



S I N C E R E L Y , K I N D R E D
F E B R U A R Y D E V O T I O N A L

INTRODUCTION

Dear Kindreds,

Recently, there have been times that I have felt far from God. It is my fault. I passively choose every day to ignore Him. Sure I could say that I forget, and that doesn't sound quite as harsh. The truth is that I'm not valuing the God that saved me. I'm not prioritizing sitting down and spending five minutes a day with Him, which is a conscious decision on my part.

And that breaks my heart.

I don't know why I find it so hard to open my Bible.

Honestly, I'm tired of all the bullsh*t. Aren't you? So today I cut it out. I stop with all of the excuses and I fix the problem. Today I make the conscience decision to read my Bible tomorrow and the day after that and the one after that too. Today I decide to be disciplined and take my relationship with this all powerful all loving God seriously. I encourage you to

make the same resolution.

The truth is that reading the Bible and praying to God on a daily basis won't fix all of our issues. Tomorrow's problems won't magically disappear, but I can tell you that by reading the Bible tomorrow's things will be different. God promises as much and so much more In Matthew 7. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

I don't think that Jesus is referring to asking for a new car here. He is saying that the ones who seek God will find Him. Carving out five or ten minutes of our day is us showing God that we are seeking Him and that we want a relationship with Him.

Everyone involved with creating this

devotional is praying that it will have some positive impact on your life. We have written and designed it with the express purpose of edifying and encouraging you the reader. The truth is that this devotional shouldn't be the extent of our daily time with God. It isn't designed to be.

If you are like me and you are currently not spending daily time with God, please use this devotional to start. I certainly plan to. But if you are already reading and meditating on God's Word in a different means we encourage you to include this as a part of what you are already doing. If you're already doing a Bible reading plan, don't stop. Add this devotional after you read that. If you're already working on homework

from a Bible study, don't stop. Add this devotional to your daily load. However, if you find yourself struggling to develop the discipline of spending time with God daily, you're in luck. We were thinking of you when we first started Kindred's devotional. We pray this is a launching pad into practically prioritizing God in your day as well as learning about how to do this whole family of God thing.

The reality is that the Bible is big and intimidating, and there is so much more than what we cover here. We will only cover a portion but it is a portion that God values and has immediate applications to our modern church environment. So let's go through part of His Word together.

Sincerely,
Cameron Lawson

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Here at Sincerely, Kindred we're all about getting deep and chatting about our lives with Jesus and others. But we're also about being very practical with living out our beliefs. Our behaviors show our beliefs, and we want our beliefs about God's truth to impact our behaviors.

All of our devotionals are saturated in that truth. We desire this to encourage and edify you.

If you have not personally asked Jesus, the Son of God, to be the Savior and Friend of your life please email sincerelykindred@gmail.com and we would love to talk with you.

If you have! Congrats! Welcome to the family of God. Whether you are spiritually toddling or are a seasoned veteran in God's army, this devotional is 100% to be taken seriously for the family of Christ. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. And the heart behind doing this theme for a month-long devotional is to set the Church up for a win.

For our February devotional, we will be looking through the "One Another" commands scattered throughout the New Testament.

There are 59 one another commands in the Bible. Something to note about the Bible is when God repeats Himself that means we need to pay attention. We decided we wanted to talk about relationships for the February devotional with the whole theme of Valentine's Day intertwined in this month. However, after some time and prayer, we decided to center this month's devotional on Christian

relationships with other Christians. The verses we will be reading through this month are for our family in Christ conducted by our family in Christ. These are not meant for people outside of the family, BUT that does not entitle us to treat nonbelievers in an exclusive or uninviting way. Jesus said the world WILL KNOW HIM through HOW we treat one another in the family.

For the rest of the days of the week, we have structured our devotional to begin and end with Scripture. In between our selected passages from God's Word primarily in ESV (English Standard Version), unless otherwise noted, we have varying paragraphs of explanation in our common tongue to prayerfully bring truth home to your hearts. We also have some recommended prayers that we encourage you to repeat even after this devotional time.

To start off each week we have different stanzas from our brother Lecrae's song "The Bride." Listen to it.

Again, we encourage you to share this devotional, starting tomorrow, even with one more person.

As Hebrews 3:13 says, encourage one another daily. And we pray this is an encouragement we can bring to you, and you can share with others.



WEEK ONE

FRIDAY

ROMANS 12:16

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”

God's desire for the Church is that we would “live in harmony together” something that sets us apart as the Body of Christ. Many other religions focus on their differences and harbor hostility towards different sub sects. The Christian Church gets caught up in this, also. We poke fun at the tendencies of that denomination, or grossly disagree with the theology of this denomination. Actions like these can take away from the immense power of our God. God is unique and He encourages diversity. He is welcoming to ALL. We should also extend that same welcome to the whole His Church. We're all in this together.

I PETER 5:5

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.””

SATURDAY

PHILIPPIANS 2:3

“Regard one another as more important than yourselves ‘Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.’”

Raise your hand if you've been hurt by a church, a ministry, a parachurch organization, etc. And after you left, proceeded to complain about or speak ill of it. You don't actually have to raise your hand, but we do encourage you to consider how you left these seasons with other groupings of Christians. Maybe you left with scars, maybe you were forced out, or maybe you ran yelling the whole way to the next sanctuary.

Whatever the case, stop. There is a better way to healing.

Paul had such a rough start in ministry. His reputation as Saul, the man who approved of the first persecution/execution of the Christian, Stephen, had left him with the conflict of not being approved of by the first Christians. In fact, Paul had to leave and do ministry far from his home in Jerusalem BECAUSE only elsewhere was he welcomed, respected, and listened to. After some time did his reputation start to heal in the hearts of those we were supposed to show this former baby Christian the Way. But as we now know, it was because of that rejection from the first followers of Christ that the gospel carried swiftly outside of Jerusalem. Paul was a huge instrument in rapidly spreading the Good News, not just to Jews but to Gentiles.

But what would of happened if he had just sat down when those first Christians told him to?

Take a moment and ask God's Holy Spirit, living and dwelling in you to give you

insight into YOUR heart. Ask yourself these questions:
Are you bitter? Do you hope that church/ministry/small group is thriving and growing?
Are you still hurt? Have you asked God to help heal your heart?
Do you want to forgive them?
Spend some time reflecting on these “heart questions” and maybe begin asking God to release you from the chains of bitterness. Ask God to show you how to forgive those who weren’t supposed to hurt you.

EPHESIANS 4:1-3

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

THE BRIDE I // LECRAE

Yeah she may look gritty

When her man come back she gone look so pretty -

She the Church

You might see her acting crazy, be patient with her tho cause she still God's baby -

She the Church

Before you dis her get to know her, Jesus got a thing fo her and He died just to show her -

She the Church

She ain't bricks and buildings

She all of God's people Men women and children -

We the church

WEEK TWO

SUNDAY

I THESSALONIANS 5:11

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

A common struggle many humans are ailed with is people pleasing. If you're not familiar with this deceitful trait, people pleasing is a sickness where the pleaser tells/does whatever they think people want in order for those people to enjoy/need the pleaser even more. It's selfish. But it's deceitfully selfish.

I know because I am a recovering people pleaser. I would serve in every ministry I could in church to get the leadership to like me more. Sometimes my intentions were pure and it was for the Lord, but other times if I was honest about why I was doing what I was doing, it was for people ... aka it was for me.

The same thing can be applied to encouragement. Sometimes we lie to our friends, our loved ones and we think we are blessing them with encouraging words. And maybe we are, but I have been learning that God longs for His Words to be used as tools to encourage the heart versus our own words that just fluff up the ego.

Galatians 1:10 says, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

You belong to God first.
Dear Christian sibling, you serve Him first.

You are to be a God pleaser your whole life, so at the beginning of your eternity you can hear, "Well done my good and faithful servant."

The best remedy for you who struggle with people pleasing is to know God's Word. Know what He says, know what He thinks, and know what He cares about, that way you can encourage your loved ones with lasting truth, instead of a momentary bite of flattery.

Spend some time and ask God to give you three names of friends in your life

I PETER 1:22

"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart."

MONDAY

EPHESIANS 4:2

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Our Christian friendships are precious things. Much like a garden they need a variety of things to help them grow. They need water (God's truth), as well as good roots (quality time). They need pruning (aka patience and gentleness) as well as light (edification).

Spend some time today praying for your close brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray that God would continue to deepen your friendships that you could both sharpen each other (Proverbs 17:17). Pray for those friends.

Then spend some time asking God for new friends to invest in. Ask Him for new relationships to be cultivated at church, your job, your gym, anywhere. Pray that these relationships would be ones to help you both grow closer to Christ.

ROMANS 15:7

“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

TUESDAY

JOHN 13:14

“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

Serving one another is one of those great honors we talk about in small groups or at Sunday morning services. But what does serving one another look like when a church leader isn’t looking? When Jesus was washing his disciples’ feet he took on the grittiest, least glamorous form of serving. The disciples’ feet were nasty: dirt roads, vagabond fishermen, wandering from here to there, days and days in between washes in the river. And Jesus got down on his hands and knees, soaking up the profound joy of God in human form, and literally washed the filth off of His closest friends.

Spend some time reading Thessalonians 1:1-13. Ask God how you can serve the Christian brothers and sisters in your life. Spend some time praying that the Holy Spirit would help you to be sensitive to how you can be used to “wash the filth” from your dear friends.

Galatians 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

WEDNESDAY

GALATIANS 5:26

“Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Isn't it so easy to be in conflict with others? Isn't it so easy to just let relationships stay in an unhealthy place? Or maybe the truth is, we don't know when a relationship is NOT in harmony.

When a friendship is pure, when two friends are genuinely cheering for each other, there is harmony. The relationship is life-giving. But when pride stirs in a friendship, it can lead to envy and competition between each other. Instead of celebrating one another's victories, we secretly relish in each other's mistakes. We hope for bad things because we want ourselves to feel better. We get haughty, we provoke, and our relationship is set to crumble. Selfishness is the number one way to ruin a friendship.

Fight for peace kindreds. Part of that is not focusing so much on DOING good things for each other, but rather BEING a good sister or brother for each other. If you struggle with envying others, maybe take a step back from your friendships. Are you doing too many things for people but for the wrong motives? Maybe start doing less, and BEING more. Be a good friend. Don't just act like one.

1 Timothy 1:5 says,
“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

Pray for the whole Church to take a step towards one another instead of away. Pray that God would show you in your own relationships how to BE a good friend to those in your life.

MARK 9:50

“Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

THURSDAY

JAMES 5:16

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.
The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Did you know that you do not have to do this life alone? In fact, the Bible is filled with instances where God prioritizes and creates community. Even the Trinity is proof that God values relationships. Jesus had many friends, he had some close friends, and he had a few best friends. He shared his burdens with his best friends. And he asked if they would pray for him. Of course, they were super lame and fell asleep!

Don't fall asleep on your friends. Pray for that friend who is going through a hard time. Tell them you're praying for them. Tell them you'll help them carry their load. And when your own burden is heavy, and you find it hard to pray, let another help you carry your load, too.

ROMANS 15:7

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

FRIDAY

GALATIANS 5:13

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

The beautiful thing about God’s love is it starts with BEING. God is far more concerned with being than doing. Often times we read these verses and we get hyped to “love one another.” But what does that really mean?

Where does loving one another start?

It starts with your heart. Read 1 Timothy 1:5.

ROMANS 13:8

“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

SATURDAY

JOHN 6:43

“Jesus answered them, ‘Do not grumble among yourselves.’”

Have you heard a choir sing together? A chorus sung in unison is powerful. But a verse sung with 8 different parts is a mighty force of creativity and beauty. It speaks of the discipline of the choir for each member to know their role, to know their part, to hear how they fit in, but to not jump to a part meant for another.

The Body of Christ is like a choir. There are different roles and different strengths. Under the direction of our Almighty Conductor, we have the leading we need to make the most beautiful song -- the symphony of God's redemption plan for man.

However, we are not a perfect family. We grumble when we miss our notes. We can get haughty even though we are not in tune with ours or another's role in the "choir."

It takes surrendering our pride to follow the Conductor. It takes humility to let Him lead us and those around us. But when we do, our lives can intertwine in the most God-exalting melodious harmony.

And this is why Paul encouraged generations of believers to live in harmony multiple times in the Word.

Pray for harmony in your local church. Pray over each ministry and small group at your church, asking God to unify them.

Read Romans 15:1-7.

ROMANS 12:16

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.”

THE BRIDE II // LECRAE

A building of beings being constructed
Christ is the cornerstone, foundation build on another and you's a goner holmes
She' built on em, supported by him, conformed to him, now she's a body of bodies who transform
through him

A temple that breathes we are the halls
We are the floor board or more we are the walls
Manifold wisdom of God no longer a mystery
The church is the pinnacle of our salvific history
One flesh union homie

The Tri-union is glorified through our corporatized communion
Still the present reality is she was born a casualty though she's made alive
She's affected by depravity
Once lived in sin and enslaved by her lust and
Folks catch her slippin and they turn away disgusted
She's a work in progress Christ is the head of her
And He wash her clean with the words that he done said to her
She's already pretty but she's really not dressed and sometimes she look silly but she's far from a
mess

Yes, please so don't be dissin cause Jesus done paid grip an
And if you didn't then should caller her Misses. I'm talking bout the church

WEEK THREE

SUNDAY

I THESSALONIANS 4:18

“Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

This verse is in the context of believers being reunited with Christ just before He establishes His kingdom on the Earth. Without getting caught up in conflicting ideas/beliefs about the end times, the point is that we would show our love for one another by encouraging and reminding each other that Jesus is still in control. He still loves us, is fighting for us, and He will return in victory.

When you have friends who are going through difficult ... When they feel so stuck they can't imagine how it will get better ... Remind them of this truth: Jesus is coming back. And when He does, He will right every wrong and wipe away every tear. This is the foundation of our hope.

Who in your in your life can you encourage with these words — reminding them the Jesus loves them, that He is fighting for them, and coming back for them?

I THESSALONIANS 4:9

“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”

MONDAY

I THESSALONIANS 4:18

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

Whenever we walk out of a movie, my husband says something like this, “It is so easy to cut a movie down and to only see what we didn’t like. However, I choose to focus on what is good about it” (this is usually in reference to the newest Star Wars movie). Since he said this when we were first dating I have found myself enjoying entertainment more. I’m wired to be a critic. I literally edit stories, photos, design, and conversations in my mind all the time. Maybe you’re like me and it is your job to make things better. Does this ability to critique, cut down, and slice apart something ever seep into how you view the Church?

I know it does for me.

My husband’s desire for focusing on goodness can be applied to our speech about our family in Christ. It’s so easy to let a genuinely good conversation talking about a friend from Church devolve into gossip, or let our grievances about that friend develop into a sort of bitterness. The idea of speaking “evil” against our family is a fragile thing. Even though the word “evil” is so charged and explicit when we’re actually partaking in this segregating speech we are poisoning relationships. We are partaking in that evil. We are disjointing different parts of the body of Christ.

And ultimately we’re setting up Satan for a win.

Bitterness lurks. It longs to be planted in our hearts. It longs to invade how we

feel towards our Church family. Anyone can criticize, gossip, or let their words be saturated in bitterness. But it takes true courage and strength to pursue the opposite spirit. This is why Paul says to do everything without complaining or arguing. It is a serious job to be an encourager of the army of God. Once we claim that as our role in the family we can use God's love to change our critiques into edification.

Read Philippians 2:12-16

JAMES 4:11

“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.”

TUESDAY

ROMANS 14:13

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

I remember the first time I heard someone on my church's staff gossip about someone in the congregation. It was like driving a car down the freeway having to break suddenly for traffic. I did a double take. The staffer noticed. They backpedaled and said, “Oh you know, they're an E.G.R.” My expressive face was still in shock. “You know ... Extra Grace Required?”

The sad thing was, I DID know.

I've thought about that moment a lot and have concluded the way we talk about our family in Christ can either strengthen or weaken us. It's as trepidatious as a slacklining. One slight breeze can knock you right off. In a similar way, gossip is that slight breeze that leads to dissension, strife, ostracizing, cliques, bitterness, envy, deceit, and overall, the weakening of the Church. It's been happening for hundreds of years.

It is difficult when someone has hurt you or simply rubs you the wrong way to look past that. We're not asking you to be perfect. God knows us. He knows our shortcomings and chooses to claim us WITHOUT the condition of us reaching perfection first. Therefore, should we have that same condition for others?

Friend, choose to claim these E.G.R. (extra grace required) people. Church leaders,

ministry leaders, etc. please guard your mouth. James 1:26 says, "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless." Claim them. Pray for them. Pray great things for them.

And take a step back. Instead of engaging in the gossip, just keep still. Let it pass.
Choose to love.

And with this little step, you will work up to living out these verses.

HEBREWS 10:24-25

"And let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. "

WEDNESDAY

I JOHN 3:11

“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

God's plan for the Church is that we would love one another. One of the most repeated One Another commands is to love one another. Repetition is God's way of highlighting, bolding, underlining, and basically yelling, “I REALLY CARE ABOUT THIS.”

But there are so many things that can derail this whole loving one another thing. That is why the verse below serves as a great memory verse. Write it out, over and over. And pay special attention to “bearing with one another.”

This phrase is unique because it refers to tolerating each other. According to Dr. David B. Hawkins (Christian Clinical Psychologist) “By ‘tolerance’ I do not mean tolerating bad behavior. I mean bearing with one another’s weaknesses. I mean being mindful that you are not the center of the universe. I mean being aware that everyone is struggling with their own burdens, wrestling with their own conflicts.” Hawkins further explains when we choose to tolerate each other we give an endless gifting. Practicing tolerance is not an option, it is a gift to others, it then becomes a gift to ourselves, and lastly, it creates a more loving world.

COLOSSIANS 3:13

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”

THURSDAY

GALATIANS 5:15

“But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.”

Let's cut to the chase, we can each name 10-30 “Christians” that have hurt us at some point or another.

That's okay.

Did you know that?

It's okay if another Christian hurts you.

The Church is not a utopia. It was never meant to be that. It was supposed to be a conglomerate of broken people that TOGETHER glorify God's diverse attributes and lift up His name together.

If you are truly living and reliving the hurt from another Christian, please stop right now and tell God about it. Tell Him why it hurts today. Tell Him why the pain is activated right now.

Then, can you please try to ask for His help to forgive that person? Maybe it doesn't happen today, but maybe one day that weight can be lifted from your heavy and scarred heart. And maybe you can encourage another sister or brother in Christ to let their wounds heal through time and forgiveness.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:20-21 and pray that you could see how those who hurt you in the Church fit into the bigger picture of God's mission of the Church.

JAMES 5:9

“Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, another Judge is standing at the door.”

FRIDAY

ROMANS 16:16

“Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.”

If you grew up in Youth Group like I did, many jokes were made about these verses. And c'mon, they are funny to think about when you're 14. But it's 2018 now, so let's consider that Paul was being serious about this.

In both of these passages the phrase “holy kiss” is surrounded by the context of greeting. Imagine you haven't seen your best friend in years. You moved. They moved. College doesn't reunite you in the fall anymore.

The first time you see this friend, this walking piece of your heart, you hug, you embrace, you cry outside a grocery store (if you're me) and you're very tempted to never let go. This is the kind of love Paul was hoping to cultivate in the first century Church. This is the kind of greeting Paul was encouraging the first century Church to give.

John Piper explains the holy kiss application as such:

“(Paul was) saying: Take the physical, familial expression of endearment and use it in a way that is holy to express your love for one another. And he didn't prescribe that it had to be done every single time you see one another fresh for the full time. He just said: Use it. Use it. Do it. And I think that we would do well to think of ways that we might include a holy kiss in our greetings, especially perhaps for very dear friends after very long absences. And I am mainly thinking of people of the same

sex here because I think you have to be so careful with kissing people of the opposite sex.”

As we get past giggles from bible verses coated with coodies, I think we can see from Pastor Piper that we should celebrate when we see each other and SHOW our affection. The Church is meant to be a powerhouse of love. This excitement, love, and affection in a greeting is a little way we can accomplish that.

I CORINTHIANS 16:20

“All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

SATURDAY

ROMANS 12:10

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

Can you imagine angelic Olympics up in heaven? Angels and forever-at-peace believers competing, so purely, to out serve one another. The competition would be fierce. It would be perfect. It would be glorious. It would consist of some montage on the Angel Cable Network heavenly news with people smiling as they clear dishes for others. Joy leaking from the eyes as competitors eagerly take out the trash.

Sounds lovely. Sounds silly. But imagine having so much contentment in Jesus, that your primary wish would be to serve others so that peace and joy would rub off on them. In such contentment, every action glorifies our King.

Spend some time thinking about how you can practically “outdo one another in showing honor” to your family you’ll see at Church tomorrow.

Or, if you are between churches, spend some time praying over where to go to Church tomorrow, asking the Lord where you can best serve the body.

I THESSALONIANS 3:12

“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you.”

THE BRIDE III // LECRAE

Her name is ecclesia meaning the assembly
Bows to the Trinity No other Divinity
A body family and community she is all one
But on earth you see her in congregational small ones
A microcosm or a small scale example
But it is the church even though its just a sample
Invisible spiritual
Physical visible
Not a brick temple never that simple
This a not a building
She is not bricks
She's a world changer but ain't bout getting rich
Perpetrating fakes cause a lot of folks to hate
Plus her hands get dirty and her feet get scraped
And sometimes her body parts start acting outta place
Legs tryna be arms
Arms thinking they the face
But she'll never be replaced with a one man band or a small Taliban with no body in command

WEEK FOUR

SUNDAY

ROMANS 12:10

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

Another mass shooting on the news. Another black life is wrongfully taken -- as told by Twitter. Another group of sexual assault victims is told they are not loved or worthy. Evil lurks.

We are called to abhor what is evil, friends. But what does the word “abhor” mean?

Abhor: To loathe. To hate. To detest. To abominate.

It is entirely too easy to find something in media that we hate. That is why I love that Paul follows up such a short and charged statement with the call to “hold fast to what is good.” It’s almost like in between those two sentences there is a complete tone change. Can you imagine Paul jumping on top of a table filled with Roman friends exclaiming:

“HATE WHAT IS EVIL!” But then his tone would soften after getting their attention.
“BUT ... hold fast, to what is good.”

We need your prayers kindreds.

The Church needs your prayers.

Pray for our Church leaders that struggle to lead us through these tragedies that bombard our media and hearts.

Pray for our Church leaders for boldness to address hard topics and see what the Bible actually says to the heart of these issues.
Pray for Sincerely, Kindred as we pursue this burden to talk about hard topics. Pray that we can encourage and edify our readers through our art and stories.

JOHN 13:34

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

MONDAY

COLOSSIANS 3:9

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Relationships are hard. Lying is easy. It isn't difficult to look our friends, our family members, our spouses, in the eye and tell them what isn't true so that we look better than we actually are. We try to dress up our old selves with falsities, try to make our old selves look more presentable in exaggeration. We do this every time we say we're "fine" when we're not, every time we say "it's ok" when we still harbor bitterness, everytime we touch up what has gone wrong, everytime we pretend to be listening while only looking out for our own devices.

Sin lurks in our old selves, and it threatens the people around us, the people we call our community. But God, in His splendid goodness calls us, not to better our old selves, but to put on a new self. And this, to our sinful selves' demise, is not only for our benefit, but for the benefit of those we hold dear. We are, as followers of Jesus, members of one another, part of the same Body. When one of us puts on the new self and puts away falsehood, the other has the same opportunity to thrive.

We do not have to bother with our old selves any longer, making sure they look the best they can. Putting on the new self means loving the people around us more than we care for ourselves. It means speaking truth and speaking life. This is the way the Body thrives.

Who can you speak truth to? What parts of your old self are you still clinging too, still trying to make better? Shake it off, my friend, and put on the new self that is made in the image of the Creator.

EPHESIANS 4:25

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”

TUESDAY

COLOSSIANS 3:9

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

His love is everlasting.
His love quiets us.
His love fights for us.
His love covers us.
His love cares for us.
His love sees us.

This is how our God loves us. Always. No matter what we've done or haven't done, His love remains the way it has been since he created us: steadfast and unmovable, sacrificial and abundant. This is how He asks us, pleads with us to love one another.

Regardless of what they've done or haven't done, our love for others is to reflect the love of the Father. This is how we are set apart, this is how the world sees and comes to know Christ: through our love.

It isn't easy, I know. It wasn't easy for Him either. He loved the very ones who put Him on that tree. He loved them so deeply and so passionately that His last earthly words were a prayer for their very souls. Find the strength in the love He has shown you, even in your lowest lows, to love those who have done you wrong.

Look into their faces and see the love He had for them, too. Only good and only love can make it right again.

JOHN 15:12

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

WEDNESDAY

1 CORINTHIANS 7:5

“Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

In the sacred design of marriage, our bodies aren't our own. They aren't our own to take away when we're upset, to hide when we feel uncomfortable. How cool that in marriage, part of fleeing sexual immorality is actually making sure you take part in it? How cool that battling Satan and his threats of temptation and unfaithfulness, means coming together again as husband and wife and enjoying the gift of sex that God created. Never should a fight, a misunderstanding, an indifference keep us from our spouse. These are the things that lead us into temptation.

Satan would like to believe he has so much control over us in this aspect. But we can fight against the temptations he throws our way by being one with our spouses, by greeting them with a holy kiss, but coming together again, the way God intended.

In a similar parallel, God has set us up to not just talk like we're family, but to act like it, even in how we greet one another. We encourage you to think about this phrase from Corinthians, “come together again” and how you can celebrate your church family whenever you all come together again.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:12

“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

THURSDAY

EPHESIANS 5:21

“Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

For the past 20 something days, we have been talking about these “one another” commands as mutual, two-way street kind of commands. This one, however, is addressed in the context of a more one-way street manner.

This is for the fillers of the pews and the sheep following the head sheep. Let's pause and reread this passage.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ, (Ephesians 5:15-21).

Welcome pastor Steven J. Cole to drop some insight on this passage:

Ephesians 5:21, translated literally, is, “submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.” It is the last of five participles that spell out the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit. The first three center on joyful worship (5:19). The fourth is, “always giving thanks for all things” (5:20). Now the last relates to our relationships, “submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.” It also serves as a topic phrase to introduce Paul's teaching on Christian marriage (5:22-33); instruction to children and parents (6:1-4); and directions to slaves and masters (6:5-9).

So the world's way is, "Assert yourself! Stand up for your rights! You don't have to take such treatment! Get an attorney to fight for your rights!" God's way is, "submit to one another in the fear of Christ." These views are at polar opposites!

God puts people in authority over you and He puts us under their authority. Therefore, be subject to them. My heart instantly wants to run to the little black book of church leaders or other family members who have hurt me, but if we can recognize that God is in control of all of these things, then maybe we can view this holy submission as an act of faith and worship to God's omniscience.

ROMANS 13:1

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

FRIDAY

2 JOHN 1:5

“And now I ask you, dear lady — not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning — that we love one another”

Country songs are written about it. It's lettered on cheesy signs and plastered above doorways and on mantles. Poets are dedicated to it. And Christians are bound to it. This is the most important thing: love. And we would have no concept of it if it were not for the steadfast and loving nature of our creator. Because of His love that moves and lives through us, we love each other.

But loving isn't easy. C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Four Loves*,

To love anything is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness.

When we extend our love to others, we extend the very part of us that has the highest capacity to be shattered. But when we withhold love from others out of fear, we withhold the very hand of God. God did not withhold His love from us. He took it to the cross and was broken for it.

Risk breaking, love with the abundant love that Christ has bestowed upon you.

1 JOHN 4:11

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

SATURDAY

I PETER 5:14

“Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.”

Today I walked around town and the world was particularly smiley. I felt particularly smiley as well. After a really good morning of worship, prayer and study I felt so very full of God’s love. I listened over and over to Cory Ashbury’s song Reckless Love. The lyrics lingered their sweet reminders in my mind all day:

Oh the overwhelming never ending reckless love of God,
Oh it chases me down fights till I’m found leaves the ninety-nine
I couldn’t earn it, I don’t deserve it,
Still you give yourself away
Oh the overwhelming never ending reckless love of God.

And, call me crazy, but I think the world was noticing. The world was being affected by the love that lives in my soul. Our love extends out of God’s love. Our love is POWERFUL. Our love can turn away anger, brighten darkness, destroy sadness. Our love shows the world who God is. The world recognizes us as followers of God as set apart because of this love. Love and holiness are inseparable. So when the world sees our love, they see our holiness.

Who and how can you love today? Fill yourself, every part of yourself with the reckless love of God and share it with the rest of the world.

I THESSALONIANS 4:9

“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”

THE BRIDE VI // LECRAE

Some don't get it so they hate
They say she's on a paper chase they say she's really fake
So they go start a ministry so they can do the work
But they don't understand how Jesus feel about His church
And yeah they make disciples
They got plenty conversions
They take care of the widows and the orphans they be workin
But none of them are churchin
No church structure
No elders and no discipline
They have no conductor
And they so they don't submit
But quite a few of them baptize
People how I pray that you'd look at this thing from God's eyes
Take responsibility inside the whole council not just the area where you might have a mouthful
Who should folks submit to
Who will conduct the discipline
If excommunicated what body will they be missing then
Look at Ephesians 4 where Paul gets practical
1st Timothy and Titus if you thinking I'm irrational

WEEK FIVE

SUNDAY

I PETER 5:14

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

In the last year, we've seen a great deal of “super” people grace the movie screen. From THE AMAZING Spiderman to the Wonderful Woman of beauty and power and fierce femininity, to the juxtaposition of Kylo Ren's power to Rey's compassion, each of these giants has some special character strength that adds to their supernatural abilities.

Jesus invites us into a narrative of becoming “super” people. His invitation is graciously given to permit us to take part in the greatest TRUE story ever told. How a God more powerful than Thor gave up his divinity to take on human flesh and die for those who utterly despised Him.

This act was made by the God who created everything out of nothing, and it is the greatest example of love the world has ever seen. We could even call this ridiculous love a superpower, or some special character strength.

For better or worse, we can't lift Thor's hammer or fit into an Iron Man suit or play with a real “laser sword”. We don't live in one of these great cinematic universes, but we do live in a universe where this all powerful, all loving God invites us into His story. This radical love that He showed to the world as He hung on a cross, we can show to the world too. He gives us this power. We just need to decide to use it.

How can you show the love of Christ to your Church today? To your friends who know God or who don't know Him? Today, how can you show this love to the world?

I JOHN 4:7-8

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

MONDAY

ROMANS 15:5

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus.”

Paul's prayer in Romans 15 is for us to walk in unity together as the Church. However, this supernatural unity can only come from God. Look around the next time you're at church. You'll find there many different people with different backgrounds, histories, ethnicities, and cultures. And then if you add another church, and another church, and another church ... what if you add in the rest of the world? You would have a super force of diversity with a mission of being in the same accord in Christ.

God is the uniter of cultures, politics, ages, races, and social classes.

Only our God can unite such a diverse group of mankind.

So in the same way, we can bring unity by extending courtesies to one another. We can do this in many ways. Some may be as controversial as silencing our boisterous political views so we can listen to our brother's instead. Others are as easy as waiting for one another when we come together to eat.

Look out for these instances to practice being one with each other. Pray that God will show you and give you ideas how to practice such a unity.

Read Romans 15:1-21 with us and remember, we are all in this together.

I CORINTHIANS 12:13

“So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”

TUESDAY

JAMES 5:16

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Confession is one of the most helpful things we can do for our hearts. In the evangelical tradition, confession takes place between God and man’s heart. It is spoken in Psalms that confession can lift the spirit (Psalm 38:18). And in the New Testament confession takes place before asking Jesus to save you (Romans 10:9), before baptism (Matthew 3:6), and before we pray so that we can be in right standing with God before we ask for something (James 5:16). But what about confessing to one another?

There is great power in the Catholic tradition of confession (there are also some causes for raised eyebrows ... but let’s just take in the good and leave the sketchiness). Confessing your sin to someone in the flesh, in person can be extremely healing. Yes God hears us and is the only one who redeems us, but He also didn’t design us to be lone wolf Christians. Yet at the same time, we cannot confess our greatest follies to whomever’s path we cross. With wisdom from God, we can discern who can be a sweet, dependable friend to help us carry our burdens to the foot of the cross.

But at the same time, can we try to be that friend to others? Can we seek to be slow to speak and quick to listen? Proverbs 20:5 says “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”

Friends, please pray that God would help you to be a woman or man of understanding. Pray for those who have confessed something to you and you handled it poorly. Pray about going to them and apologizing for your hastiness. And pray for opportunities to lay your burdens and in turn, have someone’s given to you.

JOHN 15:17

“These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

OUTRO

Dear Devotional Pals,

Well, friends, we did it. We have made it through the month of February reading the Bible every day. We know that the daily readings weren't very long, but it is no small thing to read God's Word and meditate on it daily. It is actually a really big deal. It is our heart's hope that you have drawn closer to God and learned a new thing or two about Him and His values for our big Christian family. Even more than that, however, we hope that you have built a daily habit that you can take beyond this month.

Friends, God's heart is to have a relationship with you, and not just an Instagram relationship where the extent of your interaction is watching each others' stories. It doesn't have to be a Twitter relationship of 140 characters or less.

A relationship with God can be the grandest adventure. It is an invitation to the greatest story the universe has ever heard. It is the God of worlds knocking on your front door desiring an in-your-face kind of relationship. And He won't settle for anything less.

Throughout this month we have talked a lot

about relationships in the Church, with fellow believers, and basically how to interact with this uniquely big family. Our prayer is that we each go forward from this month celebrating the Church, mourning when another mourns, helping when another is in need, and overall, letting God's big heart for His people to impact our little hearts. When a church is broadcasted on the news for poor conduct, let's pray. When a homeless ministry needs some extra items, let's give. When a Christian college is under attack, let's encourage. It isn't always easy, but God's strength moves through us. We can be so powerful if we truly believe that we belong to one another.

Love the Church.
Be the Church.
Cherish Her.
Serve Her.
And help Her.

And all God's people said...
"Amen!"

Sincerely,
Kindred