

# SPIRITUAL TOOL KIT

FOR GRADUATES OF KERYX WEEKENDS



Special 2-Month Edition  
Daily Devotionals  
Bible Studies  
Examination of Conscience



# Spiritual Tool Kit

Published by the Keryx Prison Ministry  
Chippewa Area Keryx Council

East Jordan, MI 49727  
Website: [chippewakeryx.org](http://chippewakeryx.org)

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Dedicated to the memory of  
Charles W. Thompson (1917 - 2017)  
A true Man of God

This edition contains two month's worth of  
Daily Devotionals, Bible Studies,  
and Examination of Conscience

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# Forward

In the spring of 2012, I had a conversation with Chaplain Jim Bolton at Chippewa West Prison (URF-W) during the Keryx weekend. It was evident that he is overwhelmed with the responsibilities of being a chaplain at two prisons, both East and West. He shared with me that he must manage 22 weekly programs and has almost no time to do the ministry that he feels called to do.

I inquired, “How can we help you?” In his reply, he expressed a frustration that he has observed over the years. The inmates complete the weekend and get very excited with their Christian faith but many quit coming to the weekly and monthly groups after just a few months. Although the weekly accountability groups are helpful, most of the new Christians need more “meat” in their growth process.

It was suggested that we offer the graduates of a Keryx weekend a follow-up daily devotional and weekly a Bible study to help them review their notes and grow after the weekend. I had one of those “Duh” moments when Chaplain made this suggestion. During the weekend, we tell the Keryx candidates that we are giving them all of the tools to go away from the weekend and influence the world around them. We sent them back into the prison compound or back to their hometowns to win the world for Christ. This is when the vision for a *Spiritual Tool Kit* was birthed.

Later that same day, I had a long conversation with Canadian Bob Wheelan about this vision and he quickly confirmed that this vision should become a reality. In the next few weeks, I talked with several other Keryx brothers. They all readily confirmed this vision. Among them were Daniel Hintz, Chaplain Ray Moore, Eugene Drenth, and Gregg Lange. These are all highly respected men who are part of the Keryx ministry.

Therefore, we are publishing this two-month version to help develop this vision. Each daily devotional, Bible study, and examination of conscience is based upon one talk or meditation presented during the weekend. This is a sampler of what we hope will become a book that will cover one complete year. In the end, that will require 365 daily devotionals, 104 Bible studies (2 for each week), and 12 Examination of Conscience articles (1 for each month).

John Thompson, editor  
August, 2012

Week 1 - Day 1

## Turn Despair Into Hope

*Today's Passage*  
**Psalm 25:1-12**

Based on the **Goals** talk

*"Show me your ways, Lord,  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and  
teach me, for you are God  
my Savior, and my hope is  
in you all day long."  
Psalm 25:4-5 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Since your weekend, what difficult situations have you encountered? Is your reaction different today than before your weekend?

**Prayer:** Lord, I know that I can always trust You. You have the answer to every one of my problems. Help me to always look to You for wisdom to act rather than to react by attacking other people or by giving into despair.

**Meditate Today:** Turn my despair into hope and into Godly action.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will always have hope!

A story has been told about a man and his dog. They were climbing a mountain when suddenly there was a landslide and the man found himself trapped on a ledge. The trail had been torn away in both directions. He sized up his situation and saw that his coil of rope had been torn away from his backpack and was now caught on an outcropping of rock about 6 feet below. He remembered the special training his dog learned to fetch objects upon command. However, the gap between him, his dog, and the rope was too wide for his dog to jump. Besides, it was at least a thousand foot drop that made it impossible for him to risk the life of his dog. The man realized that his arm was too short to reach the rope. But, if he could find something to extend the reach of his arm by 3 feet, he might be able to reach the rope. He looked around and saw that there was a broken tree branch within his reach and so he grabbed it and fashioned a "y" hook at the end. He was then able to reach out, hook the branch onto the coil of the rope, and then retrieve it. By exercising his power of reasoning, he could now use the rope to escape the ledge and save both himself and his dog.

The moral to this story is that we often find ourselves in a life-situation that seems impossible to get out of. Sometimes we become paralyzed because of our problems. We do not know what to do. Often people give into despair or hopelessness. We think it is easier to just give up on life.

However, rather than to give up on ourselves or to react according to our instincts, we need to reason and think about what would be the best course of action. Many times, we react to our difficult situation and strike out against other people or take it out on someone we love.

As your weekend unfolded, you learned that you need to reach out to God. You are never alone! You are never without hope.

John Thompson

## Let Go And Find Freedom

*Today's Passage*  
**Galatians 5:13-25**

Based on the *Goals* talk

*"It is for freedom that  
Christ has set us free.  
Stand firm, then, and do  
not let yourselves be  
burdened again by a yoke of  
slavery."  
Galatians 5:1(NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What habit or addiction are you holding onto? What might happen if you let go and let God help you escape?

**Prayer:** I thank God that I have freedom in Christ! I will no longer let past failures, habits, or addictions control me. I ask for the strength to overcome these problems.

**Meditate Today:** God help me to no longer let the failures of the past control me!

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am free!

In some areas of the world, monkeys are hunted using a very simple strategy. The hunter takes a coconut and fastens it with a chain to a tree. He makes a hole in the coconut that is just large enough for a monkey to stick his hand into. A nut, or some type of favorite food, is placed inside the coconut and the hunter leaves the area because the trap has been set. Along comes a monkey and he discovers a treat inside the coconut so he reaches in with his hand and grabs it. With the object inside his hand, he is unable to withdraw his clenched fist from the coconut because the hole is too small. But the monkey is determined to keep this prize and will not let go of it; so, he cannot get away. He is trapped by his own greedy instinct to get food. The hunter returns to the trap; and although the monkey wants to run away, he remains and the hunter has caught the monkey.

Some people also act this way. They grab hold of something that is valuable to them and hang on in spite of their circumstances. It might be a drug habit or some type of addiction that seems to satisfy them on a temporary basis. They think that they can't live without this "thing" in their life. Despite seeing the dangers around them they keep "holding on." It seems that they would rather risk being trapped than to let go.

Friendship with God offers you freedom from all types of addictions and negative habits. The first step to freedom is being willing to let go and let God lead you.

John Thompson

## Make God's Goals Your Goals

*Today's Passage*  
**Ephesians 5:1-20**

Based on the *Goals* talk

*"Since you are God's dear children, you must try to be like him."*

*Ephesians 5:1 (GNT)*

**Ask Yourself:** How have your life-goals changed since you completed your weekend?

**Prayer:** Lord, examine my goals and help me make changes wherever necessary. Help me work toward achieving those goals that are noble and worthy in your eyes. Take me and use me as I daily live for you.

**Meditate Today:** Lord, may your goals become my goals!

**Today's Declaration:**  
My life-goals are pleasing to God!

During your weekend you were asked to identify your life-goals by answering these three questions:

1. Where do your idle thoughts go?
2. Where does your free time go?
3. Where does your extra money go?

The answers to each of these questions should have helped you determine what your true goals are in life. Were you satisfied that the answers matched up to what you thought were your life-goals?

Although the word "God" was not mentioned during this talk, most of the posters showed that the ultimate goal in life should be aimed at getting to heaven or putting God first in your life. Ephesians 5:1 suggests that our goals will help us become more like Jesus. The focus of our life should be spiritual rather than material. Being Christ-like will look different for each of us because we are unique personalities created by God.

Do you dare to make your life-goals spiritual? Are you willing to let all of your actions, goals, plans, and dreams be made within this framework: "Is my life-goal pleasing to God"?

As you examine your life-goals, you may discover that your focus is mainly about you, your personal comfort, getting wealth, or some other self-centered idea. Are you willing to re-evaluate your goals in light of your desire to love God, live for Him, and to be Christ-like in your actions?

John Thompson

## Trapped By Our Pride

*Today's Passage*  
**Psalm 10:1-11**

Based on the **Goals** talk

*“In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.”  
Psalm 10:4 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I a victim of my own pride? What goals should I make to avoid this happening in my future?

**Prayer:** Help me to put aside my pride, to humble myself, and to seek the face of God! Lord may I listen for your voice and turn away from my old ways and follow you for the rest of my days.

**Meditate Today:**  
Lord, let my steps be led by you only!

**Today's Declaration:**  
It is my plan to always follow God's way!

Legend has it that the lion is the “king of the beasts” in the jungle. One day word came to him that another animal, a new creature, claimed to be superior. This new animal was not nearly as big nor did it have the strength of a the lion king. This news upset the lion so much that he made a vow to search the jungle until he found the creature and defeated him. He searched day after day, but to no avail.

One day, after approaching several strange animals, the lion again roared, “I’ve been searching high and low for a new animal who claims to be king and he calls himself, man. Have you seen him?” “No.” was the reply from the strange animal, “But, I happen to be looking for him too, so why don’t we search together?” So, off they went together, searching. It was a long, hot, tiring day. The new animal finally said, “Look, we are both tired and exhausted. Why don’t you come to my house to eat and sleep?” It sounded good to the lion so they made their way to a large cage, which this new animal called his home. He opened the door, stepped back and let his lion friend in. Then, very quickly, he closed the door and locked the lion inside. “Welcome to your new home,” he said, “I am man.”

Have you ever found yourself trapped in a situation created by your own pride? Maybe you ignored the warnings from others about your actions or attitudes but you told yourself it might happen to others but never to me! It is like playing with fire; sooner or later you probably will get burned.

Examples include: an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy; an arrest for recreational drug use; a car accident causing a death; a firing from a good job due to fraud or lying ... bad things that happen to good people. Now you face the consequences for your actions. Was the risk taken worth the pain you now must endure?

John Thompson



## Become All That God Wants You To Be

*Today's Passage*  
**John 10:1-18**

Based upon the **Goals** talk

*"I have come that they may  
have life, and that they may  
have it more abundantly."*

*John 10:10b (NKJV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I truly living or just existing? Am I living the life that God has designed for me or simply doing "things" for the "treats?"

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, don't let me just exist. Help me to be all that you want me to be. Help me live the abundant life that You offer to me!

**Meditate Today:** God has a plan to give me abundant life when I live truly for Him.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will become all that God wants me to be and live an abundant life!

If you attend the circus, you often will see a show with a trainer and his dog. He will tell the audience that this dog is very smart and is able to add, subtract, multiply and divide. He asks the crowd, "Do you believe that?" Of course they will yell, "No." Then he will proceed to hold up two fingers and asks the dog, "How many fingers am I holding up?" The dog responds by barking twice. Then he holds up three fingers on the other hand and asks the dog to add the number of fingers of his left hand to the number on his right hand ... the dog replies by barking five times. He then holds up two fingers on each hand and asks the dog to multiply, and he barks four times. So on goes the show through division and subtraction. The crowd cheers and applauds wildly while the trainer discreetly slips the dog edible rewards. But, everyone knows that the dog is not the mathematician, in fact, he is incapable of abstract reasoning. The dog is simply responding to carefully learned hand signals from the trainer. The dog would give the same responses as long as he is given the signal and reward, no matter what questions the trainer said with his voice.

The moral to this story is that you often do things because you get some type of reward. The paycheck you get at the end of the week makes the job, which you hate, seem tolerable. You live for the weekends, the parties, and the rewards that you give to yourself. Is that any way to really live? Are you living your life making the maximum use of your talents and gifts?

An old commercial for the army used the phrase, "Be all that you can be." Jesus gives us the same challenge. In our verse for today He talks about having an abundant life. Don't let the "things" of this world steal and rob you of the true joy of living a life in Christ.

John Thompson

## Becoming A New Creation

*Today's Passage*

**2 Corinthians 5:11-21**

Based upon the **Goals** talk

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"  
2 Corinthians 5:17(NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** How is your life different "in Christ" than it was "before Christ?" Have your hopes and dreams been changing?

**Prayer:** I thank God that I am a new creation. Keep changing my hopes and dreams so that they match Your hopes and dreams for me. I want to become "new" everyday!

**Meditate Today:** God help me to get rid of my "old" ways and to become "new" day by day.

**Today's Declaration:** My life is "new" in Christ and I am not who I used to be. My goals are changing as I grow in You.

People are not like animals! We think and reason, but animals can only react to their environment using their instincts for survival. Although modern biology claims "man has evolved," the Bible states that we are a special creation of God. Genesis 1 clearly states that in the beginning God created everything. Which methods God used, or the time frame of this creation, can be hotly debated by both the Christian and secular community. The bottom line is that we are created in the image of God.

Mankind has the ability to think and reason and make decisions that will determine the course of his life. Animals are driven totally by instinct; it is all hard-wired in their genetic code. You, however, have instincts plus the intellectual capacity to think, feel, and evaluate your actions in order to direct your life and future. You make a series of decisions throughout your life as you grow and develop. You make choices, good or bad, that have consequences which affect your future. Everyone is able to develop a life-goal, an ultimate target. They become your hopes and dreams of what the future may hold. Who will you be? What will you be like? What will you do with your life? Does your life have a purpose or meaning? What are you here on earth for?

How is that working out for you? Think about your life before Christ and your life after you've accepted Him. Have your goals and dreams changed? Has your life in Christ been an improvement over your life before Christ?

It is never too late to dream new dreams and develop new goals. It is said that the famous artist, Grandma Moses, did not start painting until she was eighty years old. As long as you are breathing, you can be working on accomplishing your mission in life. Never, never, never give up doing what God wants you to do.

John Thompson

## Discover Your Life's Mission

*Today's Passage*

**2 Corinthians 4:1-12**

Based upon the **Goals** talk

*“We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.”*

*2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NLT)*

**Ask Yourself:** Has my life turned out the way that I planned it would? Have I allowed my failures to dictate my future?

**Prayer:** Lord, don't let my failures dictate my future. Please bless me as I follow you and make you #1 in my life. Thank you for giving me a hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

**Meditate Today:** Lord, you never abandon me and I put my hope and trust in You and for my future!

**Today's Declaration:** I have hope in my future because I am never alone!

I believe that everyone has a mission to accomplish in life. We are all here on Earth for some purpose. That is what we call a life-goal. It is a combination of your hopes, dreams, plans, ideas, and convictions. Your life goal needs to be high enough to inspire you to greatness. It needs to bring out the best in you. Of course, it needs to be realistic. One that is hard, yet possible!

When you discover your mission – your life-goal – your special talent, it will have a major influence in your life. It will give you a focus; it gives you purpose and meaning for life. It will create enthusiasm inside of you.

Do you always achieve your goals? Well, the answer is no. Circumstances change. Life is an ever-changing series of ups and downs known as the “vicissitudes of life.”

Your life, like my life, may often take many unexpected twists and turns. A loved one may die. You lose a job unexpectedly. An accident happens and you are disabled. You get knocked off your feet and all seems lost.

Never despair; never lose hope! Always trust that God has something new for you. All of your life experiences are shaping you into the individual that God wants you be.

Your life-goal is not a single event or a single opportunity, that if missed, means your life is a failure. God specializes in turning failures into successes! Peter denied Christ. King David committed adultery and murder; yet he was a man “after God's own heart.”

Never confuse the “events of life” with true-life goals. Events happen, goals endure! Who you are as a person is much more important than the “things you do” or your career job.

Don't let the failures of your past life stymie your future goals. Remember, God is never too early, never too late, always on time, and always on budget!

John Thompson

### **Part 1 – What goals did Jesus have for his followers?**

Read John 17:1-26, often called the High Priestly Prayer, given by Jesus just before He went out to the Garden of Eden and was arrested. In this prayer, Jesus summarized His ministry to the Father and you learn what were the important principles of Christ’s ministry here on earth.

You also learn something about yourself as you follow the example of Christ and the disciples. Verse 20 says: *“I pray for these followers, but I am also praying for all those who will believe in me because of their teaching.” (NCV)* “These followers” are the apostles and disciples with Christ on that evening in the upper room. The remaining part of the sentence refers to any Christian believer that would come along later on. So, you can clearly see that Christ was praying for you if you are a believer.

If you don’t mind writing in your Bible, you may want to go back and re-read this passage and every time Christ makes a reference to his disciples, or to those who believe in Him, write in your own name. This prayer is for you, about you, and should help you learn something about what your life-goals should be like.

1. In verse 6, whom did Jesus say was given to Him and what have they done?
2. What two things did Jesus pray for in verse 11?
3. What benefit do followers of Christ gain according to verse 13?
4. In verse 15, what are Christ’s followers safe from?
5. Verse 16 says that we belong; what do we belong to?
6. Why did Christ pray “that they can be one” in verses 21 to 23?
7. In verse 24, what did Christ want his followers to see?

### **Part 2 – What examples can you follow?**

Finding goals, making goals, and following the plan is not always an easy path. There is always difficulty in being obedient to God working in your life. In fact, obedience and faith are often interchangeable. Consider it took Noah years to build the ark and it had never rained on earth up to this point (Genesis 2:4-6; Hebrews 11:7). Abel probably did not fully understand the importance of making a blood sacrifice to God but he did it anyway (Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4). Abraham’s promise was given (Gen. 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8) some twenty-five years before

he had a son, the basic requirement to becoming the father of a great nation. So how should you move forward with making spiritual goals in your life?

1. You must accept and claim the promise or word (goal) from God to you. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith? According to verse 6, why is it important?
2. You need to act upon the promise and take daily action-steps to work toward the goal. What does Hebrews 10:8-10 say about what we should do?
3. You need to move forward even when it is costly, requires sacrifice, and even exposes you to danger. Sometimes it seems to go against human logic so you must have conviction and confidence that you are being directed by God and that it's not just our own "stinkin' thinking." According to Hebrews 11:8, what did Abraham do?
4. You need to persevere no matter what obstacles you may encounter or circumstances that confront you. Declare to yourself: I will not give in, give up, get down, but will move forward with faith and certainty that if God is for me, who can be against me? I will stand fast, stand firm, and stand strong because I know it is God's work and His plan for my life. What does Matthew 6:33 and John 17:15 say to help you persevere?

### **Part 3 – What are your life goals?**

During the *Goals* talk, you were challenged to ask yourself three questions. 1. *Where do your idle thoughts go?* 2. *Where does your free time go?* 3. *Where does your extra money go?*

1. Since your weekend, have your answers to these three questions changed? Explain why or why not.
2. Examine Psalm 131:1-3, where should you focus your hopes and goals?
3. Check out 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and ask yourself what your goal(s) should be?
4. What does 2 Corinthians 5:6-9 say about the nature of your goals?
5. What advice does 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 offer about financial goals?
6. According to Philippians 2:2, what should be our "primary interest"?
7. In Philippians 2:14-18, what attitudes should you have as you work toward your goals?
8. In Colossians 2:1-3, what goals does Paul suggest?
9. According to 1 Timothy 1:5, what goal is commanded?

John Thompson

“Spiritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study (See Page 23)

Read: **Philippians 3:7-14**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: “*What is this passage saying to me?*”
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, “*What touches my heart?*” Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, “*What is God inviting me to do?*” Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: “*Is there something else for me?*” Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***

Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

## Influence Others For Jesus

*Today's passage:*  
**Luke 6:27-38**

Based on the *Spirituality* talk

*“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Keep meeting together and encourage each other.”*

*Hebrews 10:24-25  
(D. Hintz Paraphrase)*

**Ask Yourself:** Are you growing in grace and love? Show me one way I could reach out to someone today.

**Prayer:** Father, I thank you for Jesus, who is my example. Help be to change and be more like Him every day. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so I can love others the way You love me. Reveal any ‘Holy Joe’ characteristics in my life.

**Meditate Today:** I am redeemed to be an agent of change. I am loved to love others.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am a son/daughter of God!

‘Holy Joe/Jane’ loves himself/herself more than God. He/she refuses to love others. He/she reads the Bible, goes to church and tries to be good. The salvation of his/her soul is strictly between him/her and God. His/her attitude is: leave me alone and don’t bother me. He/she thinks spending time with people is a waste of time because, “nobody ever changes.” This mindset denies the power and grace of God.

Jesus was righteous. He was not afraid to eat with ‘tax collectors and sinners.’ Jesus knew the unrighteous would not rub off on Him; He would rub off on them. Jesus came as an agent of change. Jesus said, “I have come that you may have life, and have life more abundantly.”

Our Savior calls us to righteousness and maturity. When we come from a position of spiritual strength, we can help others grow in love and faith. With the Holy Spirit in you, and the Word of God on your lips, you can influence others.

This is the call of Keryx - to visit prisons, preach the good news of Jesus Christ, and help men/women be transformed. The Keryx prayer is for the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin, guide them into all truth, and bear witness to Jesus in their lives.

Robert came to his weekend with a lot of biblical knowledge, but no sense of community. His Sunday morning commitment was to start a Bible study in his unit. He reached out to three other men who he knew were strong believers. Their daily time in the Word became filled with joy and their faces started to glow with the glory of God. After a few weeks, an inmate, who had been hostile to Christians, came over to the table and said, “I want what you have.” He joined the group and is growing in grace and truth.

Daniel Hintz



Week 2 - Day 2

## Abundant Life

Today's passage:  
**John 12:20-36**

Based on the ***Spirituality*** talk

*“Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” James 1:21-22*  
(D. Hintz Paraphrase)

**Ask Yourself:** Since your weekend, have you come alive spiritually? How has the Holy Spirit been teaching you? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any ‘Mechanical Marvin/Mary’ characteristics in your life.

**Prayer:** Father, I am sorry for making this life all about me. In mercy, forgive me and help me. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so I experience the abundant life that Jesus offers.

**Meditate Today:** As a child of God, I was forgiven to experience peace and joy.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I have the Life of Jesus in me!

‘Mechanical Marvin/Mary’ practices only the outward signs of spirituality. He/she is just going through the motions; attending services out of habit. They may read the Bible or go to church because a friend, or someone they wants to impress, does these things. Marvin/Mary lacks commitment. Christianity has not touched their heart.

True and authentic spirituality demands the direction of our entire life towards God. When we make this commitment, Jesus comes into our hearts, minds, and souls with LIFE. The life He gives comes first with forgiveness. He removes our guilt and shame and gives us peace and joy.

The second thing, the life of Jesus brings, is spiritual revelation. The Word comes alive, as the Holy Spirit enlightens and teaches us out of the scriptures.

Tony is friend of mine. He attended a Keryx weekend at a local church. At the closing, Tony gave this testimony: “I have been married for over 35 years. All that time I thought I was a Christian, but I was just attending church and living for myself. My wife was the spiritual leader of our family and I went along for the ride. After this weekend I realize the truth. I am going home to apologize to my wife. From now on I am going to be a true man of God and the spiritual leader of my family.” I know Tony has followed through on that commitment.

When a person truly discovers Jesus, they will not be bored with church. They will come alive with gratitude and love for God and others. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)

Daniel Hintz

## You Are The Light of the World

*Today's passage:*  
**Matthew 5:1-16**

Based on the *Spirituality* talk

*"Humble yourself under  
the mighty hand of God,  
and He will exalt you at the  
proper time."*

*1 Peter 5:6 (NKJV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Think about the statement: "This life is not about me; it is about what God can do through me." Have you ever been discouraged by a hypocrite? How did you react? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any 'Harry/Harriet Hypocrite' characteristics in your life.

**Prayer:** Father, I am sorry for making this life all about me. In mercy, forgive me and help me. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so I experience the abundant life that Jesus offers.

**Meditate Today:** As a child of God, I have purpose and meaning to experience in my life.

**Today's Declaration:** I am alive today because God has a purpose for me in His kingdom!

'Harry/Harriet Hypocrite,' the angler, does not care about God. They attend church and claim Christianity only as a way to meet the right people. He/she is a self-proclaimed 'people person,' but only likes people for what he/she can get from them. This type does great damage to the name of Christ because people see through them, and many think all Christians are like this.

Think about how you have been turned off by those who say they are Christians, but do not act like it! Many times we, in Keryx, hear the excuse: "I do not go to church because it is full of hypocrites." In many cases that is valid. Hopefully, your Keryx weekend demonstrated another side of spirituality - the love of Jesus Christ coming through people. Remember that the church is not a building or a club, but the body of Jesus Christ.

At the Keryx closing, you were asked to answer three questions:

In what spiritual condition did you arrive at Keryx?

What did you find here?

What are you taking away with you?

Do you remember how many candidates said they found love? Jesus loved you through us and it was real!

Jesus exhorts us to be genuine believers; living our lives to bring glory to the Father, and being an inspiration to others. He said, "*You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*" Matthew 5:14,16 (NKJV)

George MacDonald, the Welsh author, once said, "It is my business to help my brothers and sisters to know God and to worship Him in spirit and truth - because God is altogether and perfectly true and loving and fair."

Daniel Hintz

## Be Genuine

*Today's passage:*

**1 John 1:1-10**

Based on the ***Spirituality*** talk

*"The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe... for it is written, 'the just shall live by faith.' "*  
*Romans 1:16-17 (NKJV)*

**Ask Yourself:** How would you describe repentance? What advice could you give to a youth group? Think about how the power of Jesus has changed you.

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for the blood of Jesus that purifies me from all unrighteousness. Help me change and be more like Jesus. Sanctify me by the Truth.

**Meditate Today:** I am in Christ and I am in the Truth.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am being sanctified and made good by His life in me!

'Harry/Harriet Hypocrite,' the fraud, is so phony it is laughable. He/she is a liar, unable to distinguish the truth from a lie. He/she thinks he/she has everyone fooled. He/she likes to gather with Christians because he/she likes the attention and acceptance. He/she needs to be confronted and brought to repentance, but most Christians give him/her the benefit of the doubt and conclude he/she is a carnal Christian. They try to avoid him/her.

'Harry/Harriet Fraud' needs to hear that the gospel of Jesus has the power of God to become a different person.

At a youth Bible study, a 14 year-old young lady was asked to describe repentance. She said, "I think repentance is like this: Before I knew Jesus in my heart, I pleased myself and was never sorry over my sins. Actually, I did not even think I was a sinner. I could lie and cheat and give the excuse that everyone was doing it, or I needed the good grade. When I accepted Jesus, I wanted to please Him above anybody. Now, I do not want to sin; I love to please Jesus."

She continued, "My little brother teases me and takes my things because he is selfish. He only apologizes when my Mom makes him. I don't want to be like that. Jesus came and died for me. I want to be good and to worship Him."

Jesus said, "*Sanctify them [purify, consecrate, separate them for Yourself, make them holy] by truth; Your Word is truth. And so for their sakes I sanctify [dedicate, consecrate] Myself, that they also may be sanctified [dedicate, consecrated, made holy] in the Truth.*"  
John 17:17,19 (Amplified)

Daniel Hintz

## Jesus, Our Example

*Today's passage:*  
**Matthew 23:1-28**

Based on the *Spirituality* talk

*"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."  
Luke 12:1 (NKJV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Think about the statement: "As I have loved you, you also love one another." List some ways Jesus showed His compassion for people.

**Prayer:** Father, I am sorry for making this life all about me. In mercy, forgive me and help me. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so I can love others as Jesus loves me

**Meditate Today:**  
Love is the fulfillment of the law. Love covers a multitude of sins. Perfect love never fails.

**Today's Declaration:** I am redeemed to love God with my whole heart, and love my neighbor as myself!

'Harry/Harriet Hypocrite,' knowing, wants to know everything so he/she can have influence. Knowledge is power. They have no interest in being a servant for Jesus; they want to have their way. He/she is usually trying to convert others to his/her doctrine, sharing the truth of the Word. They makes an outward show of caring about others, but in private, they are only selfish all the time.

True spirituality is servant hood. Jesus said, "*The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.*" Matthew 20:28 (NKJV)

Consider the two basins of water involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor who had the authority to release Jesus or put Him to death. Like 'Harry/Harriet Knowing,' Pilate asked questions and gathered information. He could find no fault in Jesus and thought about letting Him go. In the end, Pilate would not risk his position or reputation by going against the desire of the religious leaders. He took a basin of water and washed his hands saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man."

The evening before, Jesus had taken a basin of water, wrapped a towel around His waste, and washed the disciple's feet - even Judas. This was a job reserved for a slave or the lowest servant in the house. He said, "I have set an example for you. If I, your master and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13-12-17 D. Hintz paraphrased)

Jesus is the perfect example of a King who can be a servant. At times He took authority to instruct, correct, rebuke, impart, and lead. At other times, our King humbled Himself to meet the basic needs of those around Him. We are called by the Father to imitate the life of our older brother - Jesus Christ.

Daniel Hintz

## Confess Jesus

Today's passage:  
**Matthew 10:27-42**

Based on the *Spirituality* talk

*Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

*Revelation 1:8 (NKJV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Have you ever taken a public stand for Christ? Think of some examples from the Bible where men stood up for their faith. What happened?

**Prayer:** Father, forgive me for times that I have hidden my faith. Help me and fill me with the Holy Spirit so I have faith and courage.

**Meditate Today:** As a true believer, I am a child of God and He is not ashamed of me.

### **Today's Declaration:**

I am not ashamed of my Savior and King - Jesus. He stood up for me; I will stand up for Him!

T.L. Osborn was a worldwide evangelist in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was best known for preaching the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and for mass-miracle evangelism. In his book, *Legacy of Faith* (Harrison House Publishing), Osborn described a miracle that happened in Bangkok, Thailand. He talked through an interpreter to a Buddhist woman who had been healed at his meeting the night before.

"For nine years she had tuberculosis of the spine, and was bent over. She had suffered terrifying pain. She had been attending the crusade and had accepted Christ as her Savior. This morning, when she got out of bed, she was completely healed."

"Neighbors asked her, 'What happened? What medicine did you take? Who healed you?'"

"She told them how she had believed in Jesus and had been healed by Him."

"They said, 'It is better that you remain bent down and die than to give up your Buddhist religion.'"

"She told them, 'You have your heart; I have mine. I accepted Jesus and He healed me.'"

"All day she had testified."

What an amazing testimony to the power of Jesus!

Jesus said, "*Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*" (Matthew 10:32 NKJV)

True spirituality means we turn our lives over to Jesus and confess him before men.

Daniel Hintz

# Morning Offering

*Today's Passage:*  
**Isaiah 6:1-8**

Based on the *Spirituality* talk

*“Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,”  
Matthew 16:16 (NKJV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Think about the 4 elements of the morning offering as they apply to Jesus' life on earth. Remember some specific examples of how Jesus offered Himself to the Father. Are you doing the same?

**Prayer:** Father, please help me to fully understand how to make a morning offering. Holy Spirit, would You remind me every morning and guide me in the way I should go?

**Meditate Today:** Today I surrender, receive, remember, and bear witness of God in my life.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am loved. I am forgiven. I give myself to my Father.

The Morning Offering is giving yourself to God for this day. Before your feet hit the floor in the morning, say something like, “Here I am, Father, use me.” Follow this up with worship, prayer, and scripture reading. This is a solemn commitment to GIVE yourself to your King, Jesus. It is a desire to live for Him and not yourself. The morning offering has 4 elements.

1. **Surrender:** Jesus said, *“If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”* (Matthew 16:24 NKJV)

The cross, Jesus refers to, is God's purpose for you. There is no such thing as meeting God half way. God will not compromise with your flesh or emotions. He never takes second place - He is God and you are His child and servant.

2. **Receive:** John the Baptist said, *“A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.”* (John 3:27 NKJV) God provides all you need to live by. His plan must come from Him, not your own strength. Your morning offering calls upon God for truth, provision, strength, and light for today.

3. **Remember:** We are created to live for God and not ourselves. We must daily remind ourselves who is in charge. We do this by focusing on Jesus, the throne of grace, the blessings of the cross, and the guiding light of His Word. It is also good to daily consider how Jesus has blessed you. This reminds you He is good and has your best interest in mind.

4. **Bear witness:** Tell others about the kingdom of God. God has chosen to win souls through your testimony. Think about all the testimonies you heard on your Keryx weekend. The volunteers were a demonstration to you of spirituality and total surrender to the will of God.

Daniel Hintz

## History of *Lectio Divina* –“ Divine Reading”

*Lectio Divina*, translated from the Latin, means “divine reading.” It comes to us from the Catholic tradition. Depending on your spiritual background, you may or may not have ever heard of this practice. Being raised in the protestant faith, I never encountered it. I asked my Catholic brethren about it and I got varied responses. Some knew of it and had experience with it, others knew nothing of it nor had they ever encountered it before.

It was by complete chance that I discovered it (I say it was a “God” thing.) My wife and I subscribe to *Netflix* and we order DVD’s to view in our home at our leisure. One day a new DVD arrived and it was titled “Contemplative Prayer.” We both looked at each other and asked, “Did you order this?” Neither of us recalled doing so. However, since it had arrived, we thought that we would watch it and see what it was all about. Much to our surprise, it described the practice of *Lectio Divina*. Having never heard of it, I got on my computer and “googled” the words.

Wikipedia told me this: “The roots of Spiritual reflection and interpretation go back to Origen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, after who St. Ambrose taught them to St. Augustine. The monastic practice of *Lectio Divina* was first established in the 6<sup>th</sup> century by Saint Benedict. It was then formalized as a 4 step process by the Carthusian monk, Guigo II, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the constitution *Die Verbum* of Pope Paul VI recommended *Lectio Divina* for the general public. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the importance of *Lectio Divina* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

As I continued to view the video, I began taking notes and was amazed by what I was seeing and hearing. Several prominent Christian leaders were interviewed in the program and described the purity of this form of Bible study.

After the video ended, I immediately began to search for more information on my computer about this new-found practice and quickly I wrote out the steps and decided that it must be added to our upcoming “Prayer 168” that would take place at our church, prior to Holy Week. A couple of times each year we hold a 24/7 prayer event. We ask people sign up and pray for at least one hour during one week; thus it is called “Prayer 168” (168 hours in one week). So, I included the outline and description in a large notebook that we have available to aid people as they enter into their one hour of prayer. It has samples of prayers, list of people in our church, community officials, area churches, and a myriad of articles about the power of prayer.

Since then, I have done several Bible studies using the *Lectio Divina* format and have had wonderful responses from people about its effectiveness. Most Bible studies I’ve done in the past have a series of questions that someone wrote and the writer usually has a focus or an idea that they are trying to teach to the participants. What I enjoy about *Lectio Divina* is that there is no hidden agenda buried in the questions. You are reading a passage of scripture and asking yourself, “God, what do you have for me today?” It is just you, the scripture, and the Holy Spirit speaking to you. There are no outside influences, no one trying to teach you something that they have learned. To me, it is “pure” Holy Spirit communicating to you directly.

I hope that you find the *Lectio Divina* Bible study format productive and effective in your Christian growth. This method can be applied to most any passage of scripture you would like to study. In a small group, I believe it will become an effective tool as “iron sharpens iron” in your quest for spiritual growth and maturity.

John Thompson

True and authentic spirituality demands the direction of our entire life to God. The elements of true spirituality are listed below, along with a Bible verse that displays how Jesus Christ manifested each of these characteristics. Look up the verses as a review of the *Spirituality* talk.

1. Natural - be who you were made to be, the best you possible. Matthew 14:13-21
2. Courageous - stand up and be counted as a Christian. Mark 3:1-6
3. Manly/womanly - be strong, true, and compassionate. John 2:13-22
4. Joyful - connect to your joy and give God the credit. John 15:11; 16:33
5. Obedient - hear God's voice and do what He says. Mark 14:32-42

Each of the scriptures listed below describes at least two elements of true spirituality. Read over the passages and list the two elements in your notebook.

- A. Joshua 1:1-9
- B. 1 Samuel 17:21-51
- C. Matthew 4:18-22
- D. Luke 10:1, 17-21



E. Mark 6:30-34

F. Acts 9:10-19

Answer the following questions.

1. According to verses Romans 12:1-2, how are we transformed into true spiritual people?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. What do you think it means to quench the Spirit?
3. In Philippians 2:5-11, we are exhorted to have the same mind as Jesus Christ. From these verses, list at least two elements of being just like Jesus.
4. Read John 16:5-15. What are the 4 things the Holy Spirit was sent to earth to do?

Daniel Hintz

**“Spritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study**

Read: **1 Peter 2:1-10**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***

Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

## Responsibility To Yourself

*Today's Passage:*  
**Luke 12:42-48.**

Based on the **Your Walk** talk

*"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked"*

*Luke 12:48 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What am I doing with the Spiritual training I have received? What more does God ask (demand) of me?

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, truly You have given to me abundantly. Thank You for the privilege I have of hearing that You love me and that my sins are forgiven. Help me to live every day in thanks for Your mercy, and to show mercy to others. Be glorified in my life.

**Meditate Today:** Because I have been given much, much will be demanded of me. What can I do to be prepared for today?

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will take responsibility to live every day as a child of God!

For many teens, obtaining a driver's license is a huge milestone. The freedom to drive yourself where you want to go is an exhilarating feeling. A driver's license, along with its privileges and freedoms, carries a major responsibility to make good choices and obey traffic laws.

We have received something far greater than a driver's license. To be forgiven and made right with God is an indescribable experience. We are among the people that Jesus said had been given much and are entrusted with much. Each of us has received instruction in the Word of God and the Christian life. We have been given the knowledge and the tools to live a life that honors God. It is a beautiful gift, but it carries with it a serious responsibility. Each Christian must do the work required to learn to live a life that honors God. Nobody can do the work for you.

Imagine, on a given Sunday, that I am feeling lazy so I stay home from church service. I can ask a friend afterward what the message was about, but I will totally miss what the Holy Spirit wanted to say directly to me through the worship service. I need to be listening to Him myself.

It is our responsibility to follow God and allow Him to work in our lives to transform us into the person He wants us to become. It will require our work and His grace.

Lynn Adams

## Responsibility To Christ

*Today's Passage:*  
**Matthew 19:16-22**

Based on the *Your Walk*  
talk

*"From this time many of his  
disciples turned back and  
no longer followed him"*  
*John 6:66 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What area of  
my life is the hardest to submit  
to Christ?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I thank  
you for submitting yourself to  
the torture of death on the  
cross for me. Help me to  
surrender my will in order to  
obey all that you tell me to do.  
Please help me to clearly hear  
what you are saying to my  
spirit, and then to obey.

**Meditate Today:** For some  
it is money, for others a  
relationship or a habit that they  
refuse to let go of in order to  
follow Jesus. Please examine  
my heart and show me  
anything that competes for top  
priority in my life. I will  
surrender today to Jesus!

**Today's Declaration:**  
Jesus, you are everything to  
me; I will not let anything else  
rule my life!

Some have found that following Jesus is just too hard, and have turned away from him. A wealthy young man came to Jesus asking, "What good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus started with some of the Ten Commandments, which the young man said he had been keeping since childhood. Then Jesus went to the heart of the matter. Knowing that the man was rich, and that his security was in his wealth, he told the man to sell all he possessed and give the money to the poor. *"When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth"* (Matt. 19:22 NIV).

Jesus is the source of all that is good – hope and peace, love and joy, forgiveness and eternity in heaven. He offers salvation to us at no cost, since we could never pay for it any way. Becoming a Christian is free, but living as a follower of Jesus will cost all you have. The rich young man mentioned above is the only one in Scripture ever commanded to give away all he had and give the money to the poor. That is not a foundational teaching that applies to everyone.

The cost of following Jesus comes down to the issue of Lordship. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record Jesus as saying, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." The cost of following Jesus is the sacrifice of my will. If I am to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, I must allow him to direct my actions, how I treat other people, how I spend my money, my time, and my talents. As the Lord of my life, he determines where I live, where I go, how I behave, and how I handle both relationships and problems. A true Christian has a responsibility to obey *ALL* that Christ as commanded us.

Lynn Adams

## Responsibility To Others

*Today's Passage:*  
**Matthew 14:13-21**

Based on the **Your Walk**  
talk

*“Freely you have received.  
Freely Give.”  
Matthew 10:8b (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What have I seen in other Christians that helped draw me to Jesus Christ? Who can I share my testimony with today?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I thank you for everyone that had a part in bringing the gospel message to me. I ask You to give me a heart and a mind that is always seeking an opportunity to share my story of what You have done for me. May people all around me want to know You because they see Christ in my life!

**Meditate Today:** Jesus said that to do his Father's will was like bread to him – his daily sustenance. (John 4:34) May the same be true for me as I learn to have the mind and attitude of Christ. (Phil. 2:5)

**Today's Declaration:** I will shine like stars forever and ever! (Daniel 12:3) For the rest of my life I will seek to be a part of as many spiritual family trees as God wants me to be.

A family tree depicts several generations of relatives, and how they are related. Imagine what your Spiritual Family Tree would look like. The trunk is Jesus Christ. The first branches are the first-century disciples who divided the known world into sections and each went to tell a different area the good news about salvation in Jesus. Those who heard the message and believed it told others, who told others, who told others. Eventually, the message reached you. I hope that, when we get to heaven, we will have opportunity to look back through time and see the whole chain of people who helped bring the gospel to us.

In the miraculous feeding of more than 5,000 people, Jesus allowed the disciples to play a significant role. He gave each of them a small portion of the five loaves and two fishes. Each disciple then was instructed to share with others what he had been given. It was not until they started giving it away that the food multiplied.

Every person who has repented of their sins and received forgiveness through Jesus Christ is to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus. As a Christian, the two most important goals of life are: 1) to know and love God as much as is humanly possible; 2) to encourage others to do the same. Like the men in the New Testament, we are to be sharing with others what we have been given. Far more lasting than physical food, we have been given the key to eternal life. Each one of us is to be telling others what Jesus has done in our lives, and inviting them to know Him. In this way we become a part of somebody else's Spiritual family tree. People who are lost in sin will make decisions about whether or not they want to know Jesus based on the way that Christians live. We have the tremendous responsibility and privilege of being his representatives in the world.

Lynn Adams

## Study The One You Love

*Today's Passage:*  
**Jeremiah 33:1-3**

Based on the *Your Walk*  
talk

*“At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God”  
Heb. 12:11 (MSG)*

**Ask Yourself:** How well do I really know God? What is my motivation for reading Scripture, prayer, and meeting with other believers? Do I love God as He longs for me to love Him?

**Prayer:** Lord, please, give me a heart to know You. Help me to strive every day to learn more. Help me to come as close to You as You long for me to be.

**Meditate Today:** The Christian life is not easy. It takes continual effort. May each of us seek intimacy with God more earnestly than we seek anything else in life.

**Today's Declaration:**  
Spiritual disciplines help me learn to love God more!

Become a student of those you love. In any strong relationship, be it dating, marriage, friendship, or parent to child, a wise person studies the unique qualities of those they care for. If we take the time to learn someone else's likes and dislikes, dreams and pet peeves, we can do a much better job of showing love in the things we do and the things we don't do. We don't study another person like we would study for a test; we study them because we love them and long to do things that bring them pleasure. The same principle applies in the Spiritual realm. Jesus said the most important commandment of all is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Mark 12:30) In order to learn to love God, seek to learn to know God. Try to discover what He likes and doesn't like; what brings Him pleasure and what makes Him angry. Seek to know Him, and to do the things that please Him as an expression of your love.

There are disciplines that help us learn to know God more intimately. Disciplines such as prayer (both speaking and listening) and Bible study help us discover what He desires for/from his people. Develop the skill of quiet reflection because you long to hear God speak. Worship as a celebration of who God is, and meet with others so that you can learn from one another and encourage each other in the pursuit of knowing God.

Be faithful in studying to know God as an expression of your love. *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.”* (Phil. 1:9-11 NIV)

Lynn Adams

## Enjoy Him

*Today's Passage:*  
**Psalm 68:3-10**

Based on the **Your Walk**  
talk

*“You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence”*  
*Acts 2:28 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I experiencing the joy of the Lord? Do others see that joy in me? Does my heart long for a deeper joy in my Savior?

**Prayer:** Oh Lord Jesus, teach me to love You! I long to be as close to You as You want me to be. Fill my heart with an ever-increasing thirst to know You and love You more. Teach me to walk in the joy of the Lord, that others may see You in me.

**Meditate Today:** All the work of developing Spiritual disciplines is wasted unless it leads us to know God more intimately, and to love Him with all that we are. As we grow to know and love Him more, we will experience that inexpressible and glorious joy.

**Today's Declaration:**  
Christianity is all about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Like a healthy marriage, the Christian life takes work; but it is filled with indescribable blessings. Two people in love just enjoy being together, and both are enriched by the relationship. Although it takes work to keep communication open and the relationship healthy, couples that learn to love and accept each other for a lifetime are abundantly blessed. Scripture compares our relationship with Jesus to a marriage. The church is even referred to as the “Bride of Christ” (Rev. 19 and 21). Christianity is all about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When that relationship is strong, it is a feast for the soul.

To hear God, through the Holy Spirit, speak directly to my heart, to see Him involved in the intricate details of my life, causes my heart to overflow. Sensing His presence all around me is such a sweet experience that words can never describe it. You probably experienced “His sweet presence” during your Keryx weekend.

Peter told believers, *“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.”* (1 Peter 1:8 NIV) Do you know that “inexpressible and glorious joy?” Does the joy of the Lord define your life? More than ten times in the Psalms, we are reminded to “Rejoice in the Lord.” The fruit of the Spirit that should be evident in every believer includes joy. The more we know Him, the more we want to know Him and to be closer to Him. We learn to enjoy His presence and long for time alone with Him. The richest Christians are those who learn to thoroughly enjoy God.

Lynn Adams



Week 3 – Day 6

## Depend On The Holy Spirit

*Today's Passage:*  
**John 6:44-71**

Based on the **Your Walk**  
talk

*“Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”*

*Psalm 127:1 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I learning to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? Am I willing to wait on Him and to say only what He tells me to say when He tells me to say it?

**Prayer:** Father, I long to be an effective tool in your hand. There are so many people around me who need to know You. Help me to wait upon You and to hear your voice. Call others through your Holy Spirit, just as you called me. Mold me into an effective tool to be used for your glory.

**Meditate Today:** Let me learn to recognize and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.

**Today's Declaration:** Only in the Holy Spirit can I accomplish what Christ compels me to do!

On a mission trip to help rebuild after Hurricane Katrina, I struggled to pound in spikes with my wimpy hammer. Progress was slow and the job discouraging. Then someone handed me a nail gun. This powerful tool could do in an instant what was taking me a long time to do, better and faster. The Holy Spirit helps us like that. On our own, we struggle to do right and to minister to others. When the Holy Spirit, like a powerful nail gun, does the work through us, it is far more effective.

God chose you and blessed you with an opportunity to participate in a Keryx weekend. He longs for you to have an ever-growing relationship with Him. There is, however, only one way to accomplish your goals. When God's power works in and through us, you are able to minister in Jesus' name so others can come to know Him. Your own efforts, persuasiveness, or charisma will never be enough. It is the Holy Spirit who does the work through you.

Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him. (John 6:44) A few verses later he said, *“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.”* ... He went on to say, *“This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”* (John 6:63-65 NIV) The apostle Paul knew that people only came to Christ through his teaching because of the work of the Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

As we learn to hear His voice, He will tell us when to speak and what words to use. Submit yourself to the Holy Spirit! God speaks to hearts that He has already been calling and preparing. Talk to God about man before you talk to man about God!

Lynn Adams

## Perseverance, Perseverance, Perseverance

*Today's Passage:*  
**Philippians 3:12-16**

Based on the **Your Walk**  
talk

*“Let us not become weary  
in doing good, for at the  
proper time we will reap a  
harvest if we do not give  
up.”  
Galatians 6:9 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I striving  
forward in my relationship with  
Christ, or drifting away?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You gave  
so much for me. I commit to  
giving my all for You. When I  
am tempted to give up, help  
me to hear Your voice calling  
me to keep striving. Please fill  
me with longing to be close to  
You all the days of my life.

**Meditate Today:** May I  
love You and walk in step with  
You every day.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am determined to “climb up  
the down escalator” in my  
journey of faith, all the days of  
my life!

The Christian life is blessed, but it is not easy. Our enemy, the devil, seeks continually to deceive, to discourage, and to destroy. Picture yourself climbing up an escalator that is going down. (This activity is against the rules in most places, so I don't recommend actually trying it.) A person on the descending escalator can move toward the top if he keeps climbing. However, if he stops climbing he does not just stay in the same place as one would on a traditional staircase. He immediately begins to lose the ground he had gained. That is how it is in the Christian life. A believer who is not actively striving to grow closer to God will find himself drifting further away.

Your walk with God, once started, will last forever. You have to design your walk with your Lord Jesus Christ to last an eternity, and eternity begins now. Like any other habit or skill worth developing, it will take time. You will fall. When that happens, it does no good to wallow in despair. You must repent, get up, and start moving again. Perseverance means getting back up as often as necessary, and resuming the climb.

Along the way, there will be mountains and valleys, joys and sorrows. The Christian life is a journey, led continually by the Holy Spirit. *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will.”* (Romans 12:2 NIV) As you learn to think with a renewed mind, desire and prioritize those things that are in line with His will. Becoming a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) is a continual process throughout the rest of your life.

Lynn Adams

*Talk to God  
about man,  
before talking  
to man  
about God.*

The final talk during your Keryx weekend was called **Your Walk**. The purpose was to bring together the pieces of training provided over the previous three days, helping to equip you to walk in relationship with Jesus Christ. The crux of the Christian life is a personal relationship with God. Christianity is a journey – not toward heaven, but toward knowing the God who makes heaven desirable. From this point forward, the rest of your life is a journey toward getting closer to Him.

**Part of that journey is a responsibility to your self.** Hold on to the treasure you have been given. Don't waste it. Read Matthew 13:44-46.

- a. What is the greatest material treasure you have ever owned?
- b. How does the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ compare to the worth of your greatest earthly treasure?
- c. What are some practical ways you can make the most of this treasure rather than wasting it?

**A second part of the journey toward knowing God is discovering the unique qualities and gifts that He has given you.** Read 1 Corinthians 12.

- a. What do you think your Spiritual gift is?
- b. If you are not sure, how might you find out?
- c. What is the purpose of these Spiritual gifts, according to Ephesians 4:11-13?
- d. What do you need to do to develop this gift to the glory of God?
- e. How does this gift work in conjunction with other members of the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 12:11-30)

**Walking with Jesus helps us to learn to know Him better.** As we surrender our will to His, how should we be transformed according to Romans 12:2?

- a. In this verse, we learn to acknowledge and accept God's will. List five things that you know to be God's will for his people.
- b. In what areas have you seen God begin to change the way you think?
- c. Jesus' final command to His disciples is known as the Great Commission. Read Matt. 28:19-20. What has He told His followers to do?
- d. The purpose of the Keryx ministry is to make disciples and help people to come into personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- e. What did you learn through your weekend that helped you toward being a disciple?

f. As one who has been given much, what is your responsibility to others?

**Learning to know God leads you to discover how God sees his children.**

What can you learn about God and his feelings toward his people from the following passages: Zephaniah 3:17; John 15:14,15; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 31:3

**The phrase “Then you/they will know that I am the Lord”** appears at least 87 times in Scripture (62 times in the book of Ezekiel). What does this tell us about God’s desire for relationship with His people? Read the words of some who longed for intimacy with God, then write your own verse to express your desire for Him. (see Psalm 63:1; Psalm 42:1-2)

**Knowing God leads to loving God that is displayed by obedience.**

- a. Read John 14:15-27. What does it mean to love God?
- b. What is the connection between love and obedience?
- c. What does the peace of Jesus mean to you in the face of life’s problems

**Read Luke 24:13-35.**

- a. How did the men feel as Jesus explained the Scriptures to them?
- b. What does this tell you about God’s desire for you to know Him and to recognize His hand at work in the world around you?

*Although every Christian must make his own Spiritual journey, we are to walk with one another along the road. What does each of the following references teach us about relationships with other believers?*

Ecclesiastes 4:10; Proverbs 27:17; Hebrews 10:25; Galatians 6:2; Romans 12:15

- c. In what practical ways can you obey this teaching?

**Conclusion:** The Christian life is a journey as well as a destination. It is a day-by-day, moment-by-moment walk with the Savior. Jesus is the “Friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). Christians, whose lives are rich, fruitful, and fulfilling, are those who continually pursue intimacy with God. *“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13b-14 NIV) Let us live this way.

**Prayer:** “O Lord, when I feel You near me, my heart overflows. I long for more of that kind of intimacy with You. Please help me to be continually thirsty for more of You. Fill me with even greater longing to know You and to love You, I pray. May this relationship with You be the central pillar of my life as long as I live. I long to love You more.”

Lynn Adams

## “Spiritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study

Read: **Ephesians 5:1-20**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***  
Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

## The Call And Gathering Of A Christian

*Today's Passage:*  
**Luke 15:17-24**

Based on the talk  
**A Christian**

*"Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*  
*Luke 15:7 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What was the 'Jesus Moment' in my life? Am I still hungering for Jesus as I am being transformed?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, You have rescued me from my broken and sinful ways. Your gracious love gives me hope and shines light into the darkness of my life. Help me to let this light and love overflow from my heart and touch others.

**Meditate Today:** Reveal to me Lord, someone who needs a trusted and caring friend.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will share my love of God with others!

There are many seasons in our lives. The movie *Forrest Gump* captures these seasons in vivid and unexpected ways. We see reflections of ourselves. As the innocent Forrest grows up, he begins to encounter all the raw aspects of human nature. We catch glimpses of ourselves in the music and lyrics of the Byrd's song, "There is a season, turn, turn, turn ... there is a reason, turn, turn, turn ... there is a season for everything under heaven." We see pain and suffering in Forrest's world in all it's realism. In some ways, the movie captures people, just like us, in similar and horrific situations. There is a pall of hopelessness hanging over the characters.

In our own lives, many of us reach a point where we have nowhere left to turn, nothing left to live for. We turn to God. We realize that if we are to survive, we need a power greater than we possess. Then out of nowhere, someone appears. This person knows God, is a friend of God's, and their heart is filled with God's love. They lead us to Jesus. This is our 'Jesus Moment.' There is always someone else who cares and is with us when we have a living encounter with our Lord Jesus.

At this moment, and forever after, we begin to change. We are guided by a power that we know is not ours. God in His mercy rescues us and begins to transform us. Our true sinful nature is revealed to us and we repent. We hunger for Jesus. We begin to see the Bible as the most amazing book we have ever read. Jesus, in the gospels, astounds and astonishes us! We talk with God about all sorts of things. At some point, we realize we have entered into a friendship with God. We are Christians! We have discovered our life's goal.

Bob Wheelan



## Reality Seems To Be Upside Down

*Today's Passage:*  
**1 Corinthians 9-13.**

Based on the talk  
**A Christian**

*"For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He catches the wise in their craftiness."*

*1 Corinthians 3:19 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** How has Christ turned my world upside down? Am I helping others to be 'okay' with having an upside down world?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing Your ways and righteousness to me in Your Son, Jesus. Help me to grow in my ability to see the world as You see it. Help me to spend Your love lavishly on those who suffer.

**Meditate Today:** Lord, help me to see the world through Your eyes and be present for others who are searching for real meaning in their lives.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will be a fool for Christ in the eyes of the world!

The world economy functions on power, control, and domination. Power is top down. Power is about controlling others, and where necessary, violence is used to maintain control. Controlling occurs in relationships, families, gangs, organizations, nations, and armies. We keep score with money and possessions to let the world know where we fit in. You may be familiar with the bumper sticker that reads "The Man Who Dies With The Most Toys Wins." Life is seen as a competition and winning is everything. Huge mansions, yachts, private jets, exotic cars, and expensive clothes are marks of human success. God has a different way. The world is upside down according to God's standards.

God sent Jesus to reveal His way. (Ephesians 1:3-14) God sent His only Son, Jesus, so we might know His "upside down" ways. Jesus was materially poor; yet, He influenced more people from His three short years of ministry than all the powerful world leaders combined. Jesus did not exercise domination over others. Instead, He used His power to heal, encourage, feed, and set people free. Jesus revealed an economy of abundance shared in a domination-free order. The currency in God's economy is love.

Jesus was a perfect role model for us. He washed the disciple's feet. He served His Father faithfully and perfectly, even unto death. Because God's ways are upside down to the world, when we exhibit selfless love we appear weak to others. But, when we are willing to sacrifice for others, it will touch their hearts with the love of Jesus. Our goal in life is that others may know Jesus as we do. God sends His power to us through prayer. We become foolishness to the world. The world sees us as upside down. In truth, that is exactly the way we are. Jesus is still turning the world upside down!

Bob Wheelan

Week 4 – Day 3

## Self Discipline

*Today's Passage:*  
**Ephesians 6:1-20**

Based on the talk  
**A Christian**

*“No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tested beyond your strength but with the testing He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.”*

*1 Corinthians 10:13  
(NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I reading the playbook so I know my assignments? What is the Coach asking me to do?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, open my mind and my heart as I read Your word each day. Enable me to grow in discerning Your will. Empower me with self-discipline so I may serve.

**Meditate Today:** What area of my life is being tested to enable me to grow more into the likeness of Jesus?

**Today's declaration:**  
I will listen for the Coach's words to me today!

On the first evening of Keryx, you may recall the analogy of a football team. The first couple weeks of football practice each year are pure torture: the blocking sled, push-ups, leg exercises, and then one-on-one drills. Gradually, the Coach sorts things out and we are given assignments. We grow into a team. As Christians, God is our coach. The Bible is our playbook. Plays are sent in by means of the Holy Spirit. It's tough. We struggle and wonder if we will be able to endure. But somehow, we are given the strength we need and we are part of a team.

This football analogy is a good one and carries right through into our lives. In a Christian's life, coincidences are no longer in the playbook. We realize they are miracles and signs. Problems are seen as opportunities in disguise. God uses every circumstance and person in our lives to help us grow. Just like in football, self-discipline is essential in the growth of a Christian. We know God is always with us. The longer we are on His team, the more we trust Him. The love for our Coach grows as we study the playbook every day. We are amazed at the coach's wisdom.

As we go to play the game of life, we are well protected. We put on the full armor of God. (Ephesians 6:13-18) If we blow an assignment, our Coach is merciful. He picks us up, gives us a pat on the shoulder, whispers words of encouragement in our ear and sends us right back in. We know, without being told, when we miss an assignment. For encouragement, we go back to the playbook. We learn to always lead by example. You may have a really tough assignment. It may not be a glorious assignment, but that's where He's put us and we'd never let Him down. We love Him with all our mind, all our heart, and all our strength. We give everything we have. It's His team anyway. The Coach chose me and I am on His team forever.

Bob Wheelan

## Taking The Initiative

*Today's Passage:*  
**Romans 5:18-21**

*Based on the talk*  
**A Christian**

*“As it is written: “There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God.”*

*Romans 3:10-11 (NSRV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Whom is God trying to reach through me? Who is calling out to Him that needs me to help show them the way?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, my basic nature is to think about myself. In this condition, I do things for myself. Help me to open my mind to Your ways as I read scripture each day. Help me to discover Your truth so that Your Grace will come to me on it's way to someone else.

**Meditate Today:** Let God's light shine in my heart and reveal areas where I am called to act and take the initiative for someone else.

**Today's Declaration:**  
Father, Your Grace comes to me on its way to someone else.

No matter how hard we may try to seek God, we fail to find Him. That is because God calls us. God called each one of us to Keryx. God first loved us. We have been chosen before the beginning of time. (Ephesians 1:3-4) We can do nothing apart from God. In Acts 1, God's grace came to the apostles as it was on it's way to those whom God was calling. Then God's grace came, to the growing number of those being saved, on its way to still others.

The number of those being called and saved continues to grow to this day. God's amazing grace continues to gather those He is calling. In our helpless, sinful, condition God called us. And behold, someone was there to share the good news of Jesus with us. God's grace came to us through that person. The damaged goods of this world are made perfect in Jesus. God is redeeming His creation. We are part of it.

The faith of these first apostles gave them the boldness and courage to take the initiative and grow the number of the 'people of the way.' The Apostles took the initiative and went out into a hostile world as beacons of hope. Nothing could deter them from sharing the amazing 'Good News' of the risen Jesus. On the surface, the world looks much different today; but, the reality is that nothing has changed much in terms of God's redeeming work.

God has a Mission and we are privileged to be part of it. God has called us and gathered us in Christ so He can send His grace to us ... on it's way to someone else. God's grace always comes to us ... on its way to someone else. A Christian takes the initiative in order that they may be a blessing to others. Taking the initiative in the life of a Christian draws us into God's Mission and His amazing truth.

Bob Wheelan

## Compassion

*Today's Passage:*  
**John 11:28-44**

Based on the talk  
**A Christian**

*"When He saw the crowds,  
He had compassion for  
them, because they were  
harassed and helpless, like  
sheep without a shepherd.*

*Then He said to His  
disciples, "The harvest is  
plentiful but the labourers  
are few; therefore ask the  
Lord of the harvest to send  
out labourers into the  
harvest."*

*Matthew 9:36-38 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Do I have agape love, the love of Christ? Who do I know that needs God's agape love?

**Prayer:** Lord of the harvest, all the pain in my heart has brought me to You; turn it into love for others who are suffering. Fill me with compassion for the despised, rejected and marginalized. Use me in ways so You can heal their pain and gather them into Your kingdom.

**Meditate Today:** Fill me with compassion and love so others may know You.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will go into the fields and serve the Lord of the harvest!

The world teaches us that it is unmanly to weep. Jesus wept. Are we ashamed of our tears? Do we try to hide our deepest response to the compassionate love that God has graciously placed in our hearts? If the answer is yes, then it raises a question. How well are we able to feel the pain of others?

Christian compassion is an amazing gift. It is comprised of empathy, which is the ability to feel what others feel, combined with agape love. Agape love is God's love shown by us as we give our full attention to others. It is our complete, full, and undivided attention given to them. Agape love enables us to attend selflessly to the needs of others. This ability, combined with empathy, is the very substance of compassion.

Are you beginning to sense something amazing is going on in your life? It is happening because your natural qualities are becoming much greater than the sum of your individual parts. When you look at the natural qualities of a Christian: our life's goal, discerning the reality of the world, self-discipline, generosity and taking the initiative, you discover that the sum is being multiplied and empowered by compassion.

A Christian appears different to those who belong to this world. The world pushes aside people it deems worthless. Sometimes people get elbowed and jostled around. It is those people, that the world deems worthless, that Jesus, our Emmanuel, compassionately sought out and healed. (Matthew 25:34-36) "God's Grace is like water, it flows downhill and gathers in the lowest places." (William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army) Those the world deems unworthy are healed and given hope. As a Christian, you are called to use your compassion and hope to bring others to Christ.

Bob Wheelan

Week 4 – Day 6

# Generosity

*Today's Passage:*

**1 Chronicles 29:6-20**

Based on the talk  
**A Christian**

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son"*

*John 3:16 (NLT)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I giving to help the needs of others?  
Does everything I own belong to God?

**Prayer:** Lord, You know my heart. I give thanks for all the blessings You provide in my life. Guide me and shape me according to Your gracious Spirit. Mould me in new ways so I may give both myself, and my money, so others may receive Your love and mercy.

**Meditate Today:** Help me attend to the needs of others in new ways and hold nothing back.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will give my full attention to the needs of others as God places them in my path.

We most often think of generosity in terms of money. That makes sense because money is the world's medium of exchange. Yet, when giving money, there can be other motives beyond willingly offering to God what He has already given us. In John 3:16, God's generosity surpasses human understanding. This is counter-intuitive to us; not even one of us deserves it. God's example of generosity is a perfect model that can shine in our hearts and touch others.

Forget the lottery tickets! God giving us His Son, Jesus, means we've already won the lottery! We have received true treasure in the fruit of the Spirit and eternal hope for us. There is nothing better God can give to us. This raises the question: Is there more than my money that I can give? Jesus came in human form so you are able to better understand God's will for your life.

Jesus became a role model by being a servant to all. How can you give yourself to God and to others? It may require you to become "less" in the eyes of the world. You can give yourself and your full attention to others. Pray that God makes you more generous with both your money and spirit. The Holy Spirit will open your heart and send His Spirit to others so that they may encounter the living Jesus. There is no greater gift you can give to others than yourself. There is no other way God's Grace will touch others. Why? Because this is the way God has chosen to redeem His creation.

There still remains the question about money. How do you view money? What is your attitude toward money? Take a careful look.

This is a world based upon 'me, me, me.' Yet, money is needed to carry out God's Mission. You are called to give like the poor widow, from your heart. (Mark 12:43-44) Everything you have comes from God. God empowers you to be generous. It is by giving, both yourself and your money, that others come to know Jesus!

Bob Wheelan

Week 4 - Day 7

## Knowing The Ultimate Goal

*Today's Passage:*  
**John 15:9-17**

Based on the talk  
**A Christian**

*"The friendship of the Lord  
is for those who fear Him,  
and He makes His  
covenant known to them."  
Psalm 25:14 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Are you daily asking God to put your sinful nature to death? Is it your goal to have daily friendship with God?

**Prayer:** Thank You Father for making it possible to have friendship with You. Thank you for the sanctification; I know it is only the result of Your power working in me. Thank You for including me in Your Mission to redeem the world.

**Meditate Today:** May I use the blessings, You have given in my life, as a testimony so others may know You.

**Today's Declaration:**  
No matter what else is going on, I know God is my friend!

We know God through the Bible. Knowing our ultimate goal comes as a result of knowing God is the ultimate authority in our lives. We fear God because we know He is the ultimate authority. He knows our hearts and our thoughts. We cannot imagine living apart from God. Proverbs 1:7 reveals that the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. We cannot hide our true nature from God. We are all broken sinners and continue to sin each day for the rest of our days. This is scary unless there is a way out for us. Praise be to God, there is more!

In His forbearance, God sent His Son, Jesus, to us. God has given us a way to deal with our sinful nature. (Romans 6) Jesus took all our sins to the cross and washed us clean with His blood. God mercifully made a way for us to become His friend. As the fog of this world begins to lift, we realize that our life's goal is to have a relationship with God. We love God more and more each day and want Him to be our friend.

*"For the love of God is this, that we obey His commandments."* (1 John 5:3a NRSV) Our victory over sin is a result of our faith that Jesus is the Son of God. In faith, we are given this testimony of truth in our hearts. (1 John 5:1-12)

This forms the basis for our friendship with God. Jesus gives us commandments that we are to keep. We are to love one another as Jesus has loved us. We are to love our enemies. We are able to forgive others and never hold on to unforgiveness. We do not judge others. We live according to the golden rule. We pray about all things; we live our lives according to the great commandment. (Matt 22:36-40) We show God our friendship and love by living in obedience to His will. Jesus clearly sees that our faith is active and He guides us in a life of Christian action. In God's Word, faith is a verb. By living in friendship with God, we become the person He made us to be.

Bob Wheelan

*If you are not  
moving forward  
toward Christ,  
you are moving  
away from Him.*

**Prayer:** “Lord we gather to study Your Word in Praise and Thanksgiving. We ask You to help us search our hearts for truth. We ask for the courage to be honest, even if means we must be vulnerable, in revealing the truth. Give us the self-discipline to keep everything in confidence as we grow our relationships by revealing what is truly in our hearts. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

**Focus:** This study will center on the natural qualities of a Christian:

- a. knowing the ultimate goal in our lives,
- b. knowing the reality of our lives,
- c. knowing what is going on around us,
- d. self-discipline,
- e. taking the initiative to act,
- f. compassion
- g. generosity.

You belong to God. You have answered God’s call by attending your Keryx weekend and deciding to be part of the Keryx community and attending this Bible study. You are a leader in God’s Kingdom on earth. In Jesus, we are a different sort of leader than what most people think of as leadership. You lead by serving others.

**Scripture Readings:** Take about 5 minutes, or so, to have each person silently read and reflect on **Ephesians 1:3-10** and **John 13:1-20**. As you reflect, focus on the reality that we are all born with certain gifts and abilities. In Christ, these gifts are leavened and multiplied. We are part of God’s eternal plan revealed to us in Jesus. This remains a mystery to those unaware that Jesus is God’s Son. He was graciously given so we might know God and receive eternal life.

### **Discussion**

1. What do these passages this mean to me?
2. How am I carrying out God’s plan for my life in this place at the present time?



3. What are my gifts and unique abilities and how is God using them?

**Scripture:** Take another 5 minutes, or so, and silently read **1 Corinthians: 16:13-14** and **Ephesians 4:13**. Reflect on what these verses mean if seen through God's eyes as He looks down upon you.

### **Discussion**

1. Do I intentionally step outside my comfort zone as I serve God's purpose for my life in Christ?
2. Have I made a new friend this week who may not know Jesus is God's Son, graciously given so that in faith we may have eternal life?
3. Am I praying each day that God will place someone in my path that does not know Jesus as Christ?
4. As we look down on this place through God's eyes, what do I hear God saying to me?

**Closing Prayer:** "Thank You Lord for joining our minds together as one in Christ. Thank You for speaking to us in the unity of Christ according to Your eternal purpose. Thank You for helping us grow in maturity as servants who lead by living according to the example of Jesus. Help us to grow as the visible evidence of the 'Living, Lord Jesus' in this place. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Bob Wheelan

## “Spiritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study

Read: **Ephesians 4:17-32**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***  
Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

## Examination of Conscience - Month 1

*“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)*

Knowing that there is sin in your life that you have never confessed should make us very uncomfortable. We need to ask God every day to search our heart and help us to see any sin that we cannot see or do not want to see. It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin in our life. God hates sin and we should hate our sin as well. Let the Holy Spirit search you. If we do our own searching, we open ourselves to Satan because he “accuses” (Rev 12:10) us and tries to convince us that we are no good and that it is worthless to even try to be a Christian. The second thing that Satan may try to do is to divert our eyes to secondary issues, rather than the primary sinful issues in our life. Satan always deceives us, but the Holy Spirit speaks the truth in love. The voice of the Holy Spirit is usually soft and gentle but He always goes to the heart of the matter. The Holy Spirit points out things to us that we are “blinded” to and we don’t see.

Before you enter into this time of examination, pray and quietly stop and listen to the voice of God as He will speak into your soul. Then you can continue with this exercise. Christ is at work in your life. You will never be perfect in this world, but God sees you through the blood of Christ. Remember that the blood of Christ purifies us and makes us whiter than snow.

Areas to check yourself:

Church attendance	Daily Bible reading	Daily prayer	Daily meditation
Memorizing scripture	Weekly grouping with brothers or sisters (Green card)	Listening to Christian music/sermons	Spiritual discussions with brothers/sisters

Sharing your faith with unbelievers	Doing the right thing when no one is looking	Telling the truth at all times	Using positive words and building others up
Holding Christian brothers/sisters accountable	Helping the poor and needy	Preparing a weekly spiritual plan	Praying for chaplain and spiritual leaders
Avoiding swearing and other bad language	Speaking the truth in love	Keeping your promises	Personal Bible study or spiritual training

Ask yourself how you are doing in each of these areas of your life? Is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about making changes in one or more of these areas? Which area(s) need immediate attention? Which area(s) have shown the greatest amount of growth in the last month?

John Thompson

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”  
Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)*

Week 5 - Day 1

## The Final Sacrifice

*Today's Passage:*  
**Leviticus 16:20-22**

Based on the ***Scapegoat Service***

*“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*

*John 1:29 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Since your weekend, have you found that there are others that you need to forgive to be free from the burden you have been carrying? Have you taken the steps to forgive them also?

**Prayer:** Lord, I know that You came to take away my sins and have granted forgiveness to me. Continue to show me who I need to forgive, and help me to extend forgiveness to them.

**Meditate Today:**

May my ‘grace full life’ be one of extending forgiveness and love to all others.

**Today's Declaration:**

I will always seek to forgive others as You have forgiven me!

My family moved off the farm when I was a senior in high school. As a farm boy I remember well the daily regimen of chores, especially milking the cows. Cows don't take a sick day or a vacation day. It's a task you can never escape.

There was a similar daily chore that the nation of Israel faced. It was not milking cows; it had to do with the sacrificing of lambs. The Law prescribed that Israel had to offer the blood sacrifice on the altar to atone for sin. This chore was to be repeated daily, monthly, and yearly. This was God's prescribed means of dealing with sin. Every Israelite knew, that when they sinned, it required a sacrifice.

But there were three problems with this sacrificial system. First, it was continual, not final. It was just like the cows that needed to be milked every morning and evening. Secondly, the sacrificial system could not change the inclination of the heart toward sin. The sacrifices could not bring full reunion between God and His people. Third, the sacrificial system brought a constant reminder of sin, but not remission of sin.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to provide full atonement, making it possible for people to be in fellowship with God. He offered His own blood, presenting His perfect, sinless life to atone for sin. John the Baptist best summarized it saying, *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29 NIV) This meant Christ would be the final sacrifice. Then Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, who would fulfill the promises of Jeremiah 31 and ensure that God's people have a new heart. Now it is possible to have our inclination toward sin changed through the work of the Spirit, enabling us to live in a way that pleases God. Christ came to earth to take away both the penalty for sin and the practice of sin. May we never take for granted Christ's willingness to become a man to take away our sins. (1John 3:5 NIV)

Eugene Drenth

## Holiness For God's People Today

*Today's Passage:*  
**Exodus 20:1-17**

Based on the *Scapegoat  
Service*

*"Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart and with  
all your ..."*

*Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Since my weekend, have I found that I am striving to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, and mind?

**Prayer:** Lord God, I am without excuse. You provided the guidelines and parameters with which to live by to be in right relationship with You. I pray You empower me to obey Your word and walk in Your way.

**Meditate Today:** May my 'grace full life' become one of seeking righteousness and holiness.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will seek to be Holy as my God is Holy.

In my predominant career, I was employed for 30 years in the Commercial Nuclear Power Industry – the generation of electricity. One doesn't work long in that industry before the concept -- the way of life; a life of rules and regulations are not only presented, but are well engrained into everyone's everyday mode of operation. Tasks need to be accomplished correctly, without deviation, in accordance with the regulations, every day, to be certain that all operations produce power and keep the public safe.

When we look at the book of Leviticus, it may be that all we see is rules and regulations; restrictions that seem to "cramp" our life styles. We can look at them as restrictions that prevent us from doing what we want, or we can see them as guidelines that show the world who we are. Leviticus, when we look at it from a biblical, God-centered perspective, is Israel's blueprint for building a lifestyle of holiness.

God's people are holy because God set them apart. But we show we are holy by exemplifying God's rules. The pages of Leviticus reveal lessons of God's sense of holiness, the power of purification, and the celebration of God's redemptive work of salvation from the judgment of our sins.

As we examine and study portions of the book of Leviticus, we will discover that the lessons presented teach us of God's character, His holiness, and His plan for us. We see how observing the Law set Israel apart as uniquely God's, and taught them to honor all that was uniquely His.

The Law of God is anything but outdated. We pray as you join with these devotions, in studying a rich and challenging book of Scripture, that you would see the signs that point to Jesus, and that these timeless truths would make a difference in how you live for God today.

Eugene Drenth

## Priesthood Of The Believer

*Today's Passage:*

**Hebrews 10:1,11-14,  
19-22**

Based on the ***Scapgoat  
Service***

*"Therefore, brothers, since  
we have confidence to enter  
the Most Holy Place by the  
blood of Jesus ..."*

*Hebrews 10:19-22 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Since my weekend, knowing that I am a priest, do I find myself forgiving others as the heavenly High Priest would do?

**Prayer:** Father, I pray that I may more effectively engage in my priestly status by forgiving others, not through my goodness, but rather by the shed blood of Jesus.

**Meditate Today:** May my 'grace full life' be modeled after the heavenly High Priest.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will, by the Grace of God,  
forgive others.

The book of Leviticus was a priestly manual. The purpose was to provide professional guidance for the priests and a detailed liturgy for the house of God. The laws in Leviticus differ from those in Deuteronomy, primarily in their scope. The laws were very comprehensive, intended to guide God's people in their new life in Canaan. The laws of Leviticus were more technical and related to the priestly rituals associated with Israel's worship.

When Christ came, an important theological shift occurred. The Old Testament laws were replaced by a new order. The former sacrifices ceased to be necessary, since Christ's sacrifice accomplished what the old sacrifices could not. The need for the old priesthood became obsolete, surpassed and replaced by the High Priesthood of Jesus. Every believer is now a priest and has direct access to the Father's presence.

The blood of Christ gives us the confidence to approach God directly! We offer our worship to God as we "*declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*" (1 Peter 2:9) We present our bodies to God as a living sacrifice and an act of true worship.

We should not conclude that the church has no need of leaders. Peter describes all believers as priests, but also describes the responsibilities of the church's shepherds. (1 Peter 5:1-2)

Nor should we conclude that believers no longer need a High Priest. Hebrews assures us that Jesus Christ continues to serve as our heavenly High Priest. Because He was made like us, Jesus is able to be merciful. Because He was sinless, He is able to be faithful. Because He was tempted like us in every way, He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Because He was victorious over temptation, sin, and death, He is able to offer redemption. Jesus always lives to intercede for us. (Hebrews 7:25)

Eugene Drenth



## The Language Of Sin And Holiness

*Today's Passage:*  
**Leviticus 19:1-8,19-37**

Based on the *Scapegoat  
Service*

*"Be holy because I, the  
Lord your God, am Holy."  
Leviticus 19:2 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** As I more fully understand God's standard of holiness, do I know the Savior?

**Prayer:** Lord, I read your word to learn your standard of holiness and see embedded within it Your grace to me. Help me to live by it and treat others as You treat and love me.

**Meditate Today:** May my 'grace full life' always be one of holiness and righteousness.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will strive toward holiness and righteousness.

The Scapegoat Service is one of forgiving and is based on Leviticus 16. Leviticus is centered on God's holiness and how we need holiness and righteousness.

Author A. J. Jacobs, who describes himself as a nominal Jew, devoted an entire year to obeying every one of the 613 Old Testament laws. His book, *The Year of Living Biblically*, describes his quest to "follow the Bible as literally as possible ... without picking and choosing."

Leviticus gives us a glimpse at the challenge that Jacobs faced and the questions he must have asked along the way. Some of the commands seem logical, such as the ones governing sexual practice and condemning idol worship. Other commands, like those that forbid a field be sown with two kinds of seed or those about certain hairstyles, seem utterly strange. What could God have meant in all this seemingly haphazard, "thou shall," and "thou shall not," commands?

Leviticus 19 introduces the complexities of the law as well as its themes. It is a book where God exercises holy authority over His people. The phrase, "and the Lord said to Moses," is a familiar refrain. These are God's words, His commands. All authority is His and is grounded in His work of redemptive love and rescue.

Clear categories emerge: the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane. In essence, the holiness of God takes center stage, and alongside it, is the reminder of humanity's sin. Leviticus provides the law and grace – an expression of the gracious God to provide a means for atonement.

After this year, Jacobs never became a "believer." He must have discovered it was impossible to keep all of the Laws. James 2:10 says, "*Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*" (NIV) What a desperate need we all have for a Savior!

Eugene Drenth

## Worship And The Requirement Of Atonement

*Today's Passage:*  
**Leviticus 1 & 22:17-33**

Based on the *Scapegoat  
Service*

*"Lay your hand on the head  
of the burnt offering, and it  
will be accepted on your  
behalf to make atonement  
for you."*

*Leviticus 1:4 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** When I worship the Lord, am I performing a ritual or am I furthering my relationship with my redeemer?

**Prayer:** Father, when I come to you in worship and prayer, help me to do so in Spirit and in truth because those are the worshippers that You seek.

**Meditate Today:** May my 'grace full life' daily be one of worship and thanksgiving and for the completed sacrifice for my sins in Christ Jesus.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will strive for purity in worship to my Lord, and not for the praise of man!

Worship, as prescribed in Leviticus, presents the requirements and rituals for coming before a Holy God for forgiveness and restoration.

In some of America's biggest mega-churches, contemporary worship bands replaced robed choirs. Pastors deliver sermons in jeans and wrinkled shirts. Pews, and crosses have disappeared from their buildings. That may be why the details for worship in Leviticus seem odd to many of us. We have a tough time making sense of all the ceremonies and the blood sacrifice may seem gruesome to us.

We need to understand the historical context. The Israelites left Egypt only months earlier. Although they knew about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the needed sacrifices, they had little understanding of their identity or about God.

They needed to absorb the reality of God's holiness and how to live as His holy nation. The requirements regarding the sacrifices were signs and symbols of God's perfection and of their sin. There were right and wrong ways to approach God. Worship required obedience and acceptable practices.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus describe the various sacrifices required by God. The burnt offering is the required sacrifice for sins. Atonement is a critical term for understanding Leviticus. A right relationship with God is possible only when sin is dealt with. The penalty for sin is death; either we will die for our own sins or a substitute is required, to which we transfer our guilt.

Leviticus looks forward to the final sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The book of Hebrews tells us that the old system was always an imperfect one. However, it pointed forward to Jesus' atonement. Do you sometimes doubt that God has forgiven your sins? Believe that God accepted your confession and His blood is effective in covering your sins!

Eugene Drenth

## Worship And The Expression Of Thanksgiving

*Today's Passage:*  
**Leviticus 2 and 3**

*Based on the **Scapgoat  
Service***

*“Enter his gates with  
thanksgiving and his courts  
with praise.”*

*Psalm 100:4 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** As I look at my worship, is it characterized with thanksgiving or self-seeking?

**Prayer:** Lord, as I come to You in worship each day, help me to come with a thankful heart and mind for all the blessings You pour out on me, especially the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for me.

**Meditate Today:** Central to my ‘grace full life,’ may my attitude be one of gratitude.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will seek out the good in my life and always strive to be thankful.

Ann Volkamp, a farmer’s wife and mother of six, wrote a book, *One Thousand Gifts*. She chronicles how keeping a gratitude journal and counting God’s blessings transformed her life. “Thanksgiving is inherent to a true salvation experience; thanks-giving is necessary to live the well, whole, *fullest* life.”

The offerings in today’s reading are both voluntary and for thanksgiving. Unlike a burnt offering, the grain and fellowship offerings are not for atonement. They are offered with both a solemn consciousness of sin and the demands for perfect, unblemished offerings. For this offering, the worshiper lays a hand on the head of the animal before it’s slaughtered, and the blood is thrown against the sides of the altar.

A grain offering is composed of flour, either unprepared or baked. Because flour is a food staple, even the poor can offer this. We’ll later see that flour can be substituted for an animal if that’s all one can afford. It is possible for both rich and poor to make offerings to God. There are rules against mixing yeast and honey with grain offerings to insure purity. The offerings are seasoned with salt to symbolize the long-lasting nature of the covenant.

In the fellowship, or peace offering, an animal is slaughtered. Unlike the burnt offering, it is not entirely burned up at the altar. The best parts – the fat and the organs – are reserved for the Lord. Prohibitions of eating the fat and blood reminded them that the best portions must be devoted to God and that the blood grants atonement. The rest is consumed in a meal shared by the worshiper, his family, and the priests.

The burnt offering provided a way to receive God’s holiness and atonement. The grain and fellowship offerings provided a way for acknowledging God’s goodness. Thanksgiving is the way we continue coming to God. Might it be appropriate to start your own gratitude journal?

Eugene Drenth

Week 5 - Day 7

## Worship And The Expression Of Guilt

*Today's Passage:*  
**Leviticus 4:1,5-13**

*Based on the Scapegoat  
Service*

*"The Word of God ...  
Judges the thoughts and  
attitudes of the heart."  
Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** As I worship (and confession is a part of worship), am I coming clean with a full confession, even those very difficult confessions? Am I accepting my Savior's forgiveness?

**Prayer:** Father, I know that only You can forgive sin. I pray that You will empower me with the knowledge and reality of Your redemption, to deal with my shame and guilt.

**Meditate Today:** "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24 (NIV)

**Today's Declaration:** Today, I will seek the Lord with all my heart, and walk in His ways.

Although federal prosecutors had taped conversations that implicated Rod Blagojevich, former governor of Illinois, in federal crimes, he continued to deny his guilt: "I don't believe there's any cloud that hangs over me. I think there's nothing but sunshine hanging over me."

Sin has a track record of self-deception. We can be made to feel guilty when we've done nothing wrong or cling to innocence when we're guilty. Feelings are not a fail-safe guide for sin; the Bible is our only reliable authority when it comes to probing our inner motivations and arbitrating our actions.

Leviticus offers a thorough look at what is and isn't sin. We see that sin isn't only a descriptor for the evil things we've done intentionally. Sin can also include unintentional acts. Guilt or innocence is not weighted on the scales of motivation. To mean to do right, while inadvertently doing wrong, is still sin. Sin is the betrayal of God's holy standards, whether we're conscious of those standards or not.

We break God's law not only by doing bad things (sins of commission) but also by neglecting to do good things (sins of omission). In Leviticus 5, we see someone who refused to publicly testify about a situation that he witnessed. He was found guilty because of what he failed to do.

Sin wields such power of self-deception, it is our inclination to justify ourselves before God. We make excuses for our sin; it isn't really that bad! All of our arguments don't exonerate us. The good news is that God always provides a means for atonement. It's His gracious desire to forgive and reconcile people to Himself.

*"Search me, God, and know my heart; ... See if there is any offensive way in me ..."* (Psalm 139:23-24 NIV). Make this your prayer every day. Accept conviction from the Holy Spirit, and then accept His forgiveness when you confess.

Eugene Drenth

*Listen,*

*Listen,*

*Love,*

*Love.*

## Read Leviticus 16 – The Day of Atonement

*Summary of this passage.*

1. The high priest went to the basin in the courtyard, removed his regular garments, washed himself and went into the Holy Place to put on the special garments for the Day of Atonement. (verse 4)
2. He went out to sacrifice a bull at the altar of burnt offering as a sin offering for himself and the other priests. (verse 11)
3. He went into the Most Holy Place with some of the bull's blood, with incense and with coals from the altar of burnt offering. The incense was placed on the burning coals, and the smoke of the incense hid the ark from view. (verses 12-13)
4. He sprinkled some of the bull's blood on and in front of the cover of the ark. (verse 14)
5. He went outside the tabernacle and cast lots for two goats to see which was to be sacrificed and which was to be the scapegoat. (verses 7-8)
6. At the altar of burnt offering, the high priest killed the goat for the sin offering for the people, and for a second time he went into the Most Holy Place, this time to sprinkle the goat's blood in front of and on the atonement cover. (verses 5, 9, 15-16a)
7. He returned to the Holy Place (Called Tent of Meeting) and sprinkled the goat's blood there. (verse 16)
8. He went outside to the altar of burnt offering and sprinkled it with the blood of the bull (for himself) and of the goat (for the people). (verses 11, 15, 18)
9. While in the courtyard, he laid both hands on the second goat, thus symbolizing the transfer of Israel's sin, and sent it out into the desert. (verses 20-22)
10. After he accomplished his task, the man who took the goat away, washed himself and his clothes outside the camp before rejoining the people. (verse 26)
11. The high priest entered the Holy Place to remove his special garments. (verse 23)
12. He went out to the basin to wash and put on his regular priestly clothes. (verse 24)

13. As a final sacrifice he went out to the great altar and offered a ram as a burnt offering for himself, and another ram for the people. (verses 3, 5, 24)

14. The conclusion of the entire day was the removal of the sacrifices for the sin offerings to a place outside the camp, where they were burned, and there the man who performed this ritual bathed and washed his clothes before rejoining the people. (verses 27-28)

*Study each of the steps described above – note the details, along with their significance and purpose.*

Some other Scripture Passages to aid in this discussion are:

Leviticus 23:26-32; Leviticus 25:9; Exodus 30:10; Numbers 29:7-11; Hebrews 9:7.

**Questions To Consider** *(write answers in your notebook)*

1. What does the Day of Atonement signify?
2. Why was the Day of Atonement necessary – what purpose did it satisfy or complete?
3. How often was the Day of Atonement instituted?
4. What was the significance of the all the blood shed? *See Leviticus 17:11*
5. Do you have a scapegoat? Who/What is it?
6. What actions do you complete to make atonement for your sins? *See: John 3:16, Isaiah 1:18, 1 John 1:9*
7. How often do we need to complete the actions or purposes of our Day of Atonement?
8. When we perform the actions noted in the scriptures above, how complete are the actions as acts of atonement or redemption? *Read all of Psalm 103 and take special note of verse 12.*

As you conclude your discussion, spend time basking in the wonder of all that Christ Jesus did for us in the area of atonement and salvation and being made right with the Heavenly Father.

Eugene Drenth

## “Spiritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study

Read: **Hebrews 10:1-18**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.



5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***  
Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

## The Stone Named Envy

*Today's Passage:*  
**Proverbs 14:28-31**

Based on *The Wall*  
meditation

*"A heart at peace gives life  
to the body, but envy rots  
the bones."*

*Proverbs 14:30 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Have I  
allowed envy to take a deep  
root within my heart?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I know that  
You have come to set me free.  
I'm asking You, right now, to  
search my heart and take out  
any envy that I've held onto. I  
want to be free and clean! I  
claim freedom now, in the  
powerful name of Jesus!

**Meditate Today:** Jesus, I  
give you complete authority to  
make my heart whiter than  
snow and to fill me with Your  
presence!

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am free from envy through the  
powerful name of Jesus!

"I don't know when I first began to build the wall. I suppose it was when it occurred to me that I could keep people out of my life by building a simple wall. The wall would be a kind of boundary - a kind of protection."

"At first the little wall was only knee high. It was really quite attractive, made of native stone I had found in my life. The wall was so small that some people didn't notice it and would stumble right over it and fall flat on their faces. Others saw it but would step over it and come very close to me. I found this very uncomfortable. So I built the wall higher." (*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Then one day, I knew that I needed to begin tearing down my wall, but I didn't want to do that.

"Sometimes I would ... protest. This was my favorite stone. It was one I had saved and cherished for years. When I was finally ready, God helped me remove the stone ... (And so it went, through stones named envy, disillusionment, resentment, childishness, stubbornness, some with God's help, sometimes with the help of strangers...) As we removed more stones, the light came in." (Evans)

The word *envious* means to be jealous, to have resentment, that is brought on by another's advantage or possessions. It is sometimes so easy to allow envy to come into our thoughts or heart. Maybe someone else gets the job we thought was the perfect job for us, or perhaps someone has the materials things that we wish we could have. Whatever it is, that takes us into a place of envying someone else; that emotion does us only harm, not good. When envy is allowed to take a deep root in our heart, emotions, and mind, it becomes extremely difficult to get rid of! However, Jesus has come to free us from anything that destroys our hearts, our minds, our souls, and our bodies. He is **victor** over all!

Evelyn Thompson

Week 6 - Day 2

## God Is Always Faithful

Today's Passage:  
**Psalm 40:1-4**

Based on *The Wall*  
meditation

*"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire, he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand."  
Psalm 40:2 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Since your weekend, what stones have you needed to take down from your wall?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I know that You want to remove the dark, heavy stones that have burdened me to the pits of despair. Please take them away, and replace them with Your love!

**Meditate Today:** Remove any obstacle in my life that keeps me from resting in Your love.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am a child of God and He loves me! I will let Him remove those ugly stones from my life!

"It was the day the flower fell at my feet that I began to cry. I ran to the wall and climbed to see who had thrown it over. By the time I reached the top, no one was there. Floods of tears brought me to my knees. 'Oh, I am so alone. My wall is too high and too thick and ugly. ... I have nothing left. Won't someone help me ... please?' "

"Then a strange thing happened. Something inside me stirred like a remembrance of peaceful times passed. And in the stillness of my broken world, I knew ... God was there, a blessed presence, that God would come to me, that my darkness had been penetrated by this blessed light. ... I stood in the joy of this presence. I knew that God had watched me build my wall and that God had waited patiently for me to see it was in vain."

"Finally, it occurred to me that the Divine Creator would know why my wall was so ugly. When I asked, God began to teach me ... my error. God gave the stones names: 'This stone is jealousy. You must remove it.' "

"Sometimes I would ... protest. This was my favorite stone. It was one I had saved and cherished for years. When I was finally ready, God helped me remove the stone ... (And so it went, through stones named envy, disillusionment, resentment, childishness, stubbornness, some with God's help, sometimes with the help of strangers ...)" (*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Over my life, Jesus has had to help me get rid of those ugly stones that have kept me a prisoner to my selfish desires. Little by little, Jesus removes them and begins to pour into my spirit His healing power, and my ugly wall gets smaller and smaller! He continually works in me to create a new heart, a new person, a new creation through Jesus Christ! He is faithful! He loves! He cares! Everything that He does, He does because of His intense love for us!

Evelyn Thompson

Week 6 - Day 3

## Anger Must Go!

*Today's Passages:*  
**Ephesians 4:26-27**  
**James 1:19-21**

Based on **The Wall**  
meditation

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

*Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)*

**Ask yourself:** Is there someone or something that has held me bound in anger?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I am so angry at \_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) or angry over \_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) and I need You to help me release this anger and become healed by You. I want to be healed. I want to let go of any anger within me because it is like a heavy stone that weighs me down. I know You answer prayers and that You hear me.

**Meditate Today:** I am claiming freedom; Jesus is removing anger from me!

**Today's Declaration:**  
God's Word tells me that He is faithful to free me of all of my anger! I release it into God's hands!

"Then a strange thing happened. Something inside me stirred like a remembrance of peaceful times passed. And in the stillness of my broken world I knew ... God was there, a blessed presence, that God would come to me, that my darkness had been penetrated by this blessed light. ... I stood in the joy of this presence. I knew that God had watched me build my wall and that God had waited patiently for me to see it was in vain." (*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Letting go of anger is an impossible task without God's help. When my first baby girl died, I was filled with deep, deep anger and grief. My anger was directed at God. How could a loving God allow my little baby girl to die? Why didn't He miraculously touch her and heal her?

Those were just some of my questions that made deep roots into my spirit for a long time. Those roots kept me bound and chains of anger; self-pity took hold of me. I didn't want to pray or read my Bible because I was so angry with God. I held onto that anger instead of letting it go and getting the healing that I needed.

My stone of anger, I polished, and held onto because I was so sad. I allowed anger to overtake me and rule my life for a long time. However, over time, the loving Holy Spirit kept wooing me back to prayer, to reading God's Word, and to restoring fellowship with God as I yielded to Him. As I submitted to the mercy of God, He began to touch my anger heart and heal it.

I released this anger and placed it in the hands of a merciful God. I asked God to forgive me for holding onto anger towards Him, and then He tenderly spoke into my spirit and said, "It's okay my dear daughter. I have always loved you. You are forgiven." When I released this anger, I felt the warming touch of the Holy Spirit on me and joy filled me! Thank you, Jesus!

Evelyn Thompson

Week 6 - Day 4

# The Gift Of Forgiveness

*Today's Passage:*  
**Ephesians 4:29-32**

Based on **The Wall**  
meditation

*"Forgive and you will be forgiven."*

*Luke 6:37b (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Whom do I need to forgive?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I have held onto unforgiveness because I have not wanted to forgive. I want Your help to forgive. Please help me forgive \_\_\_ (fill in the blank) so that I can be released and free within my heart. I need You. I'm calling out to You today and I believe that You will walk with me through this healing process in me.

**Meditate Today:** Jesus, thank You for cleansing me of all of my unforgiveness. I want to walk in complete forgiveness through You!

**Today's Declaration:** Through the power of the Holy Spirit I will walk in the freedom of God's forgiveness in my life!

"In my frustration, I lay face down on the

stone I had stood upon. It was extremely large, highly polished...It was more than life size. "Do you want the answer to your question?" God asked. "Raise your head, and look at the stone you are lying upon." I raised my head and gasped for I saw my own reflection in the massive stone." (*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Forgiving someone, who has wronged you, can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. About 20 years ago, my first husband had an affair, with my best friend, and abandoned me, and my two children. Our family was completely shattered! Suddenly, I was a single parent with two deeply hurting children. I needed to go on and make a family for myself, and my children. It was beyond difficult, but I knew I had to do it! I was obsessed with unforgiveness; and, it controlled my every waking moment and sometimes even my dreams.

Although I was a Christian, I felt justified to never forgive either of them. Why should I? They destroyed my family, my life, and my children. We had been torn to shreds and they were to blame. I had done nothing wrong! I was alone, so I choose to wallow in unforgiveness for years. In my own strength, I would try to forgive them. I would claim I had forgiven them, but I knew I hadn't!

The Holy Spirit continued to speak to me and reminded me, "You must forgive them." Sometimes, I would retort by saying, "What, me forgive them? What about them coming to me and asking for my forgiveness?" I knew that by myself, I could not forgive them! However, with the power of the Holy Spirit, His consistent reminders, His unfailing mercy toward me, I obeyed! In my obedience, He healed me! I chose to forgive and was unchained from this stone of unforgiveness. None of this was possible by myself, but with Christ all things are possible! Now, I'm free!

Evelyn Thompson

## Taming Of The Tongue!

*Today's Passage:*  
**James 3:5-12**

Based on ***The Wall***  
meditation

*“Out of the mouth come  
praise and cursing. My  
brothers, this should not  
be.”*

*James 3:10 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What does  
my mouth speak everyday? Is  
it pleasing to the Lord?

**Prayer:** Father God, I want  
the words of my mouth to be  
healing words. I desire that my  
mouth doesn't speak both  
cursing and blessing. I want to  
allow the Holy Spirit to speak  
so boldly through me that  
others hear the healing words  
of God Almighty. Please help  
me to clean up my mouth.  
Help my words to be what You  
want them to be!

**Meditate Today:** Let the  
words of my mouth be  
completely pleasing to You,  
Oh Lord!

**Today's Declaration:**  
I stand on the power of the  
Holy Spirit that my words are  
healing words!

“For to whom much (grace) is given, much (grace) is expected. Wherever you go, I go with you. And whenever you come back here to be tempted, or to remove more stones I will be here for you.”

“And so I went out. I saw the walls of others, and when I could, I threw a flower over, or reached my hand through. The walls were unbelievably ugly. I heard great sobs behind the walls and my heart ached. “Won't you please help this person?” I cried out to God one day.”

“I returned to my wall and God the Blessed Presence was there. Together we removed the stones.” (*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Watching my words each day is a huge responsibility! Because the Holy Spirit lives in me, I must learn to control my tongue and my words. Being a Special Education teacher and a Mom, are two roles where I have to model consistent control over my tongue. There have been times when my students have called me very disgusting, depraved, names and are extremely disrespectful in every way. Then, I have to dig deeply into my spirit and pray that the Holy Spirit instantly controls my mouth! Without His help, my words would not have been praiseworthy to the Lord!

When I was a single mom, my children would lash out at me with painful, hurting, cutting words. My flesh wanted to retaliate; but the Holy Spirit would help me to be careful with my tongue! There has never been a time when I have been perfect in this area; but I continue to ask the Lord for help about the words that come out of my mouth!

I desire that my words bring healing, restoration, and peace. Through the power of the Spirit, I can accomplish this! Remember, our mouths must be instruments of praise and healing. This stands in stark contrast to what the world teaches! Being a child of the Most High

God, we are to be completely different than the world!

Evelyn Thompson

Week 6 - Day 6

## Soften Your Heart!

*Today's Passage:*  
**Hebrews 3:12-15**

Based on *The Wall*  
meditation

*"Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble."*

*Proverbs 28:14 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I a hard-hearted and stubborn person?

**Prayer:** Oh Jesus, I desire to have You soften my heart. I want all stubbornness and hardheartedness to be taken away! I want to be a child that listens and obeys You. I want the heart of Jesus to be my heart. Please Jesus, create in me a clean heart and do what You need to do to make me new in Your image.

**Meditate Today:** I stand on the promise of God that He is taking away my hard heart right now!

**Today's Declaration:**

Praise the Lord! I know that my heart is softened to the Word of God and all He has for me!

"Your wall is ugly. It is twisted and gray and misshapen!" Now, I did not accept this willingly. I liked my wall. In fact, some of the stones from which I had built it were so dear to me. Finally, it occurred to me that the Divine Creator would know why my wall was so ugly. When I asked, God began to teach me ... my error." (*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Being a stubborn person, having a hard heart, believing that you don't need anyone's help are characteristics that are self-absorbing and self-destroying. I have wrestled with stubbornness most of my life. I've been a Christian for many years but I have not always been willing to wait on the Lord's perfect timing. That attitude even carried into my relationship with the Lord. I would pray and ask for his wisdom, discernment, and guidance, but then I'd go right out and do it my way. I decided that if anything was going to get done, I had to do it now!

Even though there were times, when I specifically heard the tugging of the Lord to wait on Him for His perfect timing, I would do it my own way! I've had times when the Lord would tell me to be quiet, it's not time to say anything, but I would open my mouth and say what I thought was important to say right now! These have been definite times of learning to soften my heart, to let go of my stubbornness, and allow the Lord to direct all of my life! The Lord's perfect timing is always the best! Stubbornness and being hard hearted can be changed by the love of the Lord! Are you ready to let Him soften your heart today?

Evelyn Thompson

be free of any arrogant, haughty, stubborn pride! It will not dominate my life!

Week 6 - Day 7

## Conquering Pride

*Today's Passage:*  
**Psalm 31:17-19**

Based on *The Wall*  
meditation

*"Pride goes before  
destruction, a haughty spirit  
before a fall."  
Proverbs 16:18 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Does  
arrogant, stiff-necked pride live  
within me?

**Prayer:** Oh Jesus, I want You  
to remove all haughty, arrogant  
pride that keeps me separated  
from You. I want to hear the  
voice of the Holy Spirit. I want  
to be cleansed by the blood of  
Jesus Christ and become a new  
creation! Please cleanse me  
and remove all pride that  
stands in the way of a complete  
commitment to You! Replace  
pride in my life with Your  
humility!

**Meditate Today:** Turn my  
pride into humility so that my  
heart is softened to Your voice.

**Today's Declaration:**  
With the help of Jesus, I will

" 'Do you want the answer to your question?'  
God asked. "Raise your head, and look at the  
stone you are lying upon." I raised my head and  
gasped for I saw my own reflection in the  
massive stone. I knew the stone was pride.  
Quietly, we removed it."

"Then God said, "Now you begin to  
understand love. Without love the things I have  
told you would be meaningless. You will begin  
to live in peace and understanding of all those  
people around you whom you thought were not  
'your kind.' "

"So it was that I went forth, reaching out -  
sometimes just waiting beside a wall, sometimes  
tossing a flower, sometimes grasping a hand."  
(*The Wall*, Gloria Jay Evans)

Pride can root deeply within us if we allow it  
to happen. It has been around since the beginning  
of time and is one of mankind's most binding  
evils. Over my life, pride has taken deep root in  
me; and only by the grace of God, I have become  
free of it!

A spirit of pride destroys our ability to 'hear'  
the voice of the Holy Spirit because we become  
arrogant and refuse to listen to or obey God.  
Being haughty, arrogant, high and mighty, and  
stiff-necked are a few descriptions that we can  
apply to the word pride. It destroys our  
fellowship with God because we begin to believe  
we don't need God for any reason in our lives.

Pride takes a person to the level of believing  
that "I am the best. I need no one. I will not listen  
to or obey anyone." That is a dangerous place to  
live. Only when God steps into our lives and  
shows us that pride is a destroyer do we begin to  
open our eyes to its destructive force. God has  
shown me that pride can become a destroyer if I  
continue to allow it to sit on the throne of my life.  
However, because I chose to humble myself,



repent of my sin, and ask  
for cleansing, I live free  
of its controlling force  
over me!

Evelyn Thompson

*Love begins in  
your head, as an  
act of your will,  
before it becomes the  
Love of your  
heart.*

Reading *The Wall* meditation helps you realize how important it is to allow Christ to cleanse and transform your heart. God helped the person written about in *The Wall* meditation to remove these destructive stones and replace them with his gift of life. Look up the verses listed below and begin to think about your new life in Christ.

***Living by the Spirit's Power:*** Read Galatians 5:16-17 and answer the following questions in your notebook.

1. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in your life?
2. What are the two forces that are constantly fighting within your life?
3. What do you want the Holy Spirit to do for you in your life?

***Sinful Nature's Control in Your Life:*** Read Galatians 5:19-21.

1. List the sinful controls from these verses.
2. Which of these areas do you still struggle with?
3. Write them out and use this list as a prayer to the LORD for Him to remove these sinful natures within you.

***The Fruits of the Spirit:*** Read Galatians 5:22-23

1. The Holy Spirit produces fruit that brings life to you. What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit?
2. Which of these fruits do you see growing within your life?

***Note:*** *Your sinful nature and the fruits of the Holy Spirit are in direct contrast to each other. As you read over the notes you've written, strive to grow in the Spirit.*

***Anger:*** James 1:19-21

1. The first point made is that “You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” Why do you think that we seem to do just the opposite of what this scripture teaches us to do?
2. Think about a time in your life that, if you would have had the ability to do what this scripture is teaching, the circumstances might have turned out much differently? (Maybe you'd like to write this out and use it as a prayer request for yourself.)
3. Read over verses 20-21 and in your own words write out what you think these 2 verses mean to you.

***Pride:*** Read Proverbs 8:13

1. In this verse the word “hate” is used to describe what the Lord feels about pride and arrogance. Why do you think that the Lord used “hate” concerning pride and arrogance?

2. In what areas do you see pride in your life? In your prayer time, have you been asking the Lord to remove pride from your heart?
3. Read I John 2:15-17. As you read this passage, think about your life. We are not to love the world, or the things in this world. If we have arrogant pride in our possessions, then loving Jesus has taken second place. List the areas of pride that have taken root in your life and then write out a simple plan with the Lord's help to remove them.

**Our Words:** Read James 3:5-12,

1. In this passage the tongue is compared to a spark that can set a great forest on fire. What do you think this means to you?
2. Our words should not be giving praise to God at one time, then cursing another time. If we are allowing that to happen, the Holy Spirit's presence is dulled. Are you allowing yourself to both praise God and then curse? If so, what effect is this having on your life?
3. Use these verses 5-12 and write in your own words what it means to you. Write out your plan to stop both praising God and cursing.

**Forgiveness:** Read Mark 11:25.

1. If you want Jesus to forgive you, you must first forgive others. (Think about the words of the Lord's Prayer.) This verse in Mark makes that very clear. Who needs your forgiveness? What is your plan to seek forgiveness? Write out the steps you need to follow so you can begin to work towards complete forgiveness in your life.
2. Read Ephesians 4:32. Write out this verse in your own words. List the steps you are taking to become kind and forgiving. Practice these steps on a daily basis.
3. Since your weekend and remembering the burning of your "forgiveness" list, have you struggled with taking back the forgiveness that you extended by faith? Since forgiveness is an act of your will, can you always trust your "feelings" about forgiving others?
4. Is it time to make a new "forgiveness" list and offer it up to God? (Instead of burning it, give the list a "royal flush.")

**Prayer:** *Lord, I surrender all of the stones that I have built up in my life. Help me to tear down anything that hinders my relationship to You, to those that I love, or anyone that has wronged me. I want total and complete freedom from my past sins and failures. Don't ever let me try to rebuild the wall but help me instead to build bridges. Create in me a new heart, full of love and compassion for the world around me. I surrender it all to You, my Lord and my Savior! Amen.*

Evelyn Thompson

## “Spiritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study

Read: **Galatians 5:13-26**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***

Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

Week 7 - Day 1

## The Problem Of Loneliness

*Today's Passage:*  
**John 14:9-21**

Based on the talk  
**You Are Not Alone**

*“And I will ask the Father,  
and he will give you another  
Counselor to be with you  
forever—the Spirit of truth.”  
John 14:16-17a (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Since your weekend, is the sense of the Holy Spirit's presence as real as it was then? If not, why not?

**Prayer:** Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself and your great love to me in such a powerful way on my weekend. I confess I have not always practiced your presence and have allowed loneliness to creep into my life as a substitute for the personal relationship you have offered me.

**Meditate Today:** Jesus, I affirm your wonderful promises and presence in my life and know you are my elder brother and constant companion and that I am not an orphan.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I am never alone because God is constantly with me!

Today, we live in a lonely world. Seems like an impossible statement considering we live in a plugged-in world filled with every high-tech communication gadget known to humanity. We have computers, lap-tops, cell phone, iPhones, iPads, radios, MP3 players, and HDTV sets. The list goes on and we can hardly keep up with them all.

I remember attending my first collegiate football game and was overwhelmed by the noise 78,000 rabid fans could make and yet, left with a sense of loneliness that none of us knew one another and most likely would never meet again. In contrast, I have spent many hours by myself in the woods of Michigan's upper peninsula where the only evidence of civilization was an occasional plane flying overhead; but, felt perfectly at peace with a sense of God's presence enhanced by the beauty of His creation.

The problem of loneliness really boils down to relationship or the lack thereof. In our passage for today, Jesus is telling his disciples they will never be alone as orphans because He has promised them He would send the Spirit of truth, His Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Counselor to be with them forever! Furthermore, Jesus said *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”* (Hebrews 13:5b NIV)

As your weekend progressed, you became wonderfully aware of God's presence in hundreds of ways and began your “fourth day” with a sense that He was right there with you and you could handle anything life threw at you. You are no longer alone because God is constantly with you.

Chaplain Ray Moore

## Promises, Promises!

*Today's Passage*  
**Jeremiah 31:1-34**

Based on the talk  
***You Are Not Alone***

*"The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people .... I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the LORD, have spoken."*

*Jeremiah 31:33-34 (GNT)*

**Ask Yourself:** How many of God's promises do I know? How many do I really believe? What difference does this make in my life?

**Prayer:** I thank you God for all Your promises and for forgiving and forever forgetting my sins.

**Meditate Today:** God's promises are greater than my failures.

**Today's Declaration:** God's promises to me will help me keep my promises to Him.

Have you ever heard one person say to another in a mocking type of voice, "promises, promises!" In actuality, they are generally referring to the other person's failure to keep their promises. Unfortunately, a promise is often easier to make than it is to keep.

Today's scripture uses the word "covenant," that is a type of promise between at least two people. A covenant can be between two equals, or as in this case, between a superior (God as initiator) and a subordinate (man as potential recipient). God has promised to be our God if we will be His people.

Lets make it personal. If I accept His offer, a few promised benefits to me are forgiveness of my sins and God's short memory. What is my side of the covenant? Allow God to write His holy law on my heart; that will help keep me from sinning against him. God will never break his promise to me. What about mine to Him?

As a young child growing up in a Christian home and attending church every time the doors were open, I developed a very sensitive conscience toward God and my broken promises to Him about sinning. I was a frequent altar user and would go away each time feeling better, having promised God to be faithful, only to fail again, sometimes before I got out the door.

I told God not to speak to me again until he gave me the "real thing" that would keep me from sinning. At age 16, while believing a satanic lie that I had committed the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, I came to the conclusion that life without a relationship with God was not worth living. I wanted him more than my next breath. It was then God's promises and presence became real to me. It was my broken promises, not His, that was the problem. Since then, He has been writing his law upon my heart.

Chaplain Ray Moore



## Who Moved?

*Today's Passage*  
**John 15:1-5,26-27**

Based on the talk  
***You Are Not Alone***

*“And you also must testify,  
for you have been with me  
from the beginning.”  
John 15:27*

**Ask Yourself:** When did I first begin to be with Jesus? What does it mean to be with Him? Am I with Him now?

**Prayer:** I thank you Jesus for being with me! Help me to understand better how to be with You and not lag behind or run ahead.

**Meditate Today:** I remember how Jesus' presence was so wonderfully close to me on my weekend. How can I strengthen that relationship?

**Today's Declaration:**  
Every move I make today will move me even closer to Jesus!

The story is told of a couple, who had been married for about ten years, that were out for a drive. He was behind the wheel and she was sitting by the passenger door. In a moment of marital insight, she looked at him and asked if he still loved her. He said an emphatic “yes” and asked her why she would ask such a question. She said that when they were dating they would sit so close in the car that they could both fit into the same seat belt. He thought it over carefully and said to her, “I haven’t moved.”

Sometimes, in our day to day Christian walk, it may seem that we are not as close to Jesus as we once were and we may not be able to figure out why. There may be several possible reasons: for example, God may be teaching us to walk by faith and not by sight (feelings); daily trials and stresses may be causing us to question His love and concern for us; failure to spend time in prayer and study of His Word; or there may be outright disobedience or other sinful behavior in our life. In Revelation 2:4, the Holy Spirit seems to address this latter problem with the Ephesian Church: “but I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.” (NIV) The Ephesian Church had moved from their close position to the Lord.

When Jesus became our savior and forgiver of our sins, He literally became our “first love” and we must never walk away from Him. If we find that has happened, we must repent (change our mind and direction) and return to His side.

If you are not as close to Jesus as you were on your weekend, why not? Remember when you didn’t even want to leave; guess who has moved?

Chaplain Ray Moore

## Sleepless Nights

*Today's Passage*  
**Psalms 121:1-8**

Based on the talk  
***You Are Not Alone***

*"He will not let your foot slip, He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."  
Psalms 121: 3-4 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What tends to keep me awake nights and cause me to loose sleep?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, You know I have problems and worries that I just can't seem to shake. Help me to learn to trust in Your loving care. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Meditate Today:** Oh, the wonderful qualities of my Heavenly Father! They deliver me from all my earthly cares.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will not lose any more sleep worrying over things I cannot change but instead, trust in my Jesus who watches over all my ways!

Dr. David Livingstone was the well-known Scottish Christian missionary who spent most of his life ministering to the needy in Africa in the mid to late 1800's. His love for the Africans was so great that when he died his body was returned to England except for his heart, which was buried in Africa.

A story is told about Dr. Livingstone losing his way in the jungle and when evening turned into night, he was greatly concerned for his safety as he imagined all the wild and dangerous animals that would surely find and harm him. He sat down in fear with his back against a large tree and stared into the darkness. After awhile he grew weary of the watch and it was then that our verse for today came to his mind: "...he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." As he pondered the verse, he reasoned that if the God who watched over him never slept, then there was no reason why both he and God should stay up all night.

Dr. Livingstone then closed his eyes in restful sleep and when he awoke the next morning, unharmed, he praised God and soon made his way back to the mission compound.

Our world situation often resembles a dark, hostile jungle tempting us to fear or even question the promise and care of God. We worry about the economy, terrorism, illness, jobs, health-care; on and on it goes. These can produce great stress and sleepless nights.

Perhaps Babbie Mason said it best in the chorus lyrics from her song, *Trust In God*. "God is too wise to be mistaken; God is too good to be unkind; So when you don't understand; When you don't see His plan; When you can't trace His hand; Trust His heart, Trust His heart."

Chaplain Ray Moore

## The Convict's Psalm

*Today's Passage*  
**Psalms 107:1-22**

Based on the talk  
**You Are Not Alone**

*"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle."  
"Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High."  
Psalms 107:6-7;10-11 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What was my true, "life condition" before I met Jesus? How lost was I? What changed my life?

**Prayer:** Father, I know You have forgiven all my sins for Jesus' sake because I asked in faith; but may I never forget where You have brought me from. I praise your name!

**Meditate Today:** It's not about how bad I have been but about how good God is to bring me salvation. That is the essence of grace.

**Today's Declaration:** God's grace is greater than any sin I have committed!

Jerry Moss sat across from me inside Jackson's notorious State Prison of Southern Michigan, a convicted "lifer" felon of over thirty years. Now very thin and dying from liver cancer, he was not interested in talking about his medical condition. But as a Christian of about four years, his excitement focused on the fact he had found "The Convict's Psalm: 107." As we read the Psalm together it became very clear why it had spoken to him. Every bad element of a convicted felon's life was described in vivid detail along with the "stinkin' thinkin'" that made it happen. To say Jerry Moss was not a nice man would be an understatement. One fellow lifer simply called him "an animal."

Most of his prison life was spent at Marquette's notorious maximum security prison where he cut off most all family ties so he could devote his time to becoming a hardened convict, enmeshing himself in the convict culture of extortion and drug trafficking, while becoming a very good jail-house attorney.

But God had other plans for Jerry. He accepted Jesus on Keryx weekend #29, in the spring of 1998 at the Kinross Correctional Facility. His major concern became the salvation of other inmates and his family. On three occasions, I heard him thank God for allowing him to feel some of the pain it cost Jesus to save his soul. He got to witness to his sister, daughter, and two grandsons and earnestly prayed he might get to go home with them prior to his death. In April of 2002, the Governor commuted his sentence for medical reasons and his family took him home for three days prior to going to his eternal home.

When I asked him what convinced him to accept Christ, he replied: "When I heard that Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever, and that He would never leave or forsake me, I gave my heart to him. That's something an old convict like me can get his teeth into!"

Chaplain Ray Moore

## The Pit Bull Angel

*Today's Passage*  
**Jeremiah 31:1-34**

Based on the talk  
***You Are Not Alone***

“...they will return from the  
land of the enemy.  
*So there is hope for your  
future,” declares the LORD.*  
*Jeremiah 31:16-17*  
(NIV)

**Ask Yourself:** Can I recall any times God has intervened in my life in ways that could not be explained away in any other terms? Is He directly involved in my life today; at this very moment?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I know You promised to be in my life to guide me and help me live pleasing to You. Show me how to recognize You in very circumstance. Amen

**Meditate Today:** God's wonderful plan for my life is unfolding today, moment by moment, and in ways I least expect.

**Today's Declaration:** Today I will live in total anticipation that there will be a “God sighting” that I will document by days end and I will share it with someone else.

troubled seventeen year old “at risk” high school dropout who decided he could no longer live at home with an alcoholic step-dad, mom, and a very young half-brother and sister. He left home and took to living on the streets of Lansing, Michigan, or with friends who would have him.

As his storehouse of resources dwindled to a pocket-knife and a picture of his step-siblings, he found himself in Grand Ledge, near the local school yard, where he got into a fight with some bigger kids that left him beaten and mentally drained. In this condition, his mind snapped and he made the decision life was no longer worth living. He took his knife, cut the rope from a tire swing and went to a railroad bridge outside the town. He tied one end of it around the bridge railing and the other around his neck. As he stood on the railing ready to jump, out of nowhere came a pit bull dog that jumped up, bit his pants pocket, the one that held the knife and picture, and drug him to the ground. The dog then tore his pocket off along with part of his shorts and was gone as quickly as he had come, leaving the picture of Jordan's half-brother and sister on the ground.

As he looked at the picture and tried to make sense of what had just happened, the children, staring back at him from the photo, seemed to ask him, “If you don't want to live for anything else, would you love us enough to live for us?”

He went home and enrolled in the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy, a 22-week boot camp program run by the Michigan Army National Guard, where he graduated with a new purpose.

Jordan was awed when he realized that God's angels don't always have wings but occasionally, may have four legs, a tail, sharp teeth, and a bad attitude, not usually dedicated to saving lives! Yes, God really does love us that much and He is available in every crisis of our life.

Chaplain Ray Moore

Jordan was a very

Week 7 - Day 7

## Lasting Fruit

*Today's Passage*  
**John 15:1-17**

Based on the talk  
***You Are Not Alone***

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."  
"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."*

*John 15:5,16 (NIV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What is the fruit Jesus is talking about here? Is it different from the fruit I grew before coming to Christ? What is the fruit I produce now?

**Prayer:** Jesus, grow in and through me the fruit You were speaking of in this passage so all will see that I am a true disciple of Yours.

**Meditate Today:** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will be a Christian fruit-bearing disciple of Jesus as the Holy Spirit flows through me!

In this passage, Jesus

tells us that the only way believers can have their life produce lasting goodness is being in a close, loving relationship with him -- as close as a grape branch is to a grape vine; with the Holy Spirit flowing His love through them to a lost and dying world.

As a prison chaplain in the late 1980's, I was privileged to see this principle illustrated through the life of a convicted felon named Richard. During a Sunday chapel service, I made a prayer request to the inmates on behalf of Bryan McDonald, a local one year-old boy who had been diagnosed with a malignant kidney tumor. As we prepared for prayer, Richard came forward and asked me if I would anoint him on behalf of Bryan for his healing. While not fully clear on all the theological implications of this request, I did clearly see in Richard's eyes and heart the love and compassion he had for young Bryan so I agreed to his request. The next day, in my prison mailbox, there was a prisoner money transfer from Richard made payable to Bryan McDonald for \$1.00 to help with his hospital expenses. It was the last dollar Richard had. With the warden's approval, the dollar was sent to the McDonald family.

There were many surgeries and hospital visits that followed. Given the seriousness of Bryan's condition, we might logically fear the outcome of these events. I am happy to report that Bryan McDonald regularly participated as an instructor in Child Evangelism Fellowship throughout his teenage years. Later, he graduated from Lake Superior State University with a degree in computer science, and with no trace of cancer. What made the difference? I believe the doctors did their part but that the sacrificial love and compassion of one anointed, convicted felon, with \$1.00 to his name, given in love, also weighed in heavily with Heaven.

Chaplain Ray Moore

*Christ took  
action for us, so  
we need to take  
action for  
Christ.*

**Read Jeremiah 31:1-34** (Focus on verses 31 – 34)

**Part 1 – God’s Old Covenant with Israel.**

“What is a Covenant?” It’s an agreement between two equal people or entities, such as nations. It establishes mutual rules of engagement that each party can expect from the other. A major difference between human-to-human covenants and a God-to-human covenant is that it is not between equals. God is the superior party and has taken the initiative to draw up the contract between himself and the Children of Israel. It was the “Ten Commandments” and was written by God on tablets of stone (Exodus 20). When we speak of the Holy Bible, as containing the Old and New Testaments, we are actually referring to the Old and New Covenants between God and man. A “testament” is another word for a “covenant.” They both are legal documents. The Old Covenant is based on law and the New is based on grace. Since God is going to offer a “New Covenant” consider for a moment the “Old Covenant.”

1. How was it different? (verse 32)
2. How closely was God involved with Israel? (verse 32)
3. What historical event is mentioned here? (verse 32)
4. What went wrong with the Old Covenant? (verse 32)
5. Who was to blame? (verse 32)
6. What happened to them? (verse 10, 15, 18, 22)
7. Who made it happen to them and what did he do? (verse 28)

God had kept his side of the covenant and did not leave Israel to fend for themselves. On your own, read the full story of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 13-20) and meditate on how God was with them. Could Israel legitimately claim God had abandoned them?

**Part 2 – What is the New Covenant?**

Since Israel had broken God’s original covenant, hard times came. After breaking free from Egypt and crossing the Red Sea, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the Promised Land. Years later, the prophet Jeremiah pointed to the coming of a “New Covenant” that God would offer to Israel and the whole world. What are the key elements of the “New Covenant?”

1. What will God do in their minds? (verse 33)
2. What will God do on their hearts? (verse 33)
3. What will God be to them? (verse 33)

4. What will Israel be to God? (verse 33)
5. What two things will God do for them? (verse 34) (cross reference these verses with Hebrews 8:8-13)

The answers to all of these questions indicate a very personal involvement between God and Israel. It is one that will affect all aspects of their life to a very deep degree.

### **Part 3 – When and how did the “New Covenant” begin?**

The promised New Covenant did not find fulfillment anywhere in the Old Testament. However, it is mentioned in several times in New Testament: Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; I Corinthians 11:25; II Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8,13; 9:15-28; 12:24. The night before Jesus’ death on the cross, He ate the ‘last supper’ with his twelve disciples in the upper room. When the main meal was over, He took some bread and a cup of wine and defined what each of them meant to them in establishing his kingdom and their involvement. He said the bread was his broken body and the wine was His blood. (Luke 22:20)

1. From this reference, what do we learn about the event God used to establish His side of the New Covenant?
2. What was the key element of the Covenant? (hint: it was symbolized in the cup)
3. Why was this necessary? (Hebrews 9:15-28)
4. How does Jesus’ sacrifice fulfill His promises in my life as listed by Jeremiah 31:33-34?
5. What is my part in the “New Covenant” relationship with God? (Romans 10:9-10; John 3:16)
6. What happens when I “confess” Jesus Christ? (Ephesians 2:1-10)

**Conclusion:** It should be clear that God desires a relationship with us and has gone to great lengths to make a way for us to enter into that relationship with Him. It can never be on our terms or by our striking a bargain with Him. We must walk with Him by faith and in obedience to His plan for our life. He shed his own blood and sacrificed His sinless life to save our sinful soul. Is He not worthy of our best? It is the ultimate cure for loneliness. As a seminary friend of mine once said: “All this and heaven too!”

Chaplain Ray Moore



## “Spritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study

Read: **Daniel 9:4-19**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***  
Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

Week 8 - Day 1

## Christian Community

*Today's Passage*  
**Luke 15:11-32**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Amen.*

*Revelation 1:5b-6 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Have I ever thought about the church as more than a place where I receive salvation? Have I ever had a vision, like John's, where the church is called to become part of something bigger than just the people within my small group of friends?

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for calling me to serve in Your eternal and living Christian community.

**Meditate Today:** I am part of Your world-wide Christian community.

**Today's Declaration:** I will faithfully serve as a priest in Your universal Christian community no matter where I am.

The Christian community is comprised of all Christians. It includes all types of denominations that follow the teachings of Jesus. It has no walls or boundaries. It is a living, breathing eternal family of believers belonging to Christ. Although this truth may be difficult to comprehend, one day we will see it very clearly and understand the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

One thing we do know for sure. Jesus is alive everywhere in the world! The love of Jesus, in every Christian heart, is being used by God to heal broken relationships. We need to understand that we are part of the universal Christian community. The courage present in our lives, and throughout the Christian community, brings hope and trust into the world. Hopefully, this is not the first time that you have considered this idea.

As little children, we depended entirely on our moms and dads for the love we desperately needed and required. For many, the love they needed and craved was absent. People try all sorts of ways to compensate; but, they know in their hearts that something is missing. They are the "lost" ones in this world.

God is at the end of the road watching for our return. We finally head for home, once our hearts have convicted us and we have given up on doing it "our way." We are contrite and unsure about what to may happen.

To our surprise, our Father is waiting for us. He hugs us, puts a royal robe on us, places His family ring on our finger. He gives us sandals, because only slaves go barefoot. We are back and part of God's eternal Christian community.

Our local church is where we worship and grow. But, we also belong to God's universal Christian community. We carry the love of Jesus into the world. We are part of God's family. We are alive in the Holy Spirit, part of the world-wide Christian community, bound together by Jesus' saving love.

Bob Wheelan

Week 8 - Day 2

## Growing In Jesus

*Today's Passage*  
**2 Peter 1:3-11**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"Whoever wants to be first  
must be last of all and  
servant of all."  
Mark 9: 35b (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I  
hungering for Jesus and  
growing in Jesus?

**Prayer:** My amazing God and  
Father, I can barely  
comprehend what You have  
given to us in Jesus. I hunger to  
be fed by Your truth revealed  
in scripture. The Gospels and  
parables astonish and astound  
me. Feed me so I may grow!

**Meditate Today:** How can I  
grow so others may live? Show  
me someone more needy than  
me. May they also taste and eat  
from God's amazing harvest!  
As I serve them, show me what  
ways I need to change.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will grow in love, joy, peace,  
patience, kindness, generosity,  
faithfulness, gentleness and  
self-control.

In some ways, we are like a ripe peach or pear, ready to be picked and eaten. First the fruit has to grow. Beginning with pollination, then nourishment, sunshine, and finally life giving rain brings a harvest. Likewise, we too must grow and mature.

We are part of the tree of life. Jesus, the arborist, grafted us onto His tree. During our growing season, we are baptized with the Spirit of Jesus. This equates to the pollen in an orchard. The 'Christian community' is like the bee-hives of love that spread the pollen everywhere they go. The orchards, all around the world, comprise the Christian community that others see. Just like all the varieties of fruit, there are apples, oranges, figs, and pears ... there are many denominations within the 'Christian community.'

Christ grows in us and we become the 'fruit of the spirit' that comes from our orchard. As people pass by, they see all the amazing fruit that is ready to feed a world of lost people that will benefit from the life-sustaining food.

From the very first moment, we realize we belong to Jesus and begin to grow in the 'fruit of the spirit.' We find new trust, peace, and confidence given to us through the Spirit. We are meant to become life-giving fruit to benefit others. Yet, it is not us giving life, but Jesus "alive in us" that touches others. It is a true miracle! God claims them as His own people.

God calls us to grow each day as part of His 'Christian community' on earth. It is a mystery, so amazing, and it feeds our faith daily and motivates us to go to places, and do things, we've never done before. (Mark 4:26-29) The Bible is where we find the truth and wisdom that enables us to grow. Our love of God and hunger for Jesus draws us deeper than ever into a relationship with Him. As we reach out to others, Jesus is the great relationship builder and healer. We are part of God's amazing 'Christian community' on earth!

Bob Wheelan

## Marketing 101

*Today's Passage*  
**Acts 2:44-47**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all."  
Acts 4:33 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What sort of advertisement for Jesus am I to the world? Do others see Jesus in me?

**Prayer:** Father in heaven, the way You change the world boggles my mind. The fact that You chose to use me is beyond understanding. I am grateful that You have claimed me and chosen me to share the 'Good News of Jesus' with others.

**Meditate Today:** I am part of God's plan to gather His lost children.

**Today's Declaration:** I will be aware all day about the positive affect I have on others.

There is no doubt that advertising dollars drive the economy. Another major factor is 'fear.' The world's stock markets are shaken when fear grips investors and they scramble to save their wealth. Similar forces are at play inside prison and everywhere. However, other powerful forces are at work as well. The force comes from followers of Christ and the Holy Spirit!

We are part of the 'Christian community' that is growing, just like the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. On the day of Pentecost, the believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit. The group grew quickly! Even before the word 'Christian' was used to describe believers, they became a force that changed the world.

'Christian community,' with Jesus as the cornerstone, became the foundation of what God is using to accomplish His work around world. God advertises His kingdom through each believer. He relies on each faithful follower to help prepare others for the most important moment in their lives, their 'Jesus moment.' That is the moment when people see just how lost and broken they have become. They let go, repent, and give their life completely to Jesus!

God uses us quietly and without great fanfare. Each of God's advertisements is unique. His ads play in the background all through the prison, 24/7. Everything you do and say is part of God's plan. Often we are unaware of the affect we have on others. Our words and actions may work to bring a correctional officer to Christ. For those outside prison, it may be a friend, co-worker, or a neighbor that is won over. Wherever it may be, the 'Christian community' is a living, breathing advertisement for freedom and life in Jesus.

A Super Bowl ad costs several million dollars but your 30-second witness may be priceless. God just wants you to be available. He's not interested in your ability ... just your availability!

Bob Wheelan

## Learning In Christian Community

*Today's Passage*  
**Acts 11:19-26**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians." Acts 11:26b (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Am I a Christian (disciple) hungering to know my Lord Jesus in new and exciting ways each day?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, create in me a heart that hungers to know more about Jesus.

**Meditate Today:** The teachings and parables of Jesus are astounding and amazing!

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will set aside time with others to share and learn more about the gifts from our Lord Jesus!

In grade school we learned our A, B, C's. We learned words as our teachers read stories. As we listened, our minds created images that would bring the stories to life. First we learned words, then phrases, then short sentences. Finally, we begin to connect words into longer sentences. Soon we were reading books and a whole new world opened up for us.

As I read Acts, I noticed something amazing that brought me back to my grade school years. Chapter 11 introduces Antioch, Barnabas, and Christians ... our A, B, C's. A is for Antioch, B for Barnabas, and C is for the first recorded use of the term Christians. It is used to describe the Gentiles coming to know Jesus as Christ and Lord. For an entire year, Paul and Barnabas met with and taught many in the church.

Learning comprises a great deal of our church life and enables us to grow in Jesus. Up to this point, most of the 'followers of the way' were Jews. However, the work of the Holy Spirit could not be contained. It spread to the Greek and Gentile communities through its power and action.

Keryx is a learning community of Christians and other others are drawn to us by the power and action of the Spirit in our lives. By seeing our love in action, they want become a part of it. Jesus is always with every one of us as we meet. *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20b NIV) These final words from the book of Matthew reassure us that we are never alone.

When we belong to a 'Christian community,' we are not alone. Our heart and character are changed and we grow in Christ and learn God's truth in the scriptures. As God reveals His heart to us, it becomes a fountain of love. This love washes and fills us with the living water of Jesus. Our spirits never need to thirst again!

Bob Wheelan

## Fellowship

*Today's Passage*  
**Romans 12:9-13**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind."*

*Luke 14:13 (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** Do I seek out those who are treated as outcasts?

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for the amazing teachings You have revealed to us in Jesus. Open my eyes to see people that have been pushed aside and ignored by others. Help me to see their hearts and not what others see on the outside.

**Meditate Today:** Lord, open my eyes and recognize those ignored and pushed aside by others. Show me ways to help the outcasts of society.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will be a Christian brother and seek to help those ignored and include them in the life of our 'Christian community.'

Paul describes the nature of 'Christian community' in today's passage. As we serve the Lord, our love is to be genuine and we are to hold fast to what is good. We are called to be patient in suffering and pray to God about all that is going on in our lives and the lives of others in the community. We are called to be zealous and ardent. Others need to see that the community is made up of people with special relationships to each other. We are called also to be hospitable to strangers. (Luke 14:15-24)

This seems to go against the normal ways of the world. In the world, if we put on a banquet and invite all our friends, we quickly discover they often have other, more important, things going on and will send their regrets. In 'Christian community,' we are always there for each other. Everyone is welcome and hospitality extends beyond our 'important friends' and includes outcasts and the undesirable. It is an honor and privilege to be their friends.

When I served at a street mission for the homeless, many of the friends I made were down and out and marginalized by society. I would sometimes accept their invitation to go to AA meetings with them. This was an important issue in their life. They valued the genuine Christian friendship that was based on mutual love and genuine respect.

One of the highlights in my life occurs on the second Saturday each month. I go to the Ultreyas at the prisons as often as possible. There I find love and respect mutually drawing us together and closer to God. I grow in new ways each time I am privileged attend. We are all blessed as we share in prayer, praise, and study.

As we pray daily to God, He reveals to us people who are hurting and lonely. God loves us all; every last one of us. We all need friends. We are all lonely in this world. We have to be willing for God to use us to reach out to help others!

Bob Wheelan

## Prayer

*Today's Passage*  
**Philippians 4:4-7**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."...*

*"Lord do not hold this against them."  
Acts 7:59,60b (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** What sort of power enables me to have such an unflinching faith and peace from God that I am able to guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus?

**Prayer:** Father, I rejoice in the peace You have given me as I live for Jesus. I am unworthy and yet You still love me! I pray for all people, that You will gather them into the freedom of Jesus, alive in their hearts.

**Meditate Today:**  
Remember a time in your life when an impossible prayer was answered.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will pray for a friend and for the one who comes against me.

I have often thought about Saul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus. Imagine the inner turmoil and grief when he heard the voice of Jesus asking: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Then in horror, he realized it was the voice of Jesus calling out to him. He had been persecuting the Messiah! He was blinded and had to be led by the hand into Damascus. He neither ate nor drank for three days. (see Acts 9)

Imagine his prayer as he cried out to God in repentance! Then Saul experienced a miracle! Ananias came out of nowhere and announced that Jesus had sent him. He laid hands on Saul to restore his eyesight and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, Saul was healed and filled.

God chose both of these men to carry out His will. There is no doubt that God answered Saul's prayers. Saul's will and God's will became one the moment Ananias laid his hands on Saul. His eyes were healed and the Holy Spirit filled him!

I am sensitive to Saul's predicament because God rescued me, and my wife, under horrific circumstances. He sent a man to lead us to Christ. With nowhere left to turn, we cried out to God. He was there beside us. Miracles begin to happen; lives were saved and transformed!

God always hears our prayers. Others may doubt, but we know God is listening. We may fail, but God never fails! Pray for a deeper fellowship with Him and for healing of all your relationships. In order for healing and growth to take place, one more thing must happen.

We need to become part of a 'Christian community.' As we read Philippians 4:4-9, Paul is telling us: *"Keep on doing the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."* (NRSV) Be assured our prayer life grows as we grow in Christ. It is a promised gift. It is a result of our encounter with the Living Lord Jesus who now lives in us!

Bob Wheelan



## Respect

*Today's Passage*  
**Philippians 2:1-4**

Based on the talk  
***Christian Community***

*"He made David their king. In His testimony about him He said, "I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man of my heart, who will carry out all of my wishes." Acts 13:22b (NRSV)*

**Ask Yourself:** When others look into my eyes, do they see God's love? Do they see respect?

**Prayer:** Father, You and I know I am a man of many faults and mistakes. With all my heart, I cry out to You to help be become a man after Your own heart, like David. You know my life is a struggle. But, I know that with You all things are possible!

**Meditate Today:** Give me Godly respect for the people around me. May I see them from God's point of view.

**Today's Declaration:**  
I will consciously be aware of showing real, heartfelt respect for others.

We often use the word respect without any real thought as to what is contained within the word itself. The dictionary defines it: to hold people in high regard or esteem. But this aspect of the word barely touches its scriptural significance. True respect for others is a mindset. It comes from our heart. It is an essential by-product of love. Others can see it in our eyes.

In 1 Samuel 16:7, God told Samuel, when he first saw young David, don't look at the outside, look at his heart. In many versions, it also states that David "had beautiful eyes." (NRSV) Our respect, like our love, cannot be hidden and it cannot be 'faked.' It comes from Jesus living in us. It is present as an essential part of us.

God describes David as a "man of my own heart." David sinned just as we have sinned. God had Samuel select David, not because he was without sin, but because his heart was pure. He was faithful while tending Jesse's flock of sheep. Then, God sent him out to meet Goliath. As King, David led the people according to God's commands. The Messiah, Jesus, descended from the line of David. There can be no doubt as to what God cherishes most in us. We need to have unwavering respect for others. It springs from love in our hearts.

God wants us to be 'kingdom builders' here on earth. In order to do that, we must be filled with respect and love for others. We have to be people after 'God's own heart.' It includes our relationships with others and must carry over into every area of our lives.

Respect is the single most important virtue in the marriage relationship. Respect builds trust and love. It is the glue that holds families together.

As Jesus transforms our hearts, our love and respect for others grows. God is able to use us in 'Christian community.' Our love and respect for each other builds God's kingdom on earth.

Bob Wheelan

*Prayer is always  
the beginning  
point as we reach  
out to bring others  
to a life in Christ.*

**Something truly amazing goes on in us the moment we recognize that God is real and present in our lives at all times.**

*Read Revelation 1:5b-6 and Luke 15:11-32.*

1. What are some of the ways these two passages are connect together?
2. What are the “main point(s)” of these verses that help make this connection?
3. Where is 'community' in these two passages?
4. How is the passage from Luke part of your own life?

**It is not Keryx that has changed me, but rather 'Christ' who showed up in my life!** *Read 2 Peter 1:3-11.*

1. How “productive” is my Christian life?
2. How does a fruit grower keep an orchard productive?
3. How is our “Christian life” made more productive?
4. According to verse 8, do we need to have to be “perfect” in each quality listed in verses 5-7?
5. What happens if we do not work on our Christian “qualities” listed in verses 5-7?

**There is always some person that helps us prior to the moment we encounter the ‘Living Lord Jesus’ in our life. That person is a living advertisement that Christ is alive in this world and is doing God's work.** *Read Acts 2:38-41 and Acts 4:33.*

1. Who was the person in my life that urged me to become a follower of Jesus?
2. What would my 30-second testimony be if I had to stand before everyone at half time at next year's Super Bowl?
3. Have I ever been that “person” that urged someone else to come to Christ?

**God relies on you and me to carry out 'His Mission' to redeem the world. Remember, there were no churches or New Testament on the first day of Pentecost or in Antioch before Paul preached there. The apostles simply shared about the resurrection of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.** *Read Acts 11:19-26.*

1. Can I serve God without a testimony that describes what He has done in my life?
2. What are the A, B, C's of ‘Christian community’ in the early years in Jerusalem and Antioch?
3. What were Paul and Barnabas doing in the early church?

**There are some people who stand out from the rest as important, powerful and impressive leaders. Other people are more ordinary, like me. Still others are shy, withdrawn, and different than most.**

*Read Luke 14:12-14.*

1. What type of person am I drawn to?
2. Does the fact we don't throw big banquets release us from the obligation contained in this scripture?
3. What does God look at in each one of us?

*Read Philippians 4:4-7 and Romans 8:26-27.*

1. What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?
2. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul reveals what is actually going on when we pray. When we encounter the living Lord Jesus, like Paul, we are praying. There was a struggle and battle going on within us and in heavenly places. What role does prayer play in our struggles? What is the spiritual nature of our struggle?
3. In Ephesians 2:18-22, how are we all connected and no longer different? What is it in our lives that we do the enables us to become united?
4. According to Acts 2:1-4, what has happened to believers since the death and resurrection of Christ?

**Respect for others is an attitude and not something we do. It is a natural outcome of genuine humility. In the following scriptures, Paul is touches upon something huge, in terms of discernment and our ability to enter into meaningful relationships with others.**

*Read Philippians 2:1-5 and Acts 13:22b*

1. How do we become men and women “of God's own heart?”
2. According to these verses, why is respect so important?

**Summary:** ‘Christian community’ is the way God has chosen to work in the world. In Acts, the apostles went from community to community and formed churches among the believers. It continues to this day. We have many different denominations but the church is still an open, inclusive community that includes all true believers. This is mysterious but reassuring to us. We have hope as a result of all that God has done for us. We are blessed and privileged to be part of God's Christian Community -- and then to be sent out to serve others.

**Prayer:** *Father, I am so grateful You have chosen me to be part of the Christian Community. I am grateful that I've been given me the privilege to serve You. I am grateful for fellow believers who are now part of my life in Christ. Everything I've learned about Jesus amazes and astounds me. Use me in any way You can. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Bob Wheelan

## “Spritual Reading” *Lectio Divina* Bible Study

Read: **Ephesians 4:1-16**

- Get comfortable, relaxed, and quiet before God.
  - This can best be done in a small group or individually.
  - You will be reading this passage four times during the course of this study.
  - After each reading, there needs to be a quiet time of meditation and contemplation as you write your thoughts in your notebook.
  - Before you begin, **have prayer** and invite the Holy Spirit to teach and instruct you about who you are, your character, and how you should take action in your life.
1. **READ** – simply listen to the Word as it is read the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Then have quiet time without any discussion. Ask the question: *“What is this passage saying to me?”*
  2. **REFLECT** – as it is read the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, ask yourself, *“What touches my heart?”* Engage in a quiet time and write down how your heart has been touched.
  3. **RESPOND** – during this 3<sup>rd</sup> reading ask yourself, *“What is God inviting me to do?”* Allow for a time of quiet meditation and write down what God’s invitation is to you.
  4. **REST** -- this is the 4<sup>th</sup> reading of this passage. Allow yourself to experience the presence of God. Ask: *“Is there something else for me?”* Allow for a time of more quiet and meditation and add any further insight God gives to you.

5. **SHARE** – What has God revealed to you? Allow each person to share what they have written and other members should not interrupt them or ask questions. If you have questions or comments, write them down. Allow all members of the group to share before the group asks questions or enters discussion. It is recommended to place a limit on this time of sharing so everyone has an equal chance to speak, ask questions, or make comments.
  
6. **PRAYER** -- Pray for the person on your right about what God has spoken to them about from this passage that has been read. Be affirming and positive as you pray for their spiritual growth and/or action to be taken.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

Whatever is shared here stays here. Respect the confidentiality of each member of your group.

It is easier to debate the Bible and what you think it meant than to submit to what it says to you.

Allow the scripture to form you into who you are (your character) and how you live.

***“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”***

Jeremiah 6:16 (NIV)

## Examination of Conscience - Month 2

*“Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends,  
let us purify ourselves from everything  
that contaminates body and spirit,  
perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”  
2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)*

**Are your thoughts pleasing to God?** Our thoughts always precede our actions. Jesus addressed the importance of our thought life in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). He said that it is not enough that we do not kill; but first, we should not hate. He also said to not commit adultery as well as to not even allow lustful thoughts into our minds. His standard of doing right included both thoughts and actions.

*“For as he thinks within himself, so is he.”* (Proverbs 23:7 NASB) Our thought life determines our character and the actions that we take. *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”* (Philippians 4:8 NIV). We need to ask God to renew our minds and our thinking (Romans 12:1-2).

**In addition to our own thoughts and actions, how do our actions and words affect others?** Are we quick to point out the faults in others while ignoring our own shortcomings? Proverbs 6:16-19 says there are six things the Lord hates. Do we enjoy “stirring the pot” or “getting things going” during our encounters with other people? We need to get rid of anything that contaminates our inner spirit or our actions toward others. Check yourself in these areas.

Lustful thoughts	Inner anger and rage	Hatred toward enemies	Holding grudges
Wishing others misfortune	Getting even with those who wrong you	Telling lies	Critical comments
Viewing inappropriate movies and TV shows	Listening to evil music and talk	Foolish talk and coarse or dirty joking	Having a jealous spirit toward others

Gossiping	Not keeping things in confidence	Unforgiving spirit	Allowing bitterness
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As you read the daily devotionals, there is a **Daily Declaration** that is designed to help you renew your mind and change your “stinkin’ thinkin’.” When it comes to maintaining purity of mind, we fall victim to our thoughts that are in rebellion to God. During the coming month, ask God to renew your mind and to change the way you think!

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)*

*“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.” Psalms 51:1-17 (NIV)*

John Thompson







