



This Devotional Belongs To:

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This 40-Day Devotional was Created by the Churches of:

Capella Church of Christ - King, NC

First Christian Church King - King, NC

Jefferson Christian Church - Rural Hall, NC

Poplar Springs Church of Christ - King, NC

## Day 1: Character

# The Trinity

Three in one, how does that work? By all means, I'm no math major, trust me, I went to Bible College. Three in one confuses me; it makes no sense.

Sure, church people will say the Trinity is like the three properties of water, but that analogy doesn't do the Trinity justice. God, Jesus and Holy Spirit are separate but yet function as one.

Although scripture never specifically uses the word Trinity, we see in scripture how God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit work.

- 2 Corinthians 13:14
- Colossians 2:9
- 2 Corinthians 3:17
- John 1:14
- John 10:30

I love how the Trinity works, each of these three are so powerful by themselves, yet they work perfectly together to accomplish great and mighty things.

- God:
  - The beginning and the end.
  - The Alpha and the Omega.
  - All powerful and all-knowing.
  - Father.

- Jesus:
  - The Son of God.
  - God in human skin.
  - Prince of Peace.
  - Savior.
  - Word.
- Holy Spirit:
  - Our comforter.
  - The link between God and us.
  - God in Spirit form who dwells in us.
  - Our moral compass

By the power of the Trinity, we have access to God in three very distinct forms.

Question:

- As you reflect on the three forms of God, which form of the Trinity are you most thankful for? Why?

## Day 2: Character

# The Creator

Have you ever stopped to take in nature? Does it blow your mind at how everything just seems to work so well? Currently, the earth is tilted at 23.5 degrees. Scientists say that if the earth were tilted at 35 degrees, seasons and weather would be thrown into chaos. That's only an 11.5-degree difference! People will tell you that all this just happened by chance, the Bible says that in six days God formed everything and on the seventh day He rested.

*Read Genesis 1-2:3*

The first thing God revealed about Himself in Scripture is not that He is loving, holy, omnipotent, gracious, or just. No, the first thing God showed us is that He is creative! For the first six days, God revealed His creative spirit by speaking stars, animals, and oceans into existence. Then, on the sixth day, He created man *"in His own image"* and called Adam to create, showing God's image to the world.

There is much debate when it comes to the creation of the universe and earth. Scientist and Biblical scholars have spent an endless amount of time debating the cause of creation. To top it off, some Christians even question how long it took for everything to form.

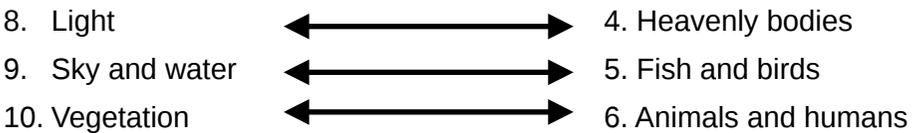
- **Old Earth Creationists:** They believe that the creation account took longer than six literal days. They base this claim on the meaning of the Hebrew word Yom, which is a general term for time. Yom is used when the author of Genesis talks about the days.

- **New Earth Creationist:** They believe the earth is somewhere around 6000 years old. They base this on the fact the earth was created in six literal days. They also use the genealogies in the Old and New Testaments to base a time frame of the earth on.

The first chapter of Genesis describes creation in great detail. Here are the first seven days in the creation account.

1. Light
2. Sky and water
3. Vegetation
4. Heavenly bodies
5. Fish and birds
6. Animals and Humans
7. Rest

Do you see a pattern going on? Days four through six complement days one through three. It's like this:



It's important to take note that God rested on day seven. The Almighty God took a break from all the amazing things that He formed. Rest is essential. We can get so caught up in our business that we forget to rest. If God rested, we should do the same. Take time to breathe and to reflect on all the magnificent things God has made in this world!

Day 3: Character

# The Creator of Us

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

*- Genesis 1:27*

By the time day six arrived God looked upon His creation and saw that everything was good, however, something was missing.

When I read the verse that describes the creation of man I see two parts to the story

## **- We are more than our mistakes and failures**

When we mess up or fail, we often think less of ourselves. Our self-worth drops, and we may convince ourselves that we are nothing but a failure. The sixth day of creation tells a different story.

God created us in His image. He formed us from the dust of the earth and put His breath in our lungs to give us life! You and I are His workmanship, the best of His creation! When we think less of ourselves, we essentially think less of God and the work He put into us. See yourself as He intended you to be, His masterpiece. Satan will tell us lies, tell us we aren't good enough. Live every day knowing you are God's best work!

## **- We are called to create**

We see that God is a creator and when He formed Adam there is a call to create. Our lives should be a reflection of God to the world. To

call a human being “creative” is redundant. We are all made in the image of the creator God. But as Romans 12 makes clear, each of us has *“different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.”* With these gifts, we are to give the world a glimpse of God. Let God’s creativity flow through you as you use your talents to spread the goodness of His love!

Let’s go back to that whole idea of something being missing in creation. God looked out and saw all that He had made. He was pleased, but He knew there could be more. So, day six He creates man in His image to be His representatives on earth.

*“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”*

*- Genesis 1:31*

When you don’t feel so good about yourself, or you feel like you have no purpose in this life know that God made you! He made you in His image and that when He looks at you, He sees you as very good!

## Day 4: Character

# Misconceptions

If someone asked you to describe God, how would you answer?

What if someone wanted to know what God is like, what would you say?

So many people in the world today have misconceptions of who God is and what He is like. I grew up in church from a young age, and I still battle with misconceptions of God.

Today we will look at a few misconceptions that people have when it comes to God and the truth of God and His character.

- **Misconception: God will not forgive me:** Most people hold on to this misconception of God due to the fact they believe their sin is too great to be forgiven.
  - **Truth: God offers forgiveness freely to those who have given Him their life:** God has freely given His son Jesus as the sacrifice for the sin of the whole world (John 3:16). No matter what you have done, Jesus paid it all for everyone.
- **Misconception: God is too holy for me to have a relationship with Him:** People have the misconception that because God is holy and we aren't He wants nothing to do with us.
  - **Truth: God created us so that we could have a relationship with Him:** God came down to earth in human form, Jesus spent time with sinners. We see this over and over in scripture (Mark

2:16-17). We cannot match the holiness of God. However, He still desires to have a relationship with us.

- **Misconception: God doesn't understand me:** This misconception comes from the idea that because God isn't physically in our midst, He has no clue what we are going through or doesn't understand us.
  - **Truth: We are His creation, and He understands us:** God formed you, He knows His creation better than we know ourselves (Jeremiah 1:5). He understands us and knows what we go through.
  
- **Misconception: God doesn't know what you did, are doing, or planning to do:** This misconception follows the one before. Because God is out of sight and out of mind, we can get away with whatever we want.
  - **Truth: God is all knowing:** Remember the story of the fall when Adam and Eve ate the fruit and hid from God (Genesis 3:9-10)? God didn't happen to find Himself in the garden for no reason. He knew exactly what they did, and He knows what we did, what we are doing, and what we will do.

Reading scripture and reflecting on what it says will help us have a better understanding of who God is and what He is like. We won't know everything nor will we be able to grasp everything that He is. The goal is to have a better understanding so that we can rid ourselves of misconceptions that we wrongly believe.

## Day 5: Character

# Mystery

When I was growing up, I loved to watch the old school Scooby-Doo episodes. The gang would find clues that would help them to solve the mystery of who done it. The idea of finding out the mystery in the episodes caught my attention, and I couldn't get enough. I have always been captivated by the idea of mysteries. I once read a mystery novel for six straight hours just to find out the ending!

When you think of mystery, I'm guessing the Bible is the last thing that comes to your mind. The Bible is full of this idea of mystery. Throughout the pages, we find instances of the mystery of God.

The very fact that God is so incomprehensible is a mystery in and of itself.

*“Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?”*

*- Job 11:7*

We struggle to know and to understand God and His ways. As someone who studied at Bible College and ministers to students, I still struggle with trying to understand God and His reasoning. I want to know why God answers one prayer but doesn't answer the next. I want to know why evil still exists and why people still do horrible things in this world. I want to understand the mind of God, yet He keeps these things a mystery.

God is a mystery to us. He has hidden certain things, but He has also revealed other things to us as well.

*“And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables.”*

*- Mark 4:11*

If we have given our life to Christ, we have an understanding of God's plan through His Son. We understand the purpose of Jesus coming to earth. For those who haven't given their life to Christ they don't see their need for a savior, it is a mystery to them.

I love what Paul says in Ephesians.

*“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making know to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”*

*- Ephesians 1:7-10*

This is a mystery that Christians understand, for those outside of Christ they are left trying to understand the mystery.

The beauty of mysteries is simply this, we might find the answers and we might not. In understanding mysteries in the Bible, know that there are some that we will never figure out. There are also mysteries that have been revealed to us because of our relationship with Christ.



Day 7: Sovereignty/Goodness

# Week 2: God's Sovereignty and Goodness

What does it mean that God is sovereign? Is God good, and what about when things in our lives aren't? These questions are crucial to the Christian faith, but they also are vitally important for our daily lives. This week we will be wrestling through these questions. What we will find is that God's sovereignty and goodness are intimately connected and help to give us comfort in every situation life may throw at us.

Day 8: God is Sovereign

Day 9: God's Sovereignty and Our Actions

Day 10: God's Goodness

Day 11: God's Sovereignty is for Our Good

Day 12: God Works All Things Together for the Good of His People

Day 13: Grace Day/Review Day

Are there circumstances in your life or the lives of others that make it hard for you to see God as good or sovereign? Write those down below.

Ask God to help you be open this week to the possibility that his sovereignty and goodness are always at work, even in the most tragic of circumstances.

## Day 8: Sovereignty

# God is Sovereign

*“O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”*

*- 2 Chronicles 20:6*

Sovereignty is a very “churchy” word. What I mean is that we use it and hear it a lot in church but, if you were like me when I was growing up, you have no idea what it means.

Think about a king. Theoretically, a king has complete and total authority over his subjects and his kingdom. No one outranks him. No one tells him what to do. He’s the boss. If you go up the chain-of-command, the king will be at the top with no equal. A king is the top dog and is over and above everyone else in his kingdom. He has all authority.

This is a good (though not perfect) picture of what Christians mean by ‘God’s sovereignty.’

When we say that God is sovereign, we mean that God is in complete control. He has ultimate authority over all things. He is over and above everything in Heaven and on Earth (Matt. 28:18). There is not one microscopic thing in all of existence, spiritual or material, that isn’t under God’s good rule and authority. What God says goes, and nothing happens apart from his good and perfect will. From the dust under your bed to the 100 billion galaxies in the universe, it’s all under His authority. This is what it means to say that God is sovereign.

And this is good news!

What a terrifying thing it would be if God didn't have complete control; if sickness, disaster, Satan, and other people could run around doing whatever they want while God was helpless to stop them or turn their actions for good. Would we even leave our houses? But praise God this isn't the case! God isn't helpless; He's sovereign. He's sovereign over Satan and sickness. He's sovereign over presidents and terrorists. He's sovereign over you and me and every other human. He's sovereign over everything in all of creation. ALL THINGS are under His authority. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from God's say-so (Matt. 10:29).

A British pastor once said, "I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes." His point: from the smallest thing to the largest thing in the universe, all things are under God's authority. Listen, God is aware and in control of the details of your life. You're not free falling, no matter how chaotic life may seem. God is in control. He's got you in his hand. God is sovereign.

Questions:

- Does God being in control of all things sound like good news to you?
- How might knowing that God is sovereign over all things affect the way we live?

Day 9: Sovereignty

# God's Sovereignty and Our Actions

*"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"*

- Genesis 50:20a

One of the questions that naturally arise when talking about God's sovereignty is, "What does God's sovereignty mean for human free will?" This is a good question. To try to answer it, let's look at the story of Joseph (Gen. 37-50).

Here's the quick version: Joseph has dreams he's going to become greater than his brothers and brags about it to them. Obviously, they don't like this, so they sell him into slavery in Egypt and fake his death. While in Egypt—this part takes a while—Joseph eventually rises to become the right-hand man of Pharaoh. A famine hits the region, and God uses Joseph to save Egypt. Then Joseph's brothers come to Egypt looking for food, and finally, Joseph reveals himself to them, and they're reunited. It's an amazing story of God's sovereignty and goodness in hardship.

But here's the part that's especially important for us, in Genesis 50:20, after all this has gone down and Joseph and his family are reunited, Joseph says to his brother, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."* Did you catch that? "You **meant** evil against me, but God **meant** it for good." What are we supposed to do we do with this?

First, we see that the brothers chose what they did. They were the ones who sold him into slavery. With their free will they **meant** evil against Joseph. But in the same sentence Joseph says that God **meant** it all for good. In other words, behind the scenes, though the brothers were the free actors, God was working his own purposes into being. God himself was intending his own sovereign will *through* the brothers' free actions.

So, we have free will, and God is sovereign over and above our free will working his own purposes into being through our actions. This is a mystery of the Christian faith we won't fully grasp this side of eternity. And that's ok; if we could understand everything about everything God wouldn't be much of a God.

But there are several things we can understand about this paradox through this story. 1) God's sovereignty doesn't mean bad things don't happen or that people don't make choices. They do. Joseph's brothers did wrong. 2) God's sovereignty doesn't let people off the hook for their sinful actions. Joseph holds them responsible. 3) But at the same time, God is also bringing about His own will through those human actions. This doesn't mean God causes people to sin, but that at times He **allows** sin to take place in order to bring about the greatest good possible. Like in this story, God could have prevented Joseph's brothers from selling him into slavery, but if He had then people would have died because Joseph wouldn't have been in Egypt to help Pharaoh prepare for the famine (Gen. 41; 50:20).

So take heart, human actions don't have the final say. God is sovereign; He'll always accomplish his good purposes.

Day 10 : Goodness

# God's Goodness

If you've been in church or tuned into the Christian world in the past two years you have probably heard "Good Good Father" by Chris Tomlin play over and over a million times...that may be a stretch, but you probably know it well by now. I love that song, but I think after hearing it 7 Sundays in a row, I began to tune it out. I began to sing the words without thinking about meaning behind them. Let me remind you of the lyrics:

*You're a good good father,  
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are;  
And I'm loved by you,  
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am;  
Because you are perfect in all of your ways  
You are perfect in all of your ways*

A few weeks ago, my church sang this song, and I was caught off guard because it had lost popularity and hadn't been sung in a while. I was able to actual focus on and listen to what the lyrics were actually saying: God is a good father. It is **WHO** He is. In these lyrics, Chris Tomlin is reminding us of an important biblical truth: God is the definition of goodness. It's His essence. At the core of His being God is good and only good. In Genesis 1, God creates the heavens and the earth. At the end of each day, He declares what He has made as good. God is creating goodness. In the beginning, there was the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). Out of the Trinity came the creation of the earth. He defined goodness. He is goodness. God is the epitome of good. And when we think of what "good" is we have to look to God since He is the definer. This truth is confirmed time and time again in His Word. God is good. Period. And everything He does is good.



Day 11: Goodness

# God's Sovereignty is for our Good

*"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."*

*- Romans 8:28*

I want to clarify some words. When this verse says that God works all things together for "good," this doesn't necessarily mean what **we** think is good. We are limited as humans – we're not the almighty, powerful, Earth creating Lord. As humans, we can't fully know what is good for us because we don't know everything and we in and of ourselves aren't good. But remember the last devotion where we said that God is the definition of good? If this is true, then it's safe to say that God fully knows what is good for us. So God is working all things together for **His** definition of what's good for us. Keep in mind; we are talking about our merciful and loving father who sent His son to die on the cross for us. If He was willing to do that, then we can be sure that His good is going to be the best good possible (Romans 8:31).

This verse is one of those verses we quote in the captions of our Instagram posts of sunsets and mountains and beaches. It's often quoted when things are going and feel "good." But in the context of God working "all things" for good, the circumstances this verse applies to don't always have to feel, seem, be "good." This verse is saying that God is working for our good in "*all things*." And that means both the good and the bad things in life.

For example, in high school, I dreamt of going to a Christian school on the coast of California. I felt like God was calling me into a community of Christians with whom I could live on the side of a mountain overlooking the Pacific ocean while studying in a great pre-med program. I was certain this thing was good and that God wanted it for me. Well, I got accepted - so I was even more confirmed that this was the Lord's will - but then I got my financial aid package...I was going to have to magically create \$30,000 per year to go there (that was **with** a 1/2 tuition scholarship). The money did magically appear. I couldn't go, and I was devastated.

An even more painful experience had hit in high school, in the span of a year, my aunt died from brain cancer, my uncle suddenly died from a medical complication, and my great grandmother died a few weeks later. This was all in the midst of being a freshman in high school, dealing with my mom's alcoholism, and the beginnings of my clinical depression and anxiety. I had to ask, God HOW is this for my good?

That is a real and valid question. And God is inviting you to ask that. He is welcoming you into His loving arms and commanding you to trust that He is good and that all things work together for good. Even rejection. Even death. Even alcoholism. Even depression. Even anxiety. Even broken dreams. Even broken families. Even broken people. Yes, even middle and high school.

Think through and pray about some of the hard circumstances in your life. Ask the Lord to reveal His goodness in those. He may not immediately, but one day, in this life or the next, God will reveal the good He's up to, and it will be better than any "good" we could have ever wished for ourselves.

Day 12: Goodness

# God Works all Things for the Good of His People

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures.*

*He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.*

*He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

*I will fear no evil, for you are with me;*

*your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”*

*- Psalm 23:1-4*

In this passage, God is pictured as a shepherd, and we're pictured as sheep. Quick question, have you ever seen or interacted with a sheep? Well let me tell you, they are dumb. They have really poor senses - especially their sight. Their peripheral vision is poor, and their depth perception is so bad that they can barely see what is right in front of them. At this point, I hope you're beginning to pick up on the metaphor.

Can we all agree that sometimes we can be dumb? If you're humble and honest, I think you can admit to times where you have done something that you thought was a good idea, but in the end, it really hurt you or someone else.

In Isaiah 53:6, it says *“We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way and the LORD has laid on **Him** the iniquity of us all”*. When it comes to spiritual things, we humans have poor peripheral vision and bad depth perception. We struggle to see what

is on the horizon of our lives. We have no idea what tomorrow will really look like, or 5 years, or 20 years. We can't fully see what our actions will bring. Due to our lack of vision, we often go astray, living how we think is best and running amuck with our lives and ending up in places we should never have been like a sheep who wanders off into a wolves den.

But here's the GOOD news. God is sovereign—remember the story of Joseph? God is totally good—we looked at this in Genesis 1. And He is working all things together for our good – we saw this in Romans 8:28. God knows all things and controls all things and works them for our greatest good. He can see today, tomorrow, five years from now, 20 years from now, and into eternity. And just as a shepherd only does good to his sheep, God is always leading and guiding us with His merciful staff into the good (His definition) He has for us. He satisfies our deepest longings (still waters) and gives our souls rest (green pastures). As the Lord to shepherd us, we desire nothing more than what He gives us. And what He gives us is always for our good. We don't need to have perfect sight. We need to have faith in our good, good Father and trust that He's using His sovereignty for our best possible good.

Questions:

- Think about the image of God as the shepherd – how are some ways you see Him shepherding you?
- Think about ways you go astray in your walk with the Lord. Be honest. Then repent and rejoice that the Lord has forgiven you for going away from Him by laying on Jesus the punishment we deserved!



Day 14: Holiness/ Wisdom

# Week 3: God's Holiness and Wisdom

When the Bible tells us to be holy, what does that mean? How does the wisdom of God help us in this life? These may be questions that you have asked before. This week we will be wrestling through these questions. What we will find is that God calls us to be holy like He is holy. This isn't an easy task, in fact, it will take everything we have every single day. We also need to rely on the wisdom of God to help us get through the difficulties of this life. This week we will look at God's holiness and His wisdom.

Day 15: God is Holy

Day 16: Be Holy

Day 17: God is Omniscient

Day 18: God Gives Wisdom

Day 19: God's Wisdom As Our Foundation

Day 20: Grace Day/Review Day

Before we begin the week, ask God to help you be holy like He is holy. Ask him to give you the wisdom to make right choices and decisions.

Day 15: Holiness

# God is Holy

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!”*

*- Revelation 4:8b*

Have you ever had your mind blown? Like someone said something and you couldn't believe the words that came out of their mouth? Or maybe you saw something, and you just couldn't stop staring? How about this one, you learned something that all of the sudden made complete sense to something that confused you before?

Before we talk about holiness, we need to define the term. We say the word holy or holiness so often in church, but I venture to say we may not understand its true meaning. The word **holy** is defined: to be set apart. Sacred. **Holiness** is defined: the state of being holy.

God's holiness makes Him completely incomparable to anything and everything we already know and experience. It's hard to even imagine, but our minds are too limited, even understand our unlimited God. We try so hard to understand God, but no matter how hard we try we simply cannot grasp all that He is.

Our God is holy! There is nothing about Him that is unclean or impure. The holiness of God is completely mind-blowing. His absolute purity reveals our impurity. He created us in His image, and He is in complete control. With His purity, He can purify our hearts and restore our brokenness.

God shares His holiness with us so we can better ourselves, to do His work here on earth. God has revealed His holiness in Jesus, His Son. We are made right with God – have a relationship with Him – through faith in Jesus. He gives us the ability to become the perfect person to glorify Him, so we can invest ourselves to help better others.

We are imperfect, so imperfect that I bet you and I can't go a whole hour without sinning. I often wonder why God would want to have a relationship with us when we cannot come close to matching His holiness. We aren't good enough, yet He desires to draw us closer to Himself. The fact that God desires for me to draw closer to Him makes me want to be as holy as possible! His holiness is what we should be striving to match every single day of our lives!

Day 16: Holiness

# Be Holy

I have a cousin who is crazy smart! She only made straight A's until college, where she made her first and only B. She is currently at Wake Forest University studying to be a pediatric doctor. To this day she is still incredibly smart! She and I were in third and fourth grade together. I had this thing in my mind that I would try and be as smart, if not smarter than her during these years. Competing with her made me work harder to achieve my goal. In those two years I did all I could to match her smarts, however, came up short. In those two years I managed to make all A's and one B, while she like I said earlier made all A's.

Think about a time you watched Steph Curry shoot a basketball, or listened to Adele sing. Their skills seem unreachable to us. You and I tend to lock onto what seems to be perfection, and set unrealistic expectations for ourselves to become more like someone else without even knowing it.

The comparison trap is all around us, and we fall for it all the time. We want to be the best, so we model ourselves after the people we see as the best. God tells us not to do that, His desire for us is to put all of our attention and focus on Him so that our lives reflect who He is. We discussed Holiness yesterday, more specifically we discussed God and His holiness.

God is perfect, and our imperfections cannot exist in His presence. We are made holy and perfect by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. Our response to the free gift of salvation is to pursue a life of holiness.

*“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

*- 1 Peter 1:14-16*

God is calling His children to be holy like He is holy. This means living according to God’s standards, not our own or the standards of the world. Living our life by God’s standards and not the world’s standards is going to be tough. The comparison trap of the world goes completely against the standards for holiness that God has for us. God expects holiness from us. The daily challenge is for us to be holy like our God. To throw off anything that will distract us from that goal.

Maybe following the comparison trap has left you unsatisfied. Who is best and what is best will only be replaced in the years to come. When it comes to holiness, that never changes. Let us be holy like our God is holy.

Day 17: Wisdom

# God is Omniscient

Have you ever thought what it would be like to know everything there was to possibly know? Like every answer on your test, or what your teacher was going to teach that day before class even began. I have often thought of that question myself. At times I have really wanted to know the answers to questions or problems I couldn't solve. It would be incredible to know everything. It would be even more impressive to know what others are thinking and to know the future!

Although we will never know everything there is to know or to know the thoughts of others or the future; God knows all these and more! He knows every detail from the beginning of time to the end because He put it all in place. God is omniscient, which is a fancy word for "knows everything." Luke 12:7 tells that God knows the exact number of hairs on your head! God knows our thoughts and our actions way before we think or act on them. God knows what we try to hide; He knows our fears and our futures. Nothing is kept hidden from God!

*"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

*- Jeremiah 29:11*

While God knows everything about us, He still desires for us to bring things before Him in prayer. God is willing and able to forgive us of our sins. He is willing to bring comfort in our time of fear. He plans out our future so that we can serve Him best.

Have you ever met a know it all? Someone who thought of themselves as the smartest person in the room? I'm sure you can think of

someone like that. People like that annoy us, and it makes us not want to be around them.

Maybe the idea of God being a know it all scares you. God doesn't want us to fear His wisdom and His plan for our lives; instead, He wants us to ask Him. Since God already knows what is going to happen, talk to Him about it. He desires to help us in our time of need because He knows we cannot do life alone. Even though it might be hard to see the big picture, trust in Him and let him work things out. God won't play the know it all game with us; He desires to use His wisdom for our good.

Day 18: Wisdom

# God Gives Wisdom

*Read 1 Kings 3:4-14*

If you could have anything in the world, what would it be? Would you want have money like Bill Gates? Play basketball like Michael Jordan? How about be as famous as a Kardashian? While we are here on earth, it is easy to be consumed in earthly things. Maybe you want to be in love like in the movies, or even live forever?

There are a lot of earthly things that could fill our minds with what we want, or what we think we need. Our immediate thought would be something that would benefit us, but what about benefiting ourselves, in order to benefit others. This is exactly what happened to King Solomon; when Solomon became king, God told him he would bless him with anything he wanted. What more could a king want? More power? More money? Solomon chose wisdom and the gift to understand people so that he could be an even better king.

We talked yesterday about **wisdom**, and how God is wisdom, and everything we have comes from Him. When Solomon asked God for wisdom God was pleased with him, and in addition, He blessed him with wealth and honor.

In 1 Kings 3:7-8 Solomon recognize his situation he was given, he feels incapable of being in control. He realizes that he is young, and in control of God's people and he is uncertain how he is going to manage it. Solomon realizes that he had a huge responsibility in front of him, and he was smart enough to ask God for his wisdom to help him through it. No

matter what we are dealing with, when you ask God for help and turn it over to Him, there is nothing He can't do.

How many times do we attempt to do something when we do not have everything under control? When really we are drowning and too prideful to ask for help. Rather we tend to hide and go through the motions acting like everything is ok when really we have no clue what is happening. To make it through any problem we have to start by realizing there is a problem, just like Solomon did when he felt like he was in too deep. Next, we have to turn it over to God and ask for His wisdom to guide us, as well as to listen to His direction.

*"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."*

*- 1 Corinthians 1:25*

God's wisdom is something we cannot even fathom, with that being said, we have to realize that He already knows and has planned out the here and now, as well as the future. A very small slither of His wisdom instilled in us is greater than any wisdom we think we have on our own. Rely on God's wisdom and not your own.

Day 19: Wisdom

# God's Wisdom As Our Foundation

Have you ever tried to make a tower out of playing cards? You know, when you take two playing cards and try to make them lean on each other to make an upside down "V." Then, you continue you to make more side by side, then lay a card horizontally across two of them and continue to build it up, normally a pyramid unless you're super creative. Once you're about to put that last card on top, what normally happens? For me, someone ALWAYS hits the table, and since the table is what the cards are standing on, they all fall down.

You'll find doing this on a card table (like a really thin folding table) literally all someone has to do is walk up next to you, and the vibrations will make it fall. For a safer experience, try it on a huge dining table that's sturdy that way it takes more to knock it down. No, it is not perfect, the slightest bump will knock it down because cards are weak, but luckily for us, our faith is not as weak as a playing card.

*"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

- Matthew 7:24-25

Jesus tells us a parable in the book of Matthew about a wise and a foolish man building houses. The foolish man built his house on sand, and when trouble came, it was destroyed. But, the wise man built his house on a rock when a storm comes the house stays put. Now obviously Jesus is not a contractor trying to tell people how to build their homes, but instead, He is talking about our faith, and how to have a strong foundation or even roots, it will strengthen us.

Have you ever heard of the Red Wood trees in California? They are these massive trees some big you can literally drive a car through (Google it) because they are so big and strong. The reason they are like this is due to what's under them, their roots, their foundation. These 350-foot trees do not have deep roots, but instead, they are extremely wide, and what they do is they intertwine and lock together with the other tree's roots so they can hold each other up because that's how God created them.

Jesus tells us to have a strong foundation, and in doing so that start with a strong faith, but just like roots it's deeper than that. You must find friends like you to intertwine your roots with, because when the storms come, and they will, you will have a strong hold on things and it will not knock you down. You might get damaged, but because of these intertwined roots with your friends and strong foundation in Christ, it will be no problem building things back up with the help of Jesus and your friends.



Day 21: Justice/Love

# Week 4: God's Love and Justice

*"What is love?  
Baby don't hurt me  
Don't hurt me  
No more."*

*- Haddaway (What is Love)*

When it comes to love, I think it's safe to say that many of us have been hurt. We've been heartbroken a time or two. Maybe the girl/guy you had a crush on didn't have the same feelings for you. People fall in and out of love all the time. God's love for us is constant; His love never fades away. God also has a heart for justice. He desires for wrongs to be made right. This week we will go in-depth to understand God's justice and His love.

Day 22: God is Justice

Day 23: God is Fair

Day 24: God is Love

Day 25: God Loves Us

Day 26: We are to Love Others Like God Loves Us

Day 27: Grace Day/Review Day

Think back to a time when someone showed you love. How did that make you feel? Write down that experience below.

Day 22: Justice

# God is Justice

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

- Amos 5:24

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

- Micah 6:8

Jesus Christ cares deeply about justice. In fact, He has a special concern for the “underdogs” of society – people cast aside by everyone else. He was a friend of the poor, the sick, the outcast, the forgotten, the ignored and the oppressed. He was an advocate for those who had no voice. He brought justice to those in need, even if it meant upsetting religious and political officials.

As the body of Christ, we are called to do the same. Jesus tells us that on Judgement Day, we will be judged according to how we respond to the people who need our help the most (Matthew 25: 31-46). Part of our job as Christians is to bring about God’s justice on earth. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

But even today, injustice is alive and well, every day we see people being hurt by others. I venture to say all of us have experienced bullying at some time in our life, we’ve also experienced being lied to. Some of you have gone through abuse; whether it was physical, emotional, sexual or some combination of the three. We have also been on the giving end of some of these injustices as well.



Day 23: Justice

# God is Fair

We live in a culture that thrives off of people getting what they deserve. Some of the most popular television programs deal with crime usually resulting in the guilty party receiving some form of punishment.

Karma is such a popular idea because we thrive on seeing people get what we think they deserve. In fact, many people define the word justice as **“those who are guilty being paid back for what they have done wrong.”** However is that necessarily right? Is karma a real thing? Even though it seems to be a part of the human condition, is it right to love seeing people get what we think they deserve?

Listen to what the author of this Psalm has to say about justice:

*“Blessed are they who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times!”*

*- Psalm 106:3*

Godly justice is not about being proven right or wanting those who have done wrong to get what they deserve. Godly justice means that we are called to do whatever is right in all circumstances.

Has someone ever spread gossip about you? If you have not, we all know what gossip is and looks like. I remember when I was in high school and I was talking with a close friend of mine about gossip that was spreading about her. She revealed to me that she was incredibly tempted to start drama and spread false gossip about the girls who had started the rumors about her. However, despite my friend's disappointment, she taught me one of the greatest lessons that I will carry on for the rest of my

life. In short, she said that she could not defend her unchristian actions in response to another person's unchristian actions. And how true that is for all of us!

When someone acts in a way that is ungodly, we are not called to respond in a similar manner. Instead, we are called to do what is Godly, true, and pure. God is the judge, not us. So while we are here on this planet earth our job is to love others and allow God's justice to reign supreme!

*"He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord."*

*- Psalm 33:5*

Day 24: Love

# God is Love

*“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

*- Romans 8:38-39*

The scriptures attest to the fact that God is love. This statement is easy to say, but can sometimes be more complicated to believe. As a child, I often thought of God as an angry man just waiting for me to mess up so that he could punish me. If you asked both Christians and non-Christians I bet they would hold to that belief as well.

This is not the God revealed in the Bible and witnessed throughout the life of Jesus Christ. God is not angry or spiteful but is indeed a God of love, peace, grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Sometimes, we need to be reminded that God is for us—not against us. The fullness of humanity is found in the love of God.

How many of you have been on the beach, and a massive wave crashed over you from out of nowhere? The love of God is like that wave, crashing on you and soaking you as you stand helpless. There is no way to escape from this reckless and abundant love, a love that goes where it wants, when it wants, and to whoever it wants. It does us well to contemplate the love of God as seen through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Even when we are not constant in our love, God is still constant in His love.

*"In the end what matters is not how good we are but how good God is. Not how much we love Him but how much He loves us. And God loves us whoever we are, whatever we've done or failed to do, whatever we believe or can't."*

*- Desmond Tutu*

Questions:

- Do you know that God loves you? Do you know that God loves humanity? Remind yourself and remind others today.

Day 25: Love

# God Loves Us

There is an interesting encounter Jesus had with His disciple, Peter, in John 21 following the resurrection. After eating breakfast along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus looked at Peter and asked him three times if he loved Him. All three times Peter proclaimed that he did indeed love Jesus, with the third time being very stern and Peter feeling somewhat hurt that Jesus did not seem to believe him.

However, there are two words used in this section for love. The word Jesus used for love was **agape**. This is a word that means sacrificial love, the most intense love a person can have for someone else. Peter's response, however, did not indicate the same type of love Jesus had for him. Peter responded by telling Jesus that he had **philos** love for Him. We may know this more along the lines of "brotherly love." Yes, Peter loved Jesus but not as intensely as Jesus loved him.

What must have been going through Peter's mind? Well earlier in the gospel as Jesus had asked this same disciple if he loved Him, Peter responded by saying yes, that he had **agape**, sacrificial love for Jesus. Peter would go on to deny that he knew Jesus three times.

I wonder if Peter was thinking to himself while on the shore of Galilee, *"The last time I told Jesus I had **agape** love for him, I really messed things up. I want Jesus to know I love Him, but I do not want to let Him down again."*

At this moment Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him sacrificially to encourage him that there was still hope.

There was still hope for Peter because of the love Jesus had for him. Even though Peter may not have given Jesus the response he necessarily wanted, Jesus still gave him the command to follow him in the same section.

Even though we may have moments in our lives that we are not proud of, moments in which we may have in fact denied Jesus, Christ's love for us is intense. That same **agape** love is what He displayed on the cross for us, so that those instances in which we have sinned, Jesus' love was strong enough to cover all of those stains. That in our most desperate times in our lives, in the midst of our mistakes, Jesus still loves us enough to call us to follow Him.

Peter responded to this challenge. In fact, his life reflected it by spreading the message of Jesus amongst other nations and eventually dying for the cause of Christ. How will you respond to the real love of Christ?

*"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

*- Romans 5:8*

Day 26: Love

# We are to Love Others Like God Loves Us

My dad once promised to take me to the movies to see Star Wars Episode 1...yeah I know, that was an incredibly long time ago. Anyways, he never took me to the movies. I was devastated. In my mind he had wronged me, so I decided that I wouldn't love him anymore. All this sounds petty, and it was, but in my mind not loving him was justified for his broken promise.

If we are honest with ourselves, we find it hard to love people sometimes. Some situations and circumstances lead us to not loving people. Maybe someone wronged you, and it is just hard to love them because of what they have done. Perhaps you find it hard to love people because they are different than you. Whatever the reason, we struggle to love others like we are supposed to.

As much as we want to believe people can be unlovable, the same goes for us. People might find us unlovable based on the same situations and circumstances we determine for others.

The Bible tells us that we have wronged God, we have sinned and brought about a separation in the relationship that He desires for us. We have decided to be selfish, to want what we think is best for us and not what God wants or has for us. If anyone is to be determined unlovable, it should be us.

Look at this passage found in 1 John:

*“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. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

*- 1 John 4:7-11*

We see in this passage two important truths about love.

1. **God loved us before we loved him**: God sent his son Jesus to earth to bring sinners back to Him. God didn't ask us to show Him love first, He went ahead and made the first move.
2. **God is love**: John says that God's very being is love. If we do not show love, we do not know God. God and love go hand in hand.

Before we begin to make excuses as to why we cannot love someone, let us remember the truths above. Let us remember that while we wrong God, He loves us so much that He sent His Son. Let us also remember that if we are born of God then we have to love because God is love.



Day 28: Faithfulness

# Week 5: God's Faithfulness

Life changes constantly. Friends, classes, weather, our bodies: you name it, it changes. And if we're honest this can become overwhelming, always looking over our shoulder wondering what is going to change next. We all desire some kind of constancy. And in God we find it. God is faithful. He does not change, and He keeps his promises. In a world where everything changes, God's faithfulness is some of the best news we could ever hear.

Day 29: God is Faithful

Day 30: God is Faithful to Word

Day 31: God is Faithful to His People

Day 32: God is Faithful to Himself

Day 33: God is Faithful to Keep His Promises

Why would God's faithfulness be good news to **you** specifically? In other words, in what situations in your life would the faithfulness of God bring comfort or peace to you?

Day 29: Faithfulness

# God is Always Faithful

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

*- Hebrews 13:8*

When I was twelve, I wanted to be an actress more than I wanted anything in this world. I dreamed of walking out onto a stage in New York City and belting out beautiful songs and monologues, captivating the audience with my presence. I wanted to be the talented girl who could sing and act in ways nobody had ever seen.

Then I turned thirteen. I wanted to be a cheerleader more than I wanted anything in this world. Fifteen, country singer. Sixteen, doctor. Seventeen, marine biologist. Do you see where I'm going with this? I was a teenager with a lot of dreams and ideas about what I wanted to do, and there's nothing wrong with that! But more than anything, I was constantly asking myself, “Who am I?” I was trying to figure out my identity.

I'm really glad that God isn't inconsistent like that. God has never changed who He is or doubted the things He's passionate about. In other words, He is **faithful**.

Being faithful means being consistent. If I'm a faithful student, I always show up to class. My teachers and classmates can count on me and expect that I will do what I say. When **God** is faithful, that idea is infinitely multiplied and amplified in His perfect character.

The God of the universe is unimaginably faithful. This means that He is always sure and certain. He is never divided against Himself or confused about what to do next. Our God doesn't take sick days like we

do; He doesn't change His mind or shift His opinion. His character is firm, and He's not going anywhere. He has never had an identity crisis and He never will.

We see this unchanging character of God all throughout the Bible. In the book of Exodus, we hear about a man named Moses who is confused about who he is and what he is supposed to do. God speaks to Moses in the midst of this crisis and says, "**I AM WHO I AM.**" I am trustworthy. I am constant. I am faithful. **I AM.**

Read and meditate on these verses about God's faithfulness:

*"The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations."*

*- Psalm 33:11*

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."*

*- James 1:17*

## Day 30: Faithfulness

# God's Word

The word of God is essential to the Christian faith. We plan the rhythm of our lives around it. We strive to read it and meditate on it every day. We gather once or twice a week to listen to a sermon about it. Even people who are not Christians value Scriptural phrases. Children everywhere learn "The Golden Rule" - "Treat others as you would like to be treated." They may not know it, but this important advice comes to us from Jesus himself in Matthew 7:12.

We value the word of God, the Bible, as the way we know and understand the story of God and humanity. It is God-breathed and Inspired. When the Bible refers to "The Word," however, it doesn't refer to the 66 books we know today.

Instead, when the Gospels refer to "The Word," capital W, it is usually referring to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Living Word. The Word in human form. Not only has God given us the written word to read and study, but God also sent us the Living Word to speak directly into our lives. The Author of Life himself came to live with us, among us, and even in us.

How beautiful is it that The Word, Jesus, is with us always, speaking new revelation into our lives. We can read about how God works in the Bible, and we get to participate in the story ourselves through Jesus Christ!

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

*- John 1:1-5*

Question:

- How is God calling you to take part in His story through the work of Jesus in your life?

Day 31: Faithfulness

# God's People

*"If we are faithless, He remains faithful - for He cannot deny Himself."*

*- 2 Timothy 2:13*

I saw this quote on Instagram the other day that says, "Invest in people who invest in you. Put effort into those who show you effort. It's so simple." This seems pretty agreeable. Love those who love you. Be faithful to people who prove themselves trustworthy. Don't waste your time on flakey friends.

There's something off about this, though. God takes the opposite approach in His relationship with us, His people. Ever since God made people, they have been flaking out on Him constantly. In the book of Hosea in the Bible, God tells Hosea to marry a "wife of whoredom." Strong language, right? God wants Hosea to commit his love and care to someone that he knows is going to be unfaithful to him. He did this to demonstrate how God's own people, His bride, have been continually abandoning their God like an adulterous wife. This isn't just about how God's people used to act, but it's about you and me today. Romans 3:23 tells us, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* We've each been **unfaithful**.

If that quote I came across online is right, then we're all in big trouble. Are we really worthy of God investing His love and care in us? Have we shown enough effort in God's eyes to prove that He should make an effort to know us back? Have we been faithful enough to get faithfulness in return? If we have sinned against Him even **once**, the answer to all of these is a concrete no.

But our gracious Father doesn't agree with that quote. He doesn't treat us the way we deserve to be treated.

*"But God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

- Romans 5:8.

Jesus died and rose again so that we can be treated with the loving-kindness that only He rightfully deserves. We are the adulterous wife. We're the rebellious child. We run away from God, and He chases us down every time. God is faithful to us, His people, no matter what. **If we are faithless, He remains faithful.**

I imagine that Jesus would read that Instagram quote and disagree completely: *"I invest in you when you completely forget about me. Every ounce of love and effort that I have has been poured out on the cross for your sake. I have given everything for you - not because of your good deeds or faithfulness, but because I am faithful."*

Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God for being faithful when you are faithless.

## Day 32: Faithfulness

# Jesus

On a cold night in the desert, the nation of Israel waits as it has for 400 years. The Hebrew people cry out, echoing the words found in Psalm 44:23:

*“Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever.”*

*- Psalm 44:23*

They have been speaking this prayer since the prophet Malachi, and for four centuries, they have heard nothing from their silent God.

But one Hebrew, a teenage girl weary from travel, knows that her God is not silent. He sent an angel to speak to her nine months ago. She will be the mother of the Messiah. Now, it is almost time to meet her baby, but she too must wait.

By this time tomorrow, God will have entered the world as a precious baby. He will be alive - eating, breathing, growing - so that one day He can rescue His children. Zachariah already sings, *“Praise to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.”*

The prophets in the Old Testament spoke of Jesus' coming, they laid out the very details of His arrival, right down to the town where He would be born! We know that God was faithful in His promise to bring a Messiah, the one who would deliver the world from the chains of sin. We can look at the prophecies in Isaiah that speak about Jesus; we can see



Day 33: Faithfulness

# God's Future Promises

*“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

*- Romans 8:31*

I have lived in Arizona my whole life. Nearly every day of the year it's hot and sunny outside. Rain is so rare that it becomes an exciting occasion when there's a cloud in the sky. I don't really have to worry about the weather much. If I hang some clothes outside to dry, I don't have to consider if it's going to rain and soak everything. I don't think I even own an umbrella, and sandals are the only type of shoe I'm familiar with.

What I'm saying is that in Arizona, we live our everyday lives in a way that reflects our trust in the forecast. If the guy on channel 3 tells me it's going to be 90 degrees and sunny, I'm pretty positive I need sunscreen and a jug of water. Why am I so obsessed with talking about the weather? I'm interested in how we react when we understand consistency.

The rising of the sun each morning is a pretty certain event, but what is even more certain is the Word of God. We can anticipate and expect that what he has said is true. He has made some huge promises to us - promises that will never break, never fade, and will always be fulfilled. We read in Isaiah that when God says He will do something, He keeps his word every time:

*“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”*

*- Isaiah 55:10-11*

The Lord is confident in the promises He's made to us. He doesn't say a single word if His actions aren't going to back it up. So do you believe that God is faithful to His promises? Because God is so trustworthy, we can live in anticipation of what He is going to do. We can step out into the sunlight and leave our umbrellas behind. We can walk in fearless faith, trusting in Jesus who has guaranteed that He'll be with us forever.

Read these (just a few of so many!) promises that God has made to those who trust in Jesus for eternal life:

- Philippians 1:6
- Philippians 4:19
- Mark 11:24
- 1 John 1:9



Day 35: Mission

# Week 6: The Mission of God

God created, and all things were good. But His creation, us, rebelled ruining the perfect harmony between humankind, creation, and God. God could have stood by and left us separated from Him. But He didn't. God set out on a mission to redeem we who are rebels back to Himself as children. Not only this, but God's mission is to reconcile **all things** back to Himself. This week we'll look in depth at God's mission and our surprising role in it.

Day 36: God's Mission: Reconciling Sinners to Himself

Day 37: God's Mission: Reconciling All Things

Day 38: God's Mission is a Global Mission

Day 39: Our Role in God's Mission to Restore Sinners to Himself

Day 40: Our Role in God's Mission to Restore All Things

Think through what it might reveal about God that He has a mission to redeem sinners and all things. What does that show us about who God is, who we are, and what that means for our lives and the lives of others?

Journal some thoughts below:

Ask God to open your heart to how He might be leading you to play a part in His mission, whether that be at home or around the world.

Day 36: Mission

# Sinners to God

God has made us for relationships. Every person's circle of relationships is different. You might develop relationships with people through the church you attend, the sports team you play on, the school you go to, the neighborhood you live in, the restaurant you work at, etc. Wherever life takes you, you will be in relationships with people. Living life with others opens up the possibility for love and heartbreak, joy and pain, laughter and sadness. Why is it that living life together always has its ups and downs? Why do we struggle to love instead of hate, to build up instead of tear down, to be patient instead of anxious? I would say that it boils down to 1 little (but big) word called **SIN**. We have all chosen to trust our own heart, and its desires, over God and His desires. We have all trusted what the world tells us over what God tells us in His Word.

*"You were dead in the trespasses and sins..."*

*- Ephesians 2:1-3*

Similar to how our sin has broken our relationships in the past with other people, our sin has completely broken our relationship with God. Ephesians 2: 1-3 states that we were dead in our trespasses and sins, we were following the course of this world, and were following the desires of our flesh; according to the bible, this made us by nature CHILDREN OF WRATH, and undeserving of God's love....

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great He has love for us, made us ALIVE together with Christ - by grace you have been saved"*

*- Ephesians 2:4-5*

God created us to have a personal relationship with Him. God knows our whole being. He knows our fears, our desires, our talents, our hurts, our weaknesses. Even though he knows the dirtiest, most ugly parts of our soul, He could not love us more. Because of this love, God offers us a way to be reconciled to Him through Jesus.

*“For by GRACE you have been SAVED through FAITH. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

*- Ephesians 2:8-9*

God's grace to us is a 100% free gift that we do not deserve because of our sin (rebellion) against Him. Through God's son, Jesus, dying on the cross, we have the gift of salvation. By believing in Christ and His death on the cross (faith), we can be saved (rescued) from our sin. How encouraging and freeing is it to know that we have a father who loves us so much that He would send His son to die on a cross in order to bring us to Himself? God's ultimate mission was and is to this day to bring broken people to Himself, and that was and is being accomplished through the work on the cross.

Have you received the free gift of God's love to forgive you for all your sin? If so, in what ways are you still rebelling against God? If not, What would it mean if you accepted that gift?

Day 37: Mission

# Restoration of All Things

*“And God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.”*

- Revelation 21:3-4

When God created the world, it was very good. **God was perfectly united with all of creation**, and this was demonstrated by the way that humankind, the land, and all the rest of the living creatures lived peacefully and with justice toward one another.

We've come a long way since that time, haven't we? **Humankind doesn't have that kind of unity with God anymore.** We know this because we don't have that same kind of peace and justice with the rest of creation. Global warming, widespread racism, broken families, and persistent violence between people and nations are all signs of this brokenness. Scripture points over and over again to God's desire to remake the kind of unity we all had in the beginning - an idea we call **“reconciliation.”**

In Revelation, John describes a vision of God's “new earth” (like a new Genesis story!) where God will be reunited perfectly with all people again, when *“death will be no more and mourning and crying and pain will be no more”* (Revelation 21:4). Read that again. Can you imagine a world like that? When God is with all people, wiping the tears from our eyes? I don't know about you, but I want that kind of world so badly I can barely stand it.

The thing is, you and I both know that **our world isn't like that.** It's full of evil that is done to us and the evil we do to others: abuse,

divorce, racism, unforgiveness, jealousy, dishonesty and pride mark all of our lives. We have all sinned and we have all been sinned against; all of creation - the mountains that have been demolished for coal, the people who have been sexually assaulted, the oceans that have been filled with oil, the families who have been deported, the student who is excluded - bears the scars. These are the signs that our whole world experiences a broken unity with God. God has a vision for a new and reconciled world where we are all united again, but **we're not there yet.**

A central part of what it means to live as a Christian is to believe and hope in God's power to bring about this new world, even in the midst of the brokenness and pain of the world around us. The brokenness runs so deeply in our world that we can't hope to fix it ourselves. **Only God can create true reconciliation.**

Living as a Christian means to constantly imagine, envision, and trust that **God is causing the reconciliation of all things**, even when it's hard to see. When we learn this kind of imagination, we learn to see and work toward this reconciliation with God.

With a prayerful spirit, consider God's reconciliation project:

- We know the world is broken. It is important, to be honest about the ways that we experience this. Reflect on the pain in the world around you, maybe even on the pain in you. Say or write them to God.
- Read Revelation 21:1-8 and dare to imagine what that kind of world would be like. What would it be like to live in that type of new world? How would daily life be different in this new creation?

Day 38: Mission

# God's Mission is Global

*"...and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation..."*

*- Revelation 5:9b*

We've spent a couple of days talking about God's mission to reconcile people and everything else in all of creation back to Himself. And lest it be lost on us, this mission is for EVERYBODY. Those in King and those in Detroit. The Dyula people of the Ivory Coast and the Japanese. This mission of God to reconcile everyone and everything is for all people, everywhere.

And this isn't just an add-on we thought would be nice to include here. This is a significant theme throughout the entire Bible. When God makes his covenant with Abraham, God does so, so that "***all the nations of the world***" will be blessed (Genesis 22:18). Psalm after psalm either describes or declares that God will be praised by "***all the peoples***" (Psalm 67, 96, 117). The prophets look forward to the day when God gathers his people from every people of the world (Isaiah 25:6, 34:1, 56:7; Ezekiel 34:11-16). Jesus continues the trend when he comes on the scene. He tells His disciples that "*the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout **the whole world** as a testimony to **all nations***"<sup>1</sup> (Matthew 24:13). Multiple times he commands His disciples to "*go into **all the world** and proclaim the gospel to **every creature***" (Mark 16:15) and

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<sup>1</sup> As a side note, "nations" throughout the Bible does not refer to nations as we think of them today. We tend to think of countries, like Brazil or Kenya; but when the Bible uses the word "nation(s)" or "people(s)" it's referring to specific people groups within those countries with a particular language or culture that distinguishes it from others. For example, the Banjara people of India.

*“make disciples of **all nations**”* (Matt. 28:19). Jesus is clear, His disciples are to be His witnesses *“to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).<sup>2</sup>

But why? Why is this such a central theme throughout the Bible? Why, from beginning to end, is Scripture concerned with the salvation of people from every people group in the world? God is the God over every human, from every people group whether they know it or not. He has created every human, of every language and color and culture and all of them will praise Him. God will not be content to have **most** people groups praise Him. It will not do for God's holy people to be made up of the majority of the ethnic groups in the world. No. God has created, loves, and is Lord over all peoples; so in the end, when God's people are gathered together, every people group will be represented.

Jesus came to accomplish this. Jesus came and *“by [His] blood ransomed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”* God's people **will** be made up of every ethnic group - Jesus has already secured this - and he's going to us to bring this to fruition. Therefore, with urgency, let's carry the good news of what God has done in Jesus to every people group on the planet. God will have His Bride, and she will be made up of *“every tribe and language and people and tongue.”* Jesus secured this. God is going to use us. So let us get going.

Take some time to reflect, pray, and act on these things:

- There are 16,825 people groups on the planet; 6,989 of them have yet to be reached with the gospel.
- God is going to use Christians to reach those who have yet to hear about Jesus. What role might God be calling you to play in this?
- We invite you to visit <https://joshuaproject.net> to learn more about the many peoples who have yet to hear about Jesus and pray for them.

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<sup>2</sup> We don't have space here but this thread continues throughout the rest of the New Testament. Here are just a few places: Romans 1:5, 9:25; Titus 2:11.

Day 39: Mission

# Our Role is to Restore Sinners to God

It's a common saying that *"great reward comes with great responsibility."* For example, when you get your drivers license, you are so excited that you are finally old enough to drive and have passed the test, but now you are responsible for driving safely and making sure you are following all the rules of the road. Our relationship with God our Father who has reconciled us to Himself is another example of a great reward with a great responsibility. As believers and children of God, we have been given the role and responsibility to help bring other sinners to God's unending, relentless love.

## **Our Reward**

In Christ, we have been rescued from our sin, through the blood of Jesus that was shed for us on the cross. We were once slaves to our sin but now we have been made alive with Christ.

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

*- 2 Corinthians 5:17*

God reconciled us to Himself because of His great love for us. This was our great reward, but like we discussed before, the reward comes with responsibility, and God has given us, His children, the greatest responsibility that anyone can have.

## **Our Responsibility**

Think about what you are most passionate about and what gets you the most excited. For me, I love talking about football with my friends. Naturally, we want to tell others about the things we love and are passionate about. So our love for Christ ought to compel us to share God's love with others. But if that isn't compelling enough for you, then take a look at scripture. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 we're commanded to "*reconcile people to Him,*" because we have been reconciled to God. When we truly realize the great love God has for His people, it should be a natural instinct to share about that love with the people in our lives. Sharing our faith can be scary, but through reading the Bible and experiencing God's unfailing love that He has for you and me, we can't help but share this great news!

## **God's Command**

Matthew 28:16-20 shows us that Jesus has entrusted his followers with the great news of what He did on the Cross to bring us back into a relationship with God. And guess what? We don't have to do this on our own. God has given us His Word, and He has given us His Holy Spirit to empower us to share about Christ with others. Jesus even promises to be with us as we go out in obedience sharing His Word, and this is Good News!

Question:

- How can you practically live out the great commission right now in your life to help bring others to know God?

Day 40: Mission

# Our Role is to Restore All Things

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”*

*- 2 Corinthians 5:20a*

We saw yesterday that God has a vision for a new and restored world, but we have to ask - how does God plan to accomplish this?

It may be hard to believe, but we see in scripture and history that **God chooses to work through the lives of human beings** to accomplish this mission of restoring the whole world. The Old Testament tells stories of the covenants (promises) God made with God's people. God declared allegiance to the people of Israel and promised to bless them. But this blessing wasn't just for them; through them, God wanted to bless the whole world (Genesis 12)!

Sometimes, the people responded to God faithfully, living as a blessing to others and the land. Other times, the people didn't, descending into manipulative and violent ways of living. Instead of giving up on a people that continued to fail, God remained faithful, always making way for the people to be restored back to Him. As we read the New Testament, God goes to unprecedented lengths for the sake of this restoration - God becomes human, making one way by which all people can be reunited with Him. This is what the New Testament calls **gospel** (good news).

But Jesus coming to earth isn't the end of the story. **God isn't done** working in the world. The Apostle Paul, in his second letter to the Christians in the city of Corinth, instructed them to be “ministers of reconciliation” because God was working through them to continue doing **the very same work** that God had been doing in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:11-21)!

We have the same instructions today. By doing things like forgiving one another, turning the other cheek, learning humility, caring for creation, loving our neighbor and practicing hospitality, we begin to cultivate this vision of restoration. Can you imagine what it would be like if a group of people really committed to living like that? Little by little it would affect the entire world! That's why, for Christians, the most important thing isn't just getting a ticket into heaven when we die, but learning to **live in ways that usher in the Kingdom of God on earth here and now.**

When Jesus rose from the dead and returned to be with God, Christians weren't left alone with this mission of reconciliation. No! We were given the Spirit of God. This Spirit empowers Christians with the presence and gifts of God needed to carry out the task of reconciliation together, as a community of people (the Church) committed to reconciliation with God. God's vision for a new creation has been entrusted to God's people! You and I are part of a community that is working with God to create restoration with all of creation. So, you and I are called to live in ways through which God will bring this restoration to all things.

Question:

- What difference does it make that God's plan for restoration with the whole world involves the lives of ordinary humans like us?

The Student Ministers who put this devotional together would like to thank the following people for their time, effort, and contributions to this devotion.

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~ All Scripture taken from the **English Standard Version**.

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