



Devotional Guide

Prepared by Pastor Michael Lewis
For the Family @RoswellstreetBC
February 2022

*"Now all these things are from God,
who reconciled us to Himself through Christ
and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"*

2 Corinthians 5:18

Friend, let's journey together to follow Jesus and tell someone the Good News of His love in this devotional walk through the month of February 2022. I will be teaching verse-by-verse through 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and this devotional guide will lead you step by step to become a "*minister of reconciliation*" who is compelled to share the message of reconciliation in a broken and divided world.

Prayerfully, Pastor Michael Lewis

January 31st – Monday – Read and Reflect on 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

This chapter will be the focal text for the sermon series. Pause & Celebrate the 'Hope' that we have beyond the grave in Verses 1 – 8.

Many today miss seeing *the God of hope* for who He really is. Sadly, many miss Jesus because they don't encounter Him in His people.

Pause to ask God WHO, in the traffic pattern of your life, needs to experience this hope of eternal life. Freely we have received these facets of His hope, and freely we are to share them.

*"No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love has been brought to full expression through us".
(1 John 4:12).*

True fellowship, in which we genuinely love each other, enables the full expression of God's love. This means *as we experience God's love through the love of others, we see Him as He really is.* As we receive hope & encouragement from others, we'll be able to see *the God of hope* (Romans 15:13). Through the comfort of a friend, we'll be able to see the One who is *"the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort"* (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Just as we receive this blessing of experiencing God through others, *we are called to express His presence to others,* giving testimony through the giving of His love in order that they might see Him more clearly and find added hope. We have a *"giving first" God,* and He calls us to be a *"giving first" people.*

Pause & Pray asking for His life to be shared through you, beginning with those close to you and with other followers of Jesus, and then extend this sharing of His love to others who need to know Him.

"Abba Father, I celebrate the hope that I have in Christ "to be absent from the body is to be present with You." I humbly ask that Your life be freely shared through me

today; I especially ask that you allow me to share with _____ and extend your love with _____ who really needs to know You, for I pray in the powerful name of Jesus, Amen!"

February 1st – Tuesday – Read and Reflect on the Gospel of Luke chapter 10.

Focus on Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus' words capture the heart of us who have experienced God's grace to become a true "*Jesus ambassador*" - see 2 Corinthians 5: 20.

Recall that the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) provided practical and caring support to the traveler, who was struggling to survive, alongside the road. Likewise, *if we hope to see others come to follow Jesus, every believer will have to become "a neighbor" to others around us and lavishly extend the love of God.*

Seeking to define the limits of love that we should be expected to demonstrate, religious leaders would ask Jesus, "*And who is my neighbor?*" (Luke 10:29). Jesus reframed the question, transforming it from one that suggested limits of love to one that reflected deep care, grace, and compassion. Rather than "*Who is my neighbor?*" Jesus posed the question, "*Who was a neighbor?*" Within the context of this introduction, Jesus began to paint a picture of what ambassadors sharing Great Commandment love look like—defined not by limits, but by radical sharing of His life and love.

Pause & Reflect – Who in your traffic patterns could benefit by you being a 'Good Samaritan?' Ask the Lord 'who' this may be by opening your eyes to see and your heart to care.

"Heavenly Father, I recall when I was the one lying on the side of the highway – mistreated and bruised. Your Son, Jesus, was the good neighbor who was moved with compassion to care for my hurt and minister to my needs. As You have loved me, may Your Spirit compel me to love _____ by _____, for I pray in Jesus' name, Amen."

February 2nd – Read & Reflect on the book of 1 Thessalonians chapter 2.

'Zoom in' on verses 7 & 8. *"But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us."*

If we hope to see a child, family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker come to follow Jesus, we must look to the One who embodies relevance and impact. If we hope to live as an ambassador who effectively shares the gospel with others, we must ask ourselves, *"How did Jesus present the good news? How did He reveal Himself to people?"*

- Did Christ offer the Jews only rational arguments as to why they should believe He was the Messiah? No.
- Did He depend upon elaborate performances and costly productions to bring people the message of hope? Hardly.
- Did Jesus focus His witness on opportunities to debate with political leaders and the religious hierarchy in order to disprove their theories and shed the light of truth upon their misguided philosophies? Evidently not.

So how did Jesus present a defense of the faith? – He gave His life.

We as Ambassadors share a relational witness like Jesus.

Jesus did not just impart the truths of the gospel; He lived them.

Jesus did not simply offer isolated rational arguments about the tenets of our faith. Rather, He consistently modeled the character and behavior that His teaching encouraged.

- People became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah as they witnessed His tears for a friend, His acceptance of an outcast, and His compassion for the infirmed (John 11:33–36; Luke 19:1–10; 18:35–42).

- Others were drawn to the Messiah by His supportive presence and unconventional demonstrations of love (John 9:1–41; Luke 17:11–19).
- Jesus Christ did not merely present a rational or propositional apologetic. He lived out a relational one.

The apostle Paul reinforced the need for a relational apologetic as he shared this powerful insight for presenting the gospel: *"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well"* (1 Thessalonians 2:8). Paul seems to be saying, *"Share the written letter (the gospel), and share the living letter (your life)."* The two make a powerful combination. Such a relational approach to the gospel is even more important in our postmodern culture, where the prevailing question is not: *"Are these propositions true?"* but rather, *"If these propositions are true, then what?"* It is only as we impart our lives along with the gospel that this important question will be answered.

Pause & Reflect – Celebrate your relationship with God through the death, resurrection & present ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you rejoice in your eternal relationship with the Lord, ask the Lord to show you someone who could benefit from a relationship with you. This person may be far away from God spiritually but consider that God might desire your friendship to lead this one to Christ.

"Heavenly Father, as You show me that _____ could benefit from a closer friendship with me. May Your Spirit empower me to show your love through acceptance, appreciation, or support; also prompt me to share the Good News of your love with this one, for I humbly pray, in Jesus' name, Amen"

February 3rd – Read & Reflect on Acts chapter 10.

Peter was led by the Spirit 'on mission' to the house of Cornelius. What was the impact of Peter's obedience to the Spirit's leading? Peter became a *1st century good Samaritan* going to a home that most Jews of his day would avoid.

As we become *21st century good Samaritans* and live our life "on mission," we extend the life and love of Jesus. Below are three specific ways (we will cover over the next 2 days) to further your engagement as Christ's ambassador by:

Truly knowing people, Initiating Caring involvement, and vulnerably sharing.

Truly knowing people. To truly know someone, you must focus undivided attention on his or her concerns and needs. As 'good Samaritans,' we should:

- Leave our "side of the road" with its priorities and preoccupations to become attentive students of other persons and their needs.
- Notice the surroundings and situations of others, their relationships and needs, with particular attention to their isolation and aloneness.
- Make caring inquiry, when appropriate, into their hopes and dreams, their disappointments and fears.
- Offer the gift of our presence, expecting that they will see Jesus in us (see Colossians 1:27).

PRAY & RESPOND

"Abba Father, I pray that Your Spirit would empower me to see people not as 'walking trees' to avoid or prune, but to see people as ones whom You love. I pray that You would allow me to get to know _____. May I become attentive students of his/her person and needs, for I humbly pray in Jesus' name, Amen"

February 4th - Read & Reflect on the Gospel of John Chapter 4.

Observe how Jesus shared a witness of His Father's love to this Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus knew this woman, and He initiated a conversation with her by vulnerably sharing his need for water from the well.

As we become *21st century good Samaritans* and live our life "on mission," we extend the life and love of Jesus. We are learning that there are three specific ways to further your engagement as Christ's ambassador. Yesterday we considered '*truly knowing people*' and today we will go further to *initiate caring involvement* – just like Jesus did with this woman at the well.

Initiate caring involvement. Be among the first to extend loving support to the hurting person according to the need of the moment, drawing upon what you have come to know about him or her. As good Samaritans, we could:

- Offer thoughtful words and, at times, appropriate touch.
- Visit, call, or send notes just to say, "I am thinking about you."
- Reassure the person's hopes and dreams by communicating, "I'm looking forward to rejoicing with you as God blesses your future."
- Commit to travel through the disappointments and fears of others, communicating, "I'm committed to go through this with you."
- Help lift the burden of the situation and struggle with practical help, thus fulfilling the law of Christ—the law of love (see Galatians 6:2–3).

PRAY & RESPOND

"Father in heaven, I call out to you on behalf of _____ whom I long to know Your love found in Your beloved Son. May Your Spirit lead me to initiate caring involvement by _____, for I pray in Jesus' name, Amen"

February 5th – Read and Reflect on 2 Corinthians chapter 3.

Write down insights that you gain about living as a follower of Jesus Christ.

'Zoom in' on Verse 2 – "*You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.*"

Our lives are to be living letters to be '*known and read by everyone.*' This speaks to the importance of appropriate vulnerability in sharing with the ones whom we are seeking to share the Good news.

As we become *21st century good Samaritans* and live our life "on mission," we shine the life and love of Jesus. We are learning three specific ways to further your engagement as Christ's ambassador. The previous two days we considered '*truly knowing people*' and '*initiate caring involvement.*' Today, we go further relationally to '*vulnerably share*' as a fellow traveler.

'Vulnerably sharing' as a fellow traveler sincerely communicates that you also, at times, have been stranded by the road, needing help.

Significant impact and deepening of relationship takes place, as we are vulnerable to share that we are "imperfect" ambassadors.

Review the list below and identify areas that may hinder you in living as a 21st Century Good Samaritan. Pray, asking the Lord to empower you to overcome this area of struggle.

I sometimes struggle with . . .

- *Being so busy with my agenda that I fail to notice people's needs.*
- *Feeling inadequate over how to help.*
- *Thinking so much about people's spiritual needs that I overlook their relational or physical needs.*
- *Not being able to see beyond a person's sin or the ways in which they are different from me. I am, therefore, not always sensitive to their need for acceptance.*
- *Being judgmental, critical, or condemning.*

*"Father in heaven, as I seek to live on mission and become a Good Samaritan, I confess that sometimes I struggle with _____.
I ask you to forgive me by the blood of Jesus and change me by Your Spirit to become more _____. I humbly pray in Jesus' name, Amen"*

February 6th – Read and Reflect on Acts chapters 3 & 4.

The man who was lame from birth lived a lonely life. Peter and John take special notice of him, and a miracle takes place. This miracle upsets the religious community.

Zoom in on 4: 12 - *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*

Peter and John were championing Jesus as the only hope of eternal life and abundant living.

Take a moment right now to recall *a friend or loved one that is experiencing life alone*. Jesus is calling you to simply walk alongside and encourage this one through your life and the hope of the gospel.

Pause and ask God to "send" you:

"Send me, Holy Spirit, to _____ who at times is alone, struggling with _____, for I pray in Jesus' name, Amen."

Be Intentional to Express Care: Today, make a phone call, send a text, or have a cup of coffee and do what Peter and John did. When they saw that the man was alone, His first response was not to preach to him, pray for him, or give a pep talk but simply care for him in the name of Jesus.

Your friend needs the same today. As you live His life alongside them, listen to the Holy Spirit for just the right time to share of Jesus, "the hope that is within you."

February 7th – Read & Reflect once again

2 Corinthians chapter 5. (Try reading the chapter in a different Bible translation.)

As I preached on this text yesterday of the certain hope we as believers have beyond the earthly grave, reflect on what the Spirit taught you through the sermon. Pray over any insights.

Focus on Verse 9 – *"Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to him."*

What is your aim in life? *Is your ambition to please the Lord, put a smile on His face?* One way we please Him is by becoming more and more like Jesus. Jesus said, *"Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher"* (Luke 6:40).

Imagine Christ standing before you—the only true Teacher (Matthew 23:10), the One who is love (1 John 4:8), the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4), the One who is humble and gentle (Matthew 11:29, 30). Imagine that He invites you

to become like Him, to express His life and love, to extend the light of His presence in a dark world as He extends the boundaries of love through you. Our calling is to become "*fully trained*" in extending the life and love of Christ, our Teacher.

Pause to consider your "*comfort zone*." We all have settings and surroundings where we sense adequacy, familiarity, and "safety," but Jesus the great Teacher has come to transform you!

Reflect on Jesus' boundary-breaking love toward Samaritans, sinners, lepers, and tax- collectors.

Pause and pray, asking for courage to expand expressions of His love through you, yielding to the Spirit's work.

Though you may not fully know all the transforming work that will be needed in your life, consider yielding to Christ's invitation. Write out a prayer as an expression of your heart and your commitment to love beyond your comfort zone.

SHARE VULNERABLY - Pause to reflect on how your own life has been blessed to walk beyond your comfort zone and how He has brought others into your life. Perhaps, there has been a stranger, spouse, child, family member, friend, or even an enemy whom the Lord has involved in His transforming work in your life. Share your experience with your child, spouse or Life Group.

February 8th – Read & Reflect on 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

From your reflection of the chapter, write down insights about sharing the Good News of Jesus with others. Note that the apostle Paul's writing of 'the day' of reward for the ministry of believers. This text is further explained by our series focal text of 2 Corinthians 5: 10 – "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*"

Healthy, God-honoring relationships need constant attention and a commitment to personal responsibility and "peace-making." God's hope for our relationships requires that each of us give a frequent account to God for our own choices and

behavior (Romans 14:12). We often think that only dysfunctional relationships need attention, but the healthiest relationships are constantly developing and carefully maintained.

Every type of relationship—marriage, friendship, employer/employee, parent/child, co-worker, classmate, or roommate—will benefit from the healing power of *confession and forgiveness*.

Because the people in your life are imperfect . . . *when you mess up, 'fess up!*

- *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*
- *"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).*

The powerful simplicity of confession is an essential tool for any peace-making plan. Saying the words, *"That was wrong of me, will you forgive me?"* can become a frequently employed strategy for bringing disconnected relationships back into alignment. Perfection is only possible for deity, not humanity, so we need God's plan for restoring relationships.

Because the people in your life are imperfect...*when they mess up, forgive them!*

- *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).*
- *"...to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).*

Reflect on *what you have done or could do to deserve His forgiveness*. There's nothing that you could do to earn the gift of His Son?

Every one of us must conclude: It's only by His grace. It is only God's unconditional love that provided the gift of Calvary and the forgiveness that is available to us.

Now allow the Holy Spirit to touch your heart *with thanks and gratitude, praise and wonder, that God has freely given the gift of His Son and the empowering of His Spirit.* Share your praise and worship with the Lord.

"As I consider the unmerited gift of God's provision of His Son and His Spirit just for me, His unfailing love and complete forgiveness, my heart is touched with

_____"
Now, yield in prayer to be a Spirit-empowered follower who faithfully *"forgives others as you have been forgiven."*

February 9th – Read & Reflect on the Gospel of John chapter 5.

Jesus models for us what it means *to live on mission*, for He was living the mission of His Father throughout His earthly ministry.

Imagine . . . A place where healing waters were stirred by grace but limited by man's ability to be first in line—a place where deliverance had gained a reputation but only for the fastest, not the neediest or the most downtrodden?

That is where you find Jesus. See Him standing, observing, talking, and listening. He is asking the Father, *"What do you want me to do?"*

There is a man lying near the pool. He is a nobody in a beautiful place marred by the worst that life can offer. Jesus stands over him. *"Excuse me, sir, but do you truly long to be healed?"* There is no demand, only an honest question. *"Do you want the impossible . . . the improbable . . . what you have asked God for every day? Are you ready to have your life changed?"*

The man doesn't answer the question, at least not directly. In fact, his response is that healing is impossible. Not improbable or unlikely. Impossible! For some, even though they are living every day in a beautiful place, their only identity is the sin and sickness they have come to know.

Take a moment to encounter Jesus beside your own troubled waters. Hear Him ask the question, *"What do you want Me to do?"* Tell Him now, and He promises to take it before the Father!

He is not bound by what you believe about yourself. He is not waiting for you to get the right answer to the question. He knows you do not have the strength or

even the belief. In fact, that's the very reason He is asking the question. **He stirs the waters of the soul.** He troubles the heart and mind so that His miracle of transformation can take root and thrive; so, He can give you a Spirit-empowered faith which is unexplainable apart from Him.

Next, move towards the place you desire to be. Jesus told the man, "*Get up!*"

Now speak up with gratitude that demonstrates faith. Claiming the hope and promise of the Holy Spirit's "*living water*" flowing through you, touching others with His presence and power (see John 7:37–39).

PRAY & RESPOND WITH YOUR HEART -

"Jesus, thank you that You hear me! I yield to your grace and lean into your mercy. I receive by faith the promise and power of your Holy Spirit. You have met me beside these troubled waters of _____, and now I give you praise. Give me an 'unexplainable' life characterized by your Spirit., for I ask in Your name, Amen."

The lesson? *Jesus is at His best when you are at your weakest and worst.*

Welcome to the springs of living water, which will empower your victorious living. His name is Jesus.

February 10th – Read both John chapter 3 & 1 Peter chapter 1.
Notice in both chapters the term 'born again.'

The discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus has personal relevance to each person "*born of woman*," to each of us, to you, to me (John 3:1–5). It's this shared experience of being born again that makes us part of His family, a shared community of Jesus followers.

In His family, we, like Nicodemus, have been challenged to embrace Him as more than "teacher" but to receive Him as Lord. We, like Nicodemus, have been provided the opportunity to **add to our natural life, His supernatural life** and then to share Him with others.

It's this miracle of **being "Spirit-born"** that unites us by the Holy Spirit to both Jesus and to one another. It's this connection of the born-again that creates true

fellowship, a community of Spirit-empowered followers who embrace the imperative to “*let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Pause & Pray:

- Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to share your personal “born again” story.
- Celebrating that His Spirit, like the wind blows where it will, bringing the new birth to all kinds of people, and He wants to impart His good news through you.
- That your walk with Jesus would experience the freedom to be characterized less by the “natural” and more by the supernatural, allowing His Spirit to boldly champion Jesus!

February 11th - Read and Reflect on 2 Timothy chapter 3.

Reflecting on the chapter, Write down what you learn about the power and authority God’s Word.

“As many as are the promises of God, in Him they are ‘yes’ and Amen . . .” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Pause to give thanks for the certainty of His Word; *although, every man be found a liar, God remains faithful to fulfill His Word.*

Thank Him for the certainty of His Word and for the John 10:10 promise of life’s abundance as declared by the Son: *“I came to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect—life in its fullness until you overflow!”* (John 10:10).

“Father God, with grateful heart I cling to your promises for direction in life. Specifically, I think of Your Promise of _____ . Also, Hearing

Christ's promise of abundant life gives security and hope. Open the eyes of my heart to see your plans for prospering in whatsoever I do as I walk in the light of your Word, for I pray humbly in the name of Jesus, Amen."

February 12th – Read & Reflect on 2 Corinthians chapter 6.

Write down insights & impressions from your meditation on this chapter.

What might it mean in Verse 1 to "*receive the grace of God in vain*"?

Let's remember once again Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan:

"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" And he said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same'" (Luke 10:36–37).

What empowered the Samaritan to cross the road and minister sacrificial care to the hurting traveler? We are not told directly, but Christ's words in Matthew 10:8 provide insight as He said, "*Freely you received, freely give.*"

- As we observe the Samaritan's "freely giving" of his compassion and care, we are left to wonder about his "freely receiving."
- When and where had he been touched by Great Commandment care? How and through whom did he receive it?
- Had he in times past been the recipient of Christ's healing touch, His gracious acceptance at a point of failure, or possibly His support during a time of struggle? We are not told. But this one thing seems important: the Samaritan has not gotten over the wonder of being cared for himself.
- Never get over the wonder of His abundant care for you!

Herein lies the power to faithful stewardship. Paul exhorts us in 2 Corinthians 6:1 *not to receive the gifts of God in vain.* Had the priest and Levite taken the Master's care for granted? Tragically, it seems so.

Pray and Respond –

"Heavenly Father, Your compassion for me is so great when I consider the depths You were willing to send Your Son to rescue me. As I have freely received Your compassion, may I never get over the wonder of Your amazing love. May Your Spirit empower me to love _____ with Your enduring love. Fill me with Your Spirit to share the truth of the Gospel, for I pray in Jesus' name, Amen."

February 13th – Read again 2 Corinthians chapter 5 (the focal text of this sermon series)

Pause & Reflect on Verse 14 – *"For the love of Christ compels us, since we have reached this conclusion, that one died for all, and therefore all died."*

Reflect on Jesus' love to the 'woman at the well' in John chapter 4; In this text, we see the 'Love of Jesus' changing her and compelling her to tell someone about His love. Shockingly, Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah, but how did she deserve or merit such revelation? It was only by grace, unmerited, and so it is with you and me.

Reflect on what you have done or could do to deserve His forgiveness.

There's nothing that you could do to earn the gift of His Son? Every one of us must conclude: **It's only by His grace.** It is only God's unconditional love that provided the gift of Calvary and the forgiveness that is available to us.

Make a list of all the things you have done this week to cause God to love you less

...

Answer: NOTHING!

Make a list of the things you have done this week to cause God to love you more .

..

Answer: NOTHING!

"... to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

Now allow the Holy Spirit to touch your heart with thanks and gratitude, praise and wonder that God has freely given the gift of His Son and the empowering of His Spirit. **Share your praise and worship with the Lord:**

"Father, as I consider the unmerited gift and provision of your Son and your Spirit just for me, my heart is touched with _____. Overwhelm me with gratitude and empower me through the wonder of your grace that I might live a Spirit-empowered faith & share Your love with others, pleasing you in all things, for I pray humbly in Jesus' name, Amen."

February 14th – Happy Valentine's Day. Read & Reflect on one of the greatest love stories ever recorded in the Gospel of Luke chapter 15.

Here we discover afresh 'the love of Christ' which compels us. He loved sinners, tax-collectors and broken people; and He told the parables to illustrate what His love is like. Take special notice of the "older brother" who would not join His Father's celebration over his wayward brother who returned home.

Who are you most like in this story? – Are you like **The Father who rejoiced in reconciliation of a relationship with his wayward son?** Or like **the older brother who regretted the reconciliation of his Father with his wayward brother?**

Following Jesus and loving as He loves means becoming a person of grace. It means seeing and ministering to people's aloneness and needs, such as *support, encouragement, and acceptance*, rather than seeing and reacting only to sin. The power to see people as God sees them must come from God, and the power to give grace comes from experiencing God's grace. *"For it is by grace you have been saved . . ."* (Ephesians 2:8). *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

One of the things that will empower your ministry to hurting people is often recalling the abundant grace you have received from God, prompting gratitude in your heart.

Pause often to consider Calvary and your own fallenness and aloneness then whisper the words "*He did it for me.*" Never get over the wonder that you have been loved, and you'll be constrained in loving others. (2 Corinthians 5:21).

As we freshly encounter Jesus, we quickly recognize His grace is not just for us but for all. Secure in the wonder of His love, can you submit your life in a new way, a way that allows God to involve you so that others can experience—witness, observe, see clearly—the miracle grace of the Father?

Begin small. What humbling experience in your life can you submit to God right now to use for His glory?

Pray & Respond:

"Jesus, you have changed my life so that I can be a witness to others of your amazing grace. I'm especially grateful for how you keep loving me, even though I disappoint you at times by _____.

I ask that you use your grace in me for your glory. Send me to others with eyes to see them as you see them. I celebrate your love and grace toward me as your Spirit empowers my love of others, for I pray humbly in Your powerful name, Amen!"

February 15th – Read & Reflect on one of the greatest depictions of grace in all the Old Testament
2 Samuel chapter 9.

King David extended kindness to Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was crippled & a descendant of King Saul, who opposed David; and yet David extended grace and forgiveness based on a covenant that he made with Jonathan. Once he was an enemy without ability to walk, and now he is sitting at the King's table.

Can You identify with the Kindness of another King who extended grace to you as an enemy and unable to walk before God? What does this do to your heart? Express your heart of gratitude for the Kindness of King Jesus. (Reflect on Romans 5: 5 – 10).

Recall from 2 Corinthians 5: 14 that *"the love of Christ compels us."* Just consider 'the startling love of Jesus' is what compels us to 'startle' others with His love.

Throughout the pages of scripture, we're touched by the uniqueness of the God-man Jesus.

Christ's words were startling and His miracles amazing, but everything He said and did was meant to call attention to how He loved. Take a moment now to reflect on how Jesus loved people and how He startled them with His love.

- Jesus startled lepers by healing their bodies and bringing dignity to their lives, sometimes even touching them to heal them (Luke 5:12,13; 17:11–19).
- Christ startled a Samaritan woman when He broke all cultural conventions by asking her for a drink of water. Amid her shame and rejection, the Savior entrusted her with a conversation about eternal things (John 4:4–26).

Can you think of others?

Pause & Reflect – How have you experienced Jesus startling you with His love? (His comfort in time of grief, His provision in a time of need, His saving and transformation of your life, etc)

As you have 'freely received' Jesus' startling love, Who could benefit from you 'startling with love?' Ask the Lord.

"Abba Father, my heart celebrates how You startled me with love when _____ . Please show me who could benefit from Your Love through me. May Your Spirit empower me to startle _____ with Your love, for I pray in Jesus' name, Amen"

February 16th – Read & Reflect on the Gospel of Luke Chapter 23.

This entire chapter displays the generous heart of Jesus willingly giving His life as the perfect sacrifice, so that we may have eternal life by faith in Him. At any moment, He could have called out to the Father and legions of angels would be

dispersed to rescue Him from His trials and impending crucifixion; yet out of love, Jesus startles us by His love.

Barabbas was released, and Jesus was sentenced to die. In the same way, we are released from our just sentence for our sins, and Jesus died in our place. **Meditate on 1 Peter 3:18** - *"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit,"*

Hear His startling cries of love from the cross for those who betrayed, tormented, and rejected Him:

- *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34).
- Listen again as He speaks hopeful, accepting words to the thief by His side: *"Today you will be with Me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43).
- Then, "He said to his mother, *'Dear woman, here is your son,'* and to the disciple, *'Here is your mother'* from that time on, this disciple took her into his home" (John 19:26–27).

Pause now and reflect on the startling love of Jesus:

Jesus, you first startled me with love as you brought me into relationship with you. Pause to give Him thanks.

"Dear Lord, I give you thanks for loving me to yourself when . . ."

"Jesus, do it again! Keep it up! Dear Lord, open the eyes of my heart that I not miss the abundance and constancy of your startling love."

February 17th – Read & Prayerfully Reflect on 1 Peter chapter 3.

If we as Christ's ambassadors hope to adopt a relational apologetic, we must recognize that there is a price to be paid. The believers to whom Peter was writing in the 1st Century recognized this as they lost homes, possessions and loved ones to the Roman Emperor Nero's insane persecutions.

Sharing one's life with another person requires a deep, costly commitment because:

- Only as our walk matches our talk, will we have an effective, contagious witness for Christ.
 - Only as we impart His life and love in spite of others' faults and failures, will we give witness to a Christ who longs to accept us (Romans 15:7).
 - Only as we offer our time talents and practical help, will we give witness to the God who bears burdens (Galatians 6:2).
 - Only as we share of our gifts and resources when others are hurting and in need, will we give witness to a Christ *who is both acquainted with sorrows and grief (Isaiah 53:3) and moved with compassion for others (John 11:35).*

The supernatural and sacrificial love of God demonstrated through His people will draw others to Christ and bear fruit that remains. We must be willing to allow God to make us "*good stewards of His manifold grace*" (1 Peter 4:10).

PRAY & RESPOND –

"Abba Father, my soul delights in Your grace that causes my heart to marvel! You have freely given me Your unconditional love and acceptance. Comfort in my challenges... Peace in turbulent times... and so much more. May Your Spirit prompt me to freely give of Your manifold grace to _____ as a testimony of Your hope, for I pray in Jesus' name, Amen"

**February 18th – Read & Reflect on
Matthew's Gospel chapter 27.**

Once again 'enter in the sufferings of Jesus' to know Him. As you read this chapter pause at Verse 46 – "About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, '*Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?*' that is, '*My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?*'"

How might 2 Corinthians 5: 21 give insight into what Jesus was experiencing in that eternal moment when He cried out in alienation?

"He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Considering Jesus' words of amazing love from the cross, **What words might He desire to speak through you to others?**

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Consider again Christ's startling love at Calvary:

- Crying out as the forsaken scape-goat sacrifice, so that You may never be forsaken.
- Forgiving those who had wounded Him
- Accepting a thief before he changed
- Supporting His own mother, even while suffering excruciating pain and sacrificing Himself

Think of His loving initiative. *Remember His forgiveness, acceptance, and support.* Then pause to review the traffic patterns of your life. You have been placed there as His ambassador. He longs to share His love through you. He hopes to demonstrate His forgiveness and acceptance through you. He wants to communicate His support through you to others. This day, as His ambassador, ask the Holy Spirit to make real 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Who among your family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances could benefit from:

- *His forgiveness through you (no matter what their sin)?* _____

- *His acceptance through you (even before they change)?* _____

- *His support through you (even if they have not asked)?* _____

Share these responses and specific people with your partner or Life group. Pray together, asking the Spirit to remove hindrances to your witness and to empower the sharing of God's startling love through you.

February 19th – Read and Reflect on 2 Corinthians chapter 7.

Have you ever felt in a low place? We all have at one time or another, for even the apostle Paul experienced this. Pause and read once again on verses 5–6 :

"In fact, when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest. Instead, we were troubled in every way: conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the arrival of Titus."

Recall a time when you were discouraged, misunderstood, or "needy of love" in some way, but God brought another Jesus follower, family member, or friend to support and encourage you. How did this person reassure you, showing loving commitment to you so that you were not alone?

"I remember a time when _____ and God brought _____ into my life to _____."

Celebrate God's goodness to you through this one. Take a moment to send a text expressing your heart of gratitude for their caring support in your time of need. Throughout the day, think of the times when God brought people in your life to encourage, support and reassure you.

February 20th – Read & Reflect on Hebrews chapter 12.

Pause & Consider the words which invites us to tell someone the Good News of Jesus' love together in Verse 2 -

". . . let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us"

Years ago, during the United States Special Olympics, viewers were brought to tears during the 100-yard dash. When the starter's gun sounded, the runners, most of whom had Downs Syndrome, raced down the track. About midway through the race, one young boy stumbled and fell, sprawling on the track. The crowds who were present, and the millions who were viewing, looked on in sympathy. The spectators were given an unforgettable lesson in the power of community by the runners they watched that day. One by one, the young runners stopped running and went back to the fallen boy. After helping the boy

to his feet, the crowd of runners started again toward the finish line, crossing it together arm-in-arm.

Scripture speaks of how we are running this race of faith. It's not *a solo event*, but *a team relay* where each of us is being encouraged by others toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). Our Hebrews 12:1 text is clear. It does not say "let you run," but rather "*let us run!*"

- A significant measure of the hope God has in mind for you is to be received in relationship with others, but our self-reliance can hinder this blessing.
- A significant measure of the hope that others need is to be shared in relationship with us, but our self-focus can hinder this blessing.
- Just as hope is found in the person of Jesus and the truth of His Word, God's design is for hope to be freely given and received among His people.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18).

Pray & Respond:

"Father in heaven, I bless you for the Hope that you have freely given me in Christ. I pray that you would forgive me of _____ (self-reliance, self-focus, pride) that hinders me from freely giving this blessing to others. Open my eyes to know the hope of Your calling and share with others, for I humbly pray in Jesus' name, Amen!"

February 21st – Read & Reflect on the Gospel of John chapter 8.

Notice in John 8:12–30, Jesus asserts that *He is the light of the world and not from this world*. In His encounter with religious leaders, He speaks to His identity, background and purpose—and offers hope to those of us who follow Him.

"For I absolutely know who I am, where I've come from, and where I'm going" (John 8:14).

We are becoming more and more like him, being jointly formed into His image (Romans 8:29). Notice the certainty of Jesus concerning:

- Who I am: *"Then Jesus said, 'I am light to the world and those who embrace me will experience life-giving light, and they will never walk in darkness'"*

(John 8:12). The religious leaders found their identity in religious performance. This is sometimes described as the religion of “**who-do-ism**,” which occurs when *who I am* is equated with *what I do*.

- **Where I’ve come from:** *“I am from above. I am not from this world...”* (John 8:23). Jesus found security in the love of his Father.
- **Where I’m going:** *“You will know me as ‘I Am’ after you have lifted me up from the earth as the Son of Man. Then you will realize that I do nothing on my own initiative, but I only speak the truth that the Father has revealed to me. I am his messenger and he is always with me, for I only do that which delights his heart”* (John 8:28, 29).
- **Jesus defined his purpose in the context of a mutually dependent relationship with his Father—the Father reveals and the Son of Man yields.**
-

Pause and rejoice in your identity, uniqueness and purpose as a joint-heir of Jesus.

- **Rejoicing** in your identity as “His Beloved” (Song of Solomon 2:4; Ephesians 1:6)
- **Celebrating** how God has formed you and set you apart (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5)
- **Expressing appreciation** for your purpose to do that which delights God’s heart (Psalm 37:4)

Pray a prayer of gratitude for your identity, uniqueness, and purpose, allowing this joy to motivate all that you do and say as His follower:

“Lord, I appreciate how You have designed me for intimacy with You and called me to reflect Your love to other people.”

February 22nd – Read & Reflect on Genesis chapters 1 & 2.

As we teach through 2 Corinthians chapter 5, we discover ‘**reconciliation**’ is a major theme of this chapter. What relationships might God desire to reconcile in your life?

God created the heavens, the earth, and all that lived upon it. He built an amazing home for Adam to live in and called it “**good**.” It’s also important to

notice the first time God declared something was “not good.” God, the Creator, made this declaration about Adam’s relationships. Adam was alone, and his aloneness in relation to other humans was “not good.” God has the same declaration for our homes: It’s not good to be alone!

Listen carefully, as we consider **the pain of aloneness**, and you can hear the Father’s heart. Listen closely, and you may sense God’s concern for countless marriages and families:

- **God sees the wedding photos in our homes**, but His heart is broken because so many couples are married but still alone!
- **God sees children as gifts from the Lord**, but families are so busy with activity that many children are missing intimacy and are very much alone (Psalm 127:3).
- **The Father sees single adults** with powerful potential and incredible ability to live for His glory, but they are hindered by the loneliness of their hearts. (2 Timothy 2:22).

Your home has a purpose: God declared in Genesis 2:18, “*It is not good that man should be alone.*” To experience God’s intended abundance in life, marriage, family, and friendships, **aloneness has to be removed from our homes.** Aloneness could be defined as: *A sense that an important person in my life does not deeply know or care about me.* The experience of aloneness is painful; it’s debilitating. The antidote for aloneness is the experience of closeness and intimacy within relationships. We are created to need intimate relationships with God and with other people. In other words, ***we need both spiritual and interpersonal relationships.***

An individual can have a relationship with God, and not be spiritually alone, but still experience interpersonal aloneness. Looking back to Genesis 2, Adam was alone interpersonally but not alone spiritually. After Genesis 3 and Adam’s choice to sin, each of us now enters the world both spiritually and interpersonally alone. This aloneness can only be resolved through intimate relationships with God and other people found alone through Jesus’ death & resurrection.

Experience Scripture: “*Rejoice with those who rejoice . . .*” (Romans 12:15).

Reflect on God's provision of your spouse, children, family, friends, and the body of Christ—just for you. Your life has been blessed because of God's ample provision. How does this provision touch your heart?

For example: I feel humility and gratitude. I haven't thought much about God providing these relationships just for me. I'm grateful that He did!

Reflecting on the way that God has provided for our relationships often prompts gratitude in our hearts. How does your gratitude now motivate your care toward others?

For example: As I think about how God has provided significant relationships in my life, it makes me want to do a better job of providing for other people in my life, beginning at home.

Pause now and celebrate how God has provided for you through those who know and care for you. **Write out a prayer of gratitude in your journal.** Then ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your expressions of grace-filled love toward your spouse and children, family, and friends.

February 23rd – Read and Reflect on Romans chapter 5.

Zero your attention on Verse 11 and the **theme of reconciliation** once again. ". . . *We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation*" (Romans 5:11).

Let's be reminded that *before we were drawn into a personal relationship with God, we were separated from Him*. Because of our sin we had no friendship, no relationship, and no peace with God. But *because of His grace we were saved from our eternal separation from God. We were reconciled, brought back, and restored by His Spirit to express His life and love*.

Pause quietly before the Lord as He reminds you **what life would have been without Him**. Ask Him to remind you of His grace and how the Lord gifted you with the Holy Spirit and desires to express Himself through you.

- *"I'm especially glad that God brought me to Him because _____."*

- *"I rejoice in God's gift of the Holy Spirit because _____"*

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

(Galatians 5:22, 23).

Pause to consider what deepened expression of the Holy Spirit's fruit might be needed in your life. Might you need to express more of the Holy Spirit's love, joy, or peace? Patience, kindness, or goodness? Faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control?

Now, ask the Holy Spirit to express Himself through you in fresh ways and then "rejoice" together in claiming the promise of abundant fruit. The Lord smiles when He sees His people living out His Book, yielding to the Holy Spirit.

February 24th – Read & Reflect on the Gospel of Mark chapter 1.

Focus Jesus' invitation of Verse 17 – *"Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."* And compare to 2 Corinthians 5:20 *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us."*

Two powerful, simple words that change everything: **"Follow Me."** To follow Him is to avoid a broad road that many travel, leading to destruction —choosing instead a narrow road leading to life (Matthew 7:13–14).

Consider the blessing that Christ has invited you to follow Him— to "partner" with Him in kingdom purposes. He calls you, *"My Ambassador"* and I am sending You to represent my life, love, and light to ones in your daily traffic patterns.

Pause to consider that God's ultimate purpose for your life is to follow Him so that you can express His glory, which . . .

- allows you to receive of God's abundant blessings.
- enables you to bless others with His love.
- blesses God and brings Him pleasure.

What do these truths do to your heart? Might you be touched to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, confident that such an offering honors and glorifies Him?

"He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me" (Psalm 50:23).

Share with Him your response to the following:

Jesus, as I consider the wonder that my "following" you actually blesses You and others around me, my heart is filled with_____. (For example: My heart is filled with praise, awe, wonder, gratitude, love, joy. I cannot get over how much You love me, and I hope I never do!)

Pause to pray with your partner or Life group, giving God honor through your praise and thanksgiving that He's inviting you to follow. You have the privilege of joining Him in an eternal calling. *"Lord Jesus, from a grateful heart, lead me by your Spirit as I champion you as people's only hope as your ambassador, I pray humbly in Your name, Amen!"*

February 25th – Read and Reflect on Colossians chapter 1.

Write down thoughts and impressions the Lord is speaking to you from His Word.

Notice in Verse 20 the miracle of reconciliation occurs by "making peace through His blood shed on the cross." Celebrate the cost of Your reconciliation and the love God displayed in providing it for you.

Now lead your heart to accept His calling for you as a "minister of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5: 18 – 21).

Ultimately, our culture's gravest problems cannot be remedied by political, social, or economic means. We throw more laws, programs, and money at these problems every year, yet they continue to increase. **The solution to the alienation and aloneness of the human heart by sin can be found only in God's offer of reconciliation through his Son, Jesus.** We as Spirit-empowered disciples who embrace our identity and calling meaningful relationships with others are possible.

Christ has entrusted this ministry of reconciliation to us, His church. God is at work in us, calling a hurting world to Himself. He is the solution to the heartache of our world, and because *He is in us*, and *we are in Him*, we have the awesome ministry privilege of co-laboring with Him to see people reconciled to God and to one another.

Pause and Pray –

"Abba Father, I am in awe that You would allow Your Son to suffer on the cross for me to reconcile my hostile heart to You. As You have reconciled me to You, I receive your calling to become a minister of reconciliation. Please empower and send me by Your Spirit to _____. May I share the Good News of Your love, for I humbly pray in Jesus' name, Amen"

February 26th – Read and Reflect on John chapter 16.

Write insights about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a journal. Reflect on how He is active in your life.

As Ambassadors for Christ, we are to be moved by Spirit-empowered compassion – not counsel, criticism, or condemnation.

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).

"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion . . ." (Luke 10:33).

Critical to the ministry of reconciliation, we as *good Samaritans* prayerfully ask for the Lord's discernment and guidance. We must be convinced that the compassionate care of Christ in us is often more valuable than any advice we may give. Your eagerness to share words of advice or counsel will often hurry you past the pain and needs of others. Counsel may indeed be appropriate, but only after compassionate care.

Following the example of Jesus, we must respond with care to people in pain, trusting the Holy Spirit to deal with any wrong and sinful behaviors and attitudes.

Recall His acceptance of Zacchaeus before he changes (Luke 19:1–10) and His support of the woman caught in adultery before He exhorts her in right living (John 8:3–11).

You and I must see people as God sees them—persons in need of His saving and freeing grace to be sure, but also persons who are in pain, needy, and often alone, needing a grace-filled relationship with God and possibly you!

Our sharing of “truth” may indeed be appropriate, but always in love (Ephesians 4:15) and always free of condemnation (Romans 8:1, 33–34). The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts of sin, and He guards His job jealously, finding no need to share it with us!

Respond with Prayer –

“Heavenly Father, May I see people the way you see them, so I can love them the way You love them. Allow me to feel your compassion for the broken by sin and alone. I sense that _____ needs Your compassion. Help me not to be critical or condemning but love him/ her with Your startling love, for I humbly pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

February 27th – Read and Reflect 2 Corinthians chapter 1.

The God of all comfort comforts us in times of tribulations, so that we may comfort others in times of trouble. This reminds of Jesus’ words to His disciples in [John 13: 34 – 35](#) - *“So I give you now a new commandment: Love each other just as much as I have loved you. For when you demonstrate the same love I have for you by loving one another, everyone will know that you’re my true followers.”*

With these words, Jesus is both reminding the disciples of His past demonstrations of love and concern for them as well as foreshadowing His forthcoming display of perfect love at Calvary. Through His sacrifice, and through His continual caring involvement in our lives, *Jesus has loved us as well*. The more we recognize and receive His love, the more we can embrace our true identity as His beloved and our life-calling to share His love.

Consider what Scripture reveals about God’s love for us:

- He has poured out His love upon us through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).
- God demonstrated His love for us by sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).
- Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38–39).
- The love of Christ for us is infinitely great and surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:18–19).
- Because of His great love for us, God made us alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:4–5).

Jesus left behind exact instructions with the disciples as to the how the world was to know about Him. His intent was that the love the disciples declared they had for Him would be demonstrated in practical and observable love for others. In other words, *the world would believe in the love of God because His people truly loved one another.*

We are not simply people who believe Scripture's great doctrines about Christ; nor are we merely people who practice good and righteous behavior. Hopefully, we do believe right doctrine and practice right behavior, but **we must be careful not to think that our identity lies in either of these things.**

Pause to give thanks that our true identity is that we are ones who have been loved by Jesus. We are His beloved. Additionally, as part of our identity is the undeserved calling and privilege to be "*ambassadors for Christ*" and co-laborers with Him in love (2 Corinthians 5:20, Matthew 11:28–29).

"Lord Jesus, I embrace and celebrate my identity as your 'beloved.' I yield to your Spirit that you might share the life and love of Jesus through me."

February 28th – Read and Reflect on the Gospel of John chapter 20.

Zoom in on Jesus' words to His disciples in Verse 21 – "*As the Father sent Me, I am sending You.*" Hear with your heart Jesus speaking these words to You.

To be "sent" with the heart and mission of Jesus is to live as a servant, sharing His life, love, and the gospel.

Recall a time when you were prompted to serve a friend, family member, or even a stranger during a time of need. "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). When did God involve you in ministry to another person at their point of need and aloneness?

I recall when (who/what) _____ and God led me to _____.

(For example: I recall when several homeless people gathered near my house to stay warm. God prompted us to take them warm soup and blankets each day until the weather changed.)

Serving others with sensitivity and initiative is a critical part of our being "sent" to live and love as Jesus. Christ exemplified this when He noticed the many needs of hurting people around Him and took initiative to meet those needs.

Prayerfully Take notice of opportunities to be "sent" as a servant to others in your life:

- Look for the unnoticed people around you. Start a conversation. Ask them about the details of their lives.
- Offer to help someone with their groceries, offer your seat on the bus, or even buy a cup of coffee for the person next in line.
- Take care packages to the homeless in your town or volunteer to deliver meals to the elderly.

March 1st – Read & Reflect on Philippians chapter 2.

Ponder in awe at the Lordship of Jesus in verses 9 – 11.

Is this any less true today? Is Jesus any less Lord? Is He any less in control? Is He not interceding for you before the Father right now? *"He always lives to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25).

The ministry of Jesus is complete and absolute. His life spent on earth proved His character and forged the Redeemer's everlasting ministry as the One who now lives to bring our petitions, prayers, and praise before the Father's throne. It's true. He really does hold the whole world in His hand.

Imagine heaven! The very atmosphere is a sweet aroma of praise that raises like the cloud that Isaiah saw in his vision. Before the throne is One who looks like the Son of God! Standing. Beseeching. His voice rising and falling with faith, hope, and love for His church. *From the mouth of the One risen from the dead, your name is spoken. You. Jesus is interceding for you!*

Pause & Respond – What does this present reality of Jesus interceding for you do to your heart? Write a prayer to Jesus.

It is time to pray with new faith, friend. Let your request go to the One who intercedes before the Father.

- Make your request known, "*Jesus, I bring my need, petition, prayer, and request before you now. _____*"
- Begin to thank Him as He takes your petition and presents it before the throne.
- Close your eyes and imagine the scene in heaven as your Lord delivers your petition before Father God.

There is only one response adequate and that is praise to the One who lives to make intercession, for you. Let His kingdom come on this earth just like it is in heaven.

March 2nd - Read & Reflect on Romans chapter 10.

Over half the population of the world is yet to hear about the Good News of Jesus' love. Why? Reflect on [Verses 11 – 13](#) and write out your thoughts and impressions.

Hearing Jesus in the present is critical to sharing His good news with our neighbors and with the nations. His voice is not unclear or uncertain, but often, it's our hearing that is impaired. To follow Him faithfully requires freedom to hear.

Be still before the Lord and offer the same prayer that David prayed as you seek to put away the things that might hinder you from hearing God:

"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).

- **Search me, O Lord, for unresolved emotions that keep me from hearing You.** Free me from any guilt or condemnation, any anger or bitterness, any fear or anxiety. Free me to live each moment "in the present" with You. Speak now Your servant listens. I need to put away . . .
- **Search me, O Lord, for sins that hinder me from hearing You.** Free me from all moral filth, evil, malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Free me to have a cleansed heart and mind. Speak now, Your servant listens. I need to put away . . .
- **Search me, O Lord, for childish things that distract me from hearing You.** Free me from rationalizing my behavior and blaming others, from idle chatter and self-focus. Free me to practice personal responsibility before You and others. Speak now, Your servant listens. I need to put away . . .
- **Search me O Lord, for self-initiative that prevents me from hearing You.** Free me from my thoughts, my ways, my ideas, and my goals. May I instead embrace Your thoughts, Yours ways, Your ideas, and Your goals. Speak now, Your servant listens. I need to put away . . .

Pause and wait before the Lord. Listen as He reveals what needs to be put away. Now **yield to Him**, even though you may not fully know all that will be necessary:

"Lord I sense the need to put away _____ from my life. Even before fully knowing all that may be required, I yield to You. I long to hear You as I live life in present abundance. Remove this from my life, so that I can more freely hear what You reveal to me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

March 3rd – Read & Reflect on the prophet Isaiah chapter 6.

In a critical time, Isaiah experienced a fresh revelation of who God is and what He is doing. Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord. What was He calling the prophet to do? Could it be the same voice of the Lord is calling you today? Write a prayer of surrender to obey His voice in your journal.

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Prayerfully reflect on the Bible verses below. *Which one of these might you need to experience more often in your own life and relationships?*

- *"think more highly of others"*—Philippians 2:3
- *"be kind, tender-hearted, compassionate"*—Ephesians 4:32
- *"It is more blessed to give"*—Acts 20:35
- *"Encouraging one another"*—Hebrews 10:25
- *"Share each other's troubles and problems"*—Galatians 6:2

Pause to encounter Jesus in His Word, asking His Spirit to turn the written Word into the living Word through your life.

"And the sheep hear his voice" (John 10:3).

Meditate quietly on Jesus as the great Shepherd "sowing" the truth in your heart.

"Lord Jesus, what truth from Your Word might You desire for me to more often experience? Speak, Lord; I am listening."

Meditate on the five scriptures above and listen for the Spirit's leadership.

I sense it would be important for me to more often experience (which scripture) from above _____ or another scripture

Take time to reflect on this one verse. Pray together with a partner or Life group. Ask Jesus to make this verse more true of who you are and empower you to do the Bible.

Lord Jesus, lead me beyond merely knowing the truth. Please lead me into a genuine experience of truth. Replace knowledge with Your love that builds and edifies as Your truth is lived in my life. I sense that Your Spirit might want this verse to be particularly true of me in my relationship with

_____. *For I pray humbly in Jesus' name, Amen.*

March 4th – Read & Reflect on all 4 chapters of the book of Philippians.

Today begins the weekend of our Acts 1: 8 celebration when we rejoice in the *'partnership of the Gospel'* with our missionary friends. Through our partnerships, our church family is spreading the Gospel all over the world.

Pause and focus on this promise - "*And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19).

There is no better illustration of "*freely receiving*" and "*freely giving*" of His provision than Christ's miracle of feeding thousands. "*Freely you have received, therefore freely give*" (Matthew 10:8).

Pause quietly to picture Christ with eyes toward heaven, His hands open.

With one hand, He receives what is available—five loaves and two fish from a young lad.

With one hand, He gives freely and abundantly to the needs of all.

At times, this calling is *to receive* from His abundance. At other times, He calls you to discern and *give to the needs* of others. His inheritance toward you never runs out; His provision is without limit.

Quietly consider: *What relational needs like, encouragement, care, support, or affirmation might you need during your struggles?*

Yield to the Holy Spirit within you as the Giver of good gifts ministers to you.

Would you open your heart to receive these gifts from Christ, the One who provides?

Now pause to reflect on the relational needs of others in your life.

What acceptance, compassion, appreciation, support or respect might you freely give to someone this week?

Could you take the time to think of a specific name and then yield to the Spirit's prompting? As you share His life and love, others will find hope in the Jesus who provides, just like the hungry multitudes.

Pray like this:

"Lord Jesus, I sense that you would be pleased for me to share _____ with _____.

Prompt and empower me to do so by your Spirit. Amen."

March 5th – Read & Reflect on Hebrews chapter 4.

"For the word of God is living and active . . ." (Hebrews 4:12).

This scripture tells us that the Word of God is living and active, but what is the evidence that God's Word is truly "living" in my life? **What does it look like for the Spirit of God to take the Word of God and empower our experience of it?**

Taking this journey into a deepened, loving relationship with His Word is an experience because *any relationship must be experienced*. It involves more than knowledge and dutiful compliance. Our journey in loving the Lord and others through living His Word will change our lives in relevant, meaningful ways.

Consider some of the benefits of taking this journey toward a more intimate relationship with the God of the Bible:

- You will live life with an expectancy of actually encountering Him—the One who wrote the Book!
- You will experience freedom like never before. Your Christian life will move beyond duties and obligations, from "got to" to "get to." You will be constrained by the love of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14 kjv).
- You will be empowered to actually live what you believe. You will find that this power comes not from a doctrinal treatise or a code of conduct, but from a Person!
- You will express humility instead of pride. Your heart will not be able to fully grasp the wonder of how the Creator of the universe meets you in His Word.
- You will demonstrate vulnerability instead of judgment. You will be excited to share what God's Word is doing in you rather than pointing to the failures of others.

Pause quietly now with the Lord for Him to speak regarding one of the above “benefits” of daily living His Word; now pray, asking Him to make these real in and through your life. Write out your prayer in your journal.

March 6th – Read & Reflect on 2 Timothy chapter 4.

The apostle Paul is writing from a dungeon just before his death to his young son in the ministry, Timothy. He writes to him *“not to be ashamed... but to preach the Word.”* Paul is encouraging Timothy with the same boldness the Psalmist experienced:

- *“I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed” (Psalm 119:46), and*
- *“I will delight in your principles and not forget your word” (Psalm 119:16).*

Claim the promise of Psalm 119:16. Disciples delight in God’s Word, not forgetting how His truth has blessed them.

Consider a specific Bible verse that has become especially meaningful to you.

Then reflect on how God made it alive for you, leading you out of darkness into light.

- Maybe God used a particular Bible verse (like John 3:16) to draw you out of sin’s darkness into a new-birth encounter with Christ.
- Maybe God used a particular Bible promise (like Psalm 23) to lead you out of a valley of despair into “green pastures.”
- Maybe God used a specific Bible admonition (like Ephesians 4:31) to challenge you to rid yourself of some area of darkness so that you could walk with Him and hear His voice.

After identifying a specific Bible verse, write it out in your journal, expressing gratitude for the power, promise, and potential of the light of God’s Word.

Consider sharing that Bible verse with someone who could benefit.