly, there seems to be an inverse relationship between the fear of man and trust in God. When we have high levels of fear of man, we have low levels of trust in the Lord. Inversely, when we have high levels of trusting the Lord, we have low levels of fear of man.

Many of us are trapped by the fear of man. We're needlessly worried about the power of others over us.

Notice that David chooses to praise the Lord as a response. He lifts the Lord with his words and as he does, his fears of others go down. What if you took some time to praise God right now? Let this time melt away your fear of man.

Make a list of those who you are afraid of and pray for them. Pray that God would bless them, and help you to trust in the Lord to overcome your fear.

It's time to refocus. It doesn't matter if it's the morning, evening or your lunch break, take a few minutes to think about the Lord. Bring to mind how he's been faithful to you. Think of his power and love for you.

Prayer:

Lord, I recognize that today is a gift from you. Help me to steward this gift and use it to bring you honor. I want to bring a smile to your face. Let me see how you're working and be a part of it.

Scripture:

- Psalm 56:4

Journey: 30 Days to a Close Relationship With God
Day 30 of 30

Devotional:

Today marks 30 days. Thanks for going on the full journey! We hope this isn't the end but only the beginning for you. Keep it going!

When we are walking with the Lord, God is working in us to do his will. You can know that your godly desires are being guided by the Lord. He is working to fulfill his good purpose.

Notice that it says to will and to act. God helps produce desires in us that are following his will. He also gives us the energy to act on those desires so we fulfill his good purpose.

Right before this verse, it says, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." You can think of the phrase "fear and trembling" as "careful attention." We want to pay close attention to following God because it matters. This life we are living for God is important.

Are you paying close attention to your walk with God? If you've made it to this point in the devotional, you probably are! Now it's time to continue this journey. Allow God to work in your life by paying close attention to your faith. Guard it. Protect it. Grow it.

Pray that God shows you how to continue this spiritual journey you're on. Pray for continued help growing deeper in your relationship with God. Get connected with a group of believers and be faithful to church. Ask God for wisdom in navigating a stronger faith.

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you that you are good and you do good. There is no one like you in all creation. Open my mind and heart to your Word and help me understand your ways. Thank you, Father, for what you will do today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture:

- Philippians 2:13
- Philippians 2:12