

Living Transformed

A 3 WEEK DEVOTIONAL



LIVING TRANSFORMED DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

Creation - Passage: Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis 1:27 – *“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”*

If you’ve ever experienced an amazing sunset, breathtaking landscape, or the vastness of the ocean, then there have been times when you were likely taken aback by the beauty of creation. What’s crazy is that God created flowers, birds, and everything else in nature and yet that all pales in comparison to God’s ultimate masterpiece—you and me. When it comes to you and me, God created us in His image and “breathed into us the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). Out of all that God created, He created us specifically to be in a relationship with Him.

When we are in a relationship with God, He desires to transform our lives- just as He transformed the darkness into light, and the void into earth. He doesn’t force this change, He invites you into it. The Apostle Paul tells us how this transformation can occur if we are willing to offer ourselves to God. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God- this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform 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 12:1-2 We’ve written this devotional for you because we want to give you tools to cultivate your relationship with God and a picture of the power and purpose of living a transformed life.

We all have areas of our lives where we would like to see God transform. Maybe we need a change in our marriage, our relationships, our hurts, and our struggles. God has given us that opportunity! The question is whether you and I will take Him up on His offer and give ourselves to Him.

REFLECT:

What are some areas in your life where you would like to see God transform so you can live the life He created you for?

Have you tried to make changes in your life without God's help? Where did that leave you?
Did it work?

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

Sin - Passage: Genesis 3:1-10

Genesis 3:10 – *“The Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’”*

Have you ever seen a child who gets “caught with their hand in the cookie jar”? They tend to back away, eyes down, and try to hide from you. In the same way, we’ve done things in our lives where we feel like we need to back away from God and try to hide—it could have been a lie we’ve told, bitterness we’ve held, or a lustful thought that we’ve had. Adam and Eve hid from God because they expected punishment for their sin. But even though they deserved spiritual death, we see that when Adam and Eve sinned, God didn’t punish them; instead, He reached out by calling to them and asked where they were.

We have all sinned, but know that God doesn’t want to punish you. Instead, He has reached out to you and asked you to return to Him no matter what you have done. So when you sin, you have the choice to either back away from God, or to run to Him because He is the only one who can free you from your sin. God isn’t sitting in heaven with a scorecard in one hand and a lightning bolt in the other; He is a father who is waiting for His sons and daughters to turn to Him. That’s why throughout the Bible, we see that God promises to save mankind from the consequences of sin (Genesis 3:15).

REFLECT:

Adam and Eve ignored God’s boundaries, and as a result, sin (which is willful disobedience to put ourselves in place of God) entered the world. Are there places in your life where you are ignoring God’s boundaries?

Do you have a tendency to run away from God when you sin or to run to God? Today decide that no matter what sins you've committed that you will run to God instead of away from Him.

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

Jesus - Passage: Romans 5:6-11

Romans 5:8 – *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

In our culture, we are evaluated by our performance. It starts at a young age for most of us. Some of us remember the rewards for a good “report card,” while others remember scoldings for a bad report card. Some of us have memories of achieving in athletics, while others not so much. As adults, we are rewarded in our jobs through promotions, pay raises, positions, and praise. If we under-perform, the opposite is true.

Paul tells us that our performance is not what led our Heavenly Father to make way for us to have a relationship with Him; as a matter of fact, good deeds cannot remove sin. The reality is that while we were “still sinners,” Jesus died for us. God showed us mercy even though we had not earned it. This thought is difficult for us to grasp because we live in a society where we get what we earn or do not earn.

As you are beginning your faith journey, always remember that God does not base your relationship on your “good” performance. Relationship with God depends on our faith in Jesus, who lived the sinless life we could not, died the death we deserved and raised to live in victory over sin. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” This verse is one of the most amazing passages in the Bible because it reminds us the love of God is greater than our lack of performance. We know that ultimately through our relationship with Jesus, we have a relationship with God. There will be days when we fail, but we have to remember what began our relationship with God and what will sustain it is His love for us, through Jesus Christ.

REFLECT:

Have you ever tried to repair your relationship with God with good performance? How does knowing that you don’t need to earn your way to God change your motivations in doing the right things?

Have you personally accepted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins? If not, why not?

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

Repentance - Passage: Acts 17:24-31

Acts 17:30 – *“In the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.”*

Road trips can be an exciting journey until you realize you’re lost. Before you are made aware that you are way off course, the trip is probably smooth sailing. Few things are more frustrating than being lost. It’s a waste of time and energy. Sometimes we are given a bad map, or maybe the GPS isn’t up to date. Many times we simply were not paying attention. One way or another, we are not headed in the direction we need to go.

When we head in the wrong direction, our only solution to remedy the situation is to stop and change our course. We must turn from the direction we were previously headed and go in a new direction.

When we become a follower of Christ, we have a decision to make. God calls us to turn from our old ways of life that were full of sin, and God then calls us to turn to Him and to follow His ways of life. This means turning away from things we used to think were okay. Some of those things we need to turn from may be: selfishness, bitterness, anger, lust, jealousy, and greed. Also, there are things in our lives that we used to reject that we should begin doing in obedience to God. Some of those things we may need to turn to are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control.

REFLECT:

Are there any things in your life that God is asking you to turn from today?

What are the things in your life that you need to turn to today? Maybe these are character traits (like love, joy, peace and patience), habits, or relationships.

WEEK 1 | DAY 5

The Holy Spirit - Passage: John 14:15-21

John 14:16-17 – *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth.”*

We’ve all been in situations where we need help. Maybe we were learning to walk, trying to open a door when our hands were full, or were at work and overwhelmed; there have been times when we couldn’t do it alone. In our lives right now, we could likely list off places where we need help in marriage, relationships, work, or parenting. Our need for help extends into our spiritual life as well. Whether you’re fighting temptation, helping someone in need, or working on your marriage, we all could use help to grow. That’s why God hasn’t left us alone to do all of these things on our own. He provided for us His Holy Spirit to help.

God gives us His Holy Spirit so we can communicate with Him, and He can communicate with us any time. The Holy Spirit can speak to us through our quiet times in prayer, when we’re reading our Bible, and can also use other people and even the circumstances that we are going through in our lives. Whether we are down or celebrating, the Holy Spirit is always relaying our feelings and concerns to Jesus. The Holy Spirit’s job is to live in us and keep us connected to Jesus at all times. Don’t worry about holding anything back from Him. It makes Him smile to hear from you.

God also offers peace through the Holy Spirit, so when we are feeling down, upset, or overwhelmed, all we have to do is ask for His help. God will give His peace to us so that we are comforted in a way that we have never felt before. It is a fantastic feeling to experience.

If you have just opened the door and let Christ into your life, all this is yours. It will take time to develop the relationship, learn to communicate, and experience these gifts, but all this is waiting for you to enjoy through the Holy Spirit. Begin today.

REFLECT:

What are those areas in your life where you need God to help you?

Are there areas of your life where you are prone to sin? Is there a way you can partner with the Holy Spirit to set yourself up for success by avoiding those areas altogether?

WEEK 1 | DAY 6

Continuing Your Faith Journey - Passage: Matthew 4:18-22

Matthew 4:19 – *“Come, follow me” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”*

If you have small children at home, then you’ll know that one of the great things about having little ones is that they adore everything you do. For example, sons try their hardest to fix things around the house, pick up heavy packages, or help their moms out by doing a little cleaning here and there because they’re following their dad’s lead. There may come a day when that may not be the case, but while they’re still young, it is fun to watch.

Similarly, a relationship with Jesus is the idea of “follow.” Jesus called the early disciples by saying, “follow me.” For the next three years of Jesus’ ministry, they followed His every step. They listened to His teachings, watched how He interacted with people and saw Him do miraculous works. The more they followed, the more they learned. After Jesus rose from the grave and ascended to heaven, it was now the disciples’ turn to take His message to the world. They got the chance to put into action all they had learned while they were “following” Him.

Each day you have the opportunity to follow Jesus. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are a picture of the life of Jesus. As we get in the Bible daily, we find power and direction for life. If we choose to surround ourselves with others who are “followers,” we find strength from the community of believers. When we pray daily, we can ask God to give us the wisdom and heart to see life the way that Jesus did. Just like children, we adore our Savior and strive to follow His example. Each day, remember at the heart of faith is the word “follow.”

REFLECT:

Think about all the decisions you have to make today. Are there any decisions where you need to strive to follow Jesus’ example?

Is there a community of believers in your life where you know that you grow when you are around them? List them out. What do you need to do to be around them this week?

WEEK 2 | DAY 1

The Bible reveals Who God is and What He Has Done Passage: John 13:1-17

John 13:13-14 – *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”*

If you’ve ever had someone who has done something extraordinarily kind for you, you’ll know that it fundamentally changes the way you look at other people. Maybe it was someone who helped you through a hard time physically, financially, or spiritually—but no matter what, it makes you reassess the way you treat others.

Extraordinary kindness is what we see Jesus extending in this passage of Scripture. During those days, only the lowest servant would wash all of the feet of those who entered the house. None of the disciples were willing to take that lowly position. So what does Jesus do? He gets up—even though out of everyone, He deserves glory—and washes the feet of His disciples. Jesus describes His ministry when He says, “For even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Jesus’ example shows us that God is a God of grace, love, and service. That act of kindness ought to change us; it ought to leave a mark on us and make us more grace-filled, love-filled, and serving. There are those around us who God has placed in our path so that we can follow Jesus’ example and serve them in extraordinary ways. The Bible shows us that God is a God of extraordinary grace, love, and service, and we should be too.

REFLECT:

Since Jesus extended His grace, love, and service to you, how do you think you can best thank Him for those gifts today?

Who is someone in your life today that you can show extraordinary grace, love, and service to?

WEEK 2 | DAY 2

The Bible Tells Us About Our Reconciliation to God Passage: Luke 15:11-32

Luke 15:20 – *“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”*

Have you ever had an experience where you expected the worst, but received the exact opposite? Maybe it was getting “let off” of a speeding ticket. Maybe it was a teacher in school, giving you another day to complete the homework or retake a test. Perhaps it was showing up late to meet a friend, and they greeted you with a smile rather than anger. It could have been the gas company giving you a few extra days to pay your bill (all right, maybe I’m dreaming here). When you have an experience like this you can exhale with relief at the reality of what just happened.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells us about a son who walked away from his father and family. He then squandered his life in reckless living and years later returns to his father expecting the worst. But instead, he experiences a father who runs to him, hugs him, kisses him, and restores him. Can you imagine the relief the son felt? At that moment, all of his failure, his embarrassment, and his pain melted into the arms of his father. That’s grace, and that’s a picture of the story of reconciliation in the Bible.

Throughout the Bible we see the word “grace.” Grace is something we all need and something our heavenly Father offers through His Son Jesus. Grace is not getting what we deserve. We all deserve that “spiritual speeding ticket.” Why? Because we have all sinned. But God doesn’t give us what we deserve; He gives what only He can provide—grace, His undeserved favor. When we experience that grace, we, like the son in Luke 15, have this collective exhale of relief and gratitude. Because of grace, we can rest in God’s peace as we find ourselves in a right relationship with Him.

REFLECT:

Many people never “return home” to the Father because they fear how God might receive them. They fear embarrassment, rejection, or punishment. Sometimes we hold back areas of our lives or refuse to confess things to God because of our fear. The big question for you: Are there areas of your life that you have kept from God because of fear?

Take a few moments to consider those areas of your life that you haven't "brought home" to God. One by one, confess them to Him, ask His forgiveness, and then experience the grace only your loving heavenly Father can provide.

WEEK 2 | DAY 3

The Bible Provides Instructions for a Full Life Passage: Matthew 5:21-48

Matthew 5:21, 22 – *“You have heard that it was said...But I tell you.”*

Have you ever been to the gas station to fill up your tank and realized you didn't have enough money to fill it all the way? Maybe you only had \$10, so you put the gas in your car, jumped back in and started it up, but as you watched the gauge only moved up to just over a quarter tank. Ugh. But hey, that's what you could afford. You wanted a full tank, but you put in what you had. Of course, we'd rather see our gauge on "full," but that's not always possible. So we settle for a quarter or a half tank.

Life is like that. We all want a full life. But many of us experience much less. In the passage above, Jesus gives us keys to a full life — and it looks difficult to achieve! He says things like, "You have heard it said, do not commit murder. But I tell you, do not be angry with your brother because that is murdering in your heart." The first statement is like putting \$10 of gas in the tank. The second part is filling the tank to the top. The first part is life. The second part is life to the full. Every time Jesus says, "You have heard it said ... (fill in the blank) ... But I tell you (fill in the blank)" He is giving us the key to move from life to a full life.

Now here is the catch: We only have \$10. We can do the first part on our own. The second part we can only do through the power of God in us. We can "not murder" by our will-power and strength. But we need God to help us not have anger towards our brother. We can "not commit adultery" by our choice, but we need God to give us the strength to guard our hearts.

The key to a full life is the power of God living in you to help you do what you cannot do on your own. God doesn't raise the standard of a full life without providing the avenue to experience the full life. The full life comes when we live our lives through the power of His Holy Spirit in us.

REFLECT:

Are there things in your heart that you need the power of God to conquer? Is there lust that is growing? Is there anger that is simmering? Are there sinful thoughts that are brewing? When not arrested, these thoughts give birth to actions and destroy a full life.

Take a few moments and ask God to “fill your tank.” Ask God to give you the strength to change you from the inside out. What are the areas of your life that you need God’s Holy Spirit to help you conquer so you can experience a full life?

WEEK 2 | DAY 4

We Engage the Bible - Passage: Psalm 1

Psalm 1:2 – *“Blessed is the one ... “whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.”*

At some point in our lives, we look back over the years and see how much we’ve changed. That change might be for the better or maybe even for worse. However, we all want to look back on our lives and see growth. We want to see that we’ve made a positive difference in the lives of those around us. We want to see how much we have grown closer to God. We want to see that our lives matter.

Psalm 1 tells us the difference between the person who looks back on their lives with regret and those who look back on their lives with satisfaction. Those who look back on their lives with regret will find that throughout their lives, they compromised on their values. They “walked with the wicked,” then they “stood in the way of sinners,” then they “sat in the company of mockers.” They’ll find that they ended up doing things in their lives they never imagined they would do.

However, the person who looks back on their life with satisfaction has a different story. They meditated, dwelled, mulled over the Bible, and what they know God has spoken in the Bible. And because of their faithfulness to God and obedience to what He says, they found themselves in a place where God “watches over their way” so that “everything they do prospers.”

We all make decisions every day that determine how we will look back on our lives. Will we look back with regret? Or will we look back with satisfaction? Every decision that we make points us in a direction that will lead us to a destination.

REFLECT:

Are there decisions that you are making today that are pointing you in a direction that’s leading to the wrong destination? What can you do about those decisions?

What is something you can begin to do that will lead you to reflect on your life with satisfaction?

WEEK 2 | DAY 5

Be Engaged by the Bible - Passage: James 1:19-27

James 1:22 – *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

Did you know you can know the right thing to do but still do the wrong thing? We’ve all had times in our lives where we’ve been told not to touch something, but you know what we want to do as soon as we’re told not to? Touch it! In so many areas of our lives, God has set up boundaries that we shouldn’t cross, and we know we shouldn’t cross them—it’s just that we do because we want to do what we’re told not to do. God gives us the Bible so that we can be changed. The ultimate purpose of the Bible is that we know Jesus Christ and become like Him in our actions, attitudes, thoughts, speech, and values. We are to live out the words of the Bible.

James 1:22 tells us, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” Action is required when reading God’s Word. It is simply not enough to read it; we must do what it says. The result of obeying God’s Word is life transformation. The Bible changes our character and transforms our lives. As you read the Bible, find out what it has to say to you and do it.

For most of us, our problem with the Bible is not that we try to understand difficult passages. Our real problem is with obeying the passages we do understand. We let God’s Word go in one ear and out the other without applying its principles and practices to our lives.

Our culture has shaped us to be talkers. It’s easier to talk about doing something than to actually do it. When it comes to God’s Word, we need to turn down the volume of our voices and amplify our actions. James challenges us not only to hear God’s word but to be doers as well. Doers are people who inspire, influence and make a difference. Doers are people that realize that God’s Word demands action.

REFLECT:

Have you ever ignored what you are sure God called you to do? What was the result?

Is there something in your life that you've found that you are more a "talker" than a "doer"?
How can you, with God, make a change so you can walk in obedience?

WEEK 3 | DAY 1

Praise - Passage: Psalm 103

Psalm 103:2-5 – *“Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits ...who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.”*

Often we get caught up in life worrying about ourselves. We get caught up worrying about our work and our next promotion. We get caught up worrying about our family and providing for them. We get caught up worrying about how we need to feed the dog, make supper, mow the lawn, and make it to soccer practice on time. In our lives, many different things are claiming our attention, and if we're not careful, we could find ourselves being unthankful and discontent. When we're caught up in ourselves, we forget that the God of the Universe knows us intimately and cares for us deeply. We forget that everything good comes from Him and that He deserves our praise.

There are things that we take for granted every single day that others would feel so grateful for receiving. We have the ability in America to go to the supermarket and pick up whatever food we need. We don't have to worry about where our next meal will come from. We have houses or apartments where we have a roof over our heads and heat or air so that we are comfortable year-round. We have people who have sacrificed their lives so that we have the freedom to vote and have freedom of speech.

Every good thing that we have received in life is a gift from God. James 1:17 says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” That's why we praise God. He is worthy of our praise and thanks because He has given us so many good things from what seems like the most trivial thing (the ability to feed yourself) to what seems like the most amazing thing (your opportunity to live in a free country). And when we praise God, we join with the rest of creation, as David says, “Praise the Lord, you, his angels ... Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts ... Praise the Lord, all his works ... Praise the Lord, my soul” (Psalm 103:20-23).

REFLECT:

What are ten things that you can thank God for today? Write them down and find someone you can share with about how thankful you are for them.

Take some time to look back on your life. Can you see where God was working on your behalf, and you didn't realize it at the time, but now you are grateful for how He was taking care of you?

WEEK 3 | DAY 2

Repent - Passage: Psalm 51

Psalm 51:1-2 – *“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.”*

We’ve all made mistakes in our lives that could go down in record books for ultimate fails. Sometimes we may feel like we are all alone in how bad we’ve messed up and that God can’t forgive us for what we’ve done. However, in the Bible, we see a man who sinned against God, and yet because of his response to sin was still called a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). Let’s explore how that can happen.

In this passage, David found himself having sinned greatly before God. We see the story in 2 Samuel 11:1-12:14: One day, David was enjoying the sun on his deck when he saw a beautiful woman on the roof next to him. David then takes the woman for himself, and she becomes pregnant. There’s a problem, though she’s married. So, David tries to fix his problem by bringing her husband back from the battlefield, thinking that he will be with his wife so no one will ever know. However, the man refuses to be with his wife since the other men in battle can’t be with theirs. David then fixes this whole situation by killing the husband and marrying the woman.

There are many parallels to what David did in this situation and what we do when we sin: (1) We are tempted to sin, (2) we sin, (3) we try to hide our sin, and (4) we hurt ourselves and those around and our relationship with God is damaged.

However, that’s not the way that David’s story ends. David is told that he wronged this woman and her husband, and he repents (turns from his sin) and returns to God. That’s when he writes this Psalm asking God to have mercy on him and wash his sin away. David wasn’t called a “man after God’s own heart” because he never sinned but because of the way he responded to sin.

REFLECT:

Have you ever felt like you’ve sinned so severely that God could never forgive you? How does reading about David change your view?

If there is a sin that has created distance between you and God, take some time and pray Psalm 51 to God and ask Him to have mercy on you according to His unfailing love.

WEEK 3 | DAY 3

Ask - Passage: Luke 11:1-13

Luke 11:9 – *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

In our culture we like immediate results. If a webpage takes too long to load, we're upset at our web service. If we're waiting in traffic, we're impatient to get to where we're going. If we don't receive next-day shipping, we think it takes too long. And it's easy to see our spirituality in the same way. If God doesn't answer our prayers on our timeline, then we get impatient. However, there are some things in life where we cherish the growth process. With our children we want them to stay young so that they will be around for longer. With relationships we are excited to get to know someone better over a period of time. With these situations it's easier to want to be patient. Prayer is building a relationship, something that takes time but you are willing to make that happen because the reward of knowing God is worth it to you.

This passage in Luke talks about how we must persevere and be patient in our prayers. God desires to give His children good things; it's just that He wants to be with us throughout that process. Every prayer that we pray brings us closer and closer to God. God wants you to come to Him, that's why He says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:9).

So, are you weary? Are you impatient? Are you frustrated with how long God seems to be taking? We have the opportunity in those times to either become frustrated with our prayer life or to push through and persevere, knowing that God has something greater in store for us. Imagine what God could and would do if we would only commit to asking Him until He comes through.

REFLECT:

Is there something for which you've grown weary of seeking, knocking, or asking? What is it? How can you commit to persevering with patience in prayer today?

Are there specific things that you are asking God to do? Today, take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. For one column, write "Prayers" and for the other, "Answered Prayers." Now, commit to pray for those things in the "Prayers" column until you receive an answer and then write that answer in the "Answered Prayers" column.

WEEK 3 | DAY 4

Yield - Passage: Mark 14:32-42

Mark 14:36 – *“Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’ ”*

In the military, it is not the privates in the infantry who decide where they are going to go, what they are going to do or the maneuvers that they are going to use. It’s generals, who have the overall picture, and ultimate goal in mind who make decisions for the infantry. Oftentimes in life we wonder why God isn’t giving us everything that we always ask for, and we must realize that we’re not the people who have all the information—God is. God knows how what we are asking for will affect us and those around us.

Mark dives into the midst of Jesus’ struggle as He is in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knew that this time had come where He would suffer and die. We see into the secret prayer life of Jesus in the middle of the most difficult situation He had to face in His life on earth. Jesus very well could have, at that moment, decided that He was not going to die—that it wasn’t His will and therefore wasn’t God’s will. But instead, Jesus yielded to God’s plans and desires. Jesus knew that God had something greater in mind than just what Jesus saw at that moment. God was the general who saw all that would happen because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and at that moment, Jesus was the infantry—the man on the ground. So, Jesus, at that moment, decided it wasn’t what He wanted to do that He would do, but what God wanted.

There are times in all of our lives where we get focused on what we want, and it’s easy to forget that God is orchestrating things that are more amazing than we could ever imagine. When we want what we want, it’s difficult to say yes to God instead of yes to ourselves. However, we will find that God’s “thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways (His) ways ... As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are (His) ways higher than your ways and (His) thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

REFLECT:

Have there been times in your life where you wanted your way but yielded to God, and His way was more amazing than you ever would have imagined?

Are there places in your life where you resist yielding to God's way instead of yours? Take some time to pray through those areas and ask Him for His strength to do what He's calling you to do.

WEEK 3 | DAY 5

Persistence in Prayer - Passage: Luke 18:1-8

Luke 18:1 – *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”*

Have you ever wondered whether prayer actually accomplishes anything? Sometimes it can be discouraging when we pray for the same thing over and over again, only to feel as if no one is listening. It’s encouraging in moments like these to remember that Jesus Christ Himself spoke to this very issue.

God answers our prayers even if it’s in ways that we don’t expect. God answers every prayer in one of four ways. First, God can answer, “No.” It may be that what you are asking for is not something that would be best for you. Second, God can answer, “Grow.” Perhaps you need to focus more on your spiritual growth before He answers your prayer. Third, God can answer, “Slow.” When God says, “Slow,” you’ll receive what you’re asking for but that you need to be patient. Fourth, God can answer, “Go.” When you hear, “Go,” God is giving you the blessing of a “yes” to your prayer.

It’s interesting times we’re living in when we get discouraged because we pray for something on Monday, but we don’t have the answer by Thursday. Could it be that in those in-between moments, when we’re praying like crazy for something and waiting for the answer, that the Lord is accomplishing His most important work in us as He says “grow” or “slow”? If you’ve been praying for something for a while, but you haven’t received an answer, don’t give up! God may be answering your prayer with a no, grow, slow, or go.

REFLECT:

Have you ever been prayed for something, and you’ve received a no, grow, or slow answer? In that situation, did you ever realize that the answer was best for you at that time?

What are you praying for today that you're discouraged about? Commit to being persistent in your prayers.
