



THE

WAY

This journal belongs to:

Full Name

If found, please return to

Many of the things we need to keep alive in our lives never come from rushing or being busy; they grow from rest, in the daily intentional pauses that reconnect, heal, and align us again.

It is those little pauses that have the power to give us the strength, courage, and faith to face our days.

That is the purpose of this devotional and the next 21 days: to take you to a daily time of rest and renewal where each page will be a discovery of God's Word, a reminder of His purpose, His love, and the opportunity to invite Holy Spirit to walk with you in every moment of your day.

Our wish is that in these next few days, you find a daily rhythm to pause, read, write, pray, and in doing so, give yourself the gift of living a life in the "plural" where you do not live alone. Holy Spirit is in you, with you, and on you; so it is no longer "me" but "we" (Holy Spirit and I) in everything you do, and in that walk, we have no doubt that you will affirm and clarify your convictions, which are the ones that will keep you standing and firm, no matter the stages or circumstances of life.

We want to also continue to use the S.O.A.P method of Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. Fasting is a powerful way to draw near to God, and as we engage in this spiritual discipline, we will also delve into the Word of God to deepen our understanding of His heart. Each day, you will encounter a Scripture passage, reflect on it using the SOAP method, and spend time in prayer.

Our prayer is that this is not just another devotional, but the beginning of a deep friendship with Holy Spirit, a new beginning, a daily appointment awaited by you where each pause will lead you to move forward, grow, affirm your faith, and your convictions in Jesus so that together we continue to learn to live a life God's way and begin to abide in His presence and make your heart HIS home. For God to occupy every space of your heart.

Welcome to this Journey!

ABOVE

Romans 12:1-2 (MSG)

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Have you ever asked yourself, “Who or what am I becoming?” Our default self often leans toward the belief that we alone plot our course, captain our ship, or control our destiny. It is common for our inner self to aspire to lead rather than to follow. We hear statements like, “You do you,” “Be true to yourself,” or “Speak your truth.” However, these verses encourage us to submit every moment of our life to Him, a mindset that runs counter to our culture. As followers of Jesus, we are called to live a life following Him because only through Jesus can we become who we are meant to be and who He has destined us to be.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus inviting people to apprentice under Him and step into a whole new way of living by being transformed. John Mark Comer says, *“This transformation is possible if we are willing to arrange our life around the practices, rhythms, and truths that Jesus Himself did, which will open our lives to God's power to change.”* In other words, we can be transformed if we are willing to follow Jesus. THE WAY!

HOW TO S.O.A.P

You'll need three items each day:

1. Bible
2. Pen
3. Journal

S - Scripture

Open your Bible to your reading for the day. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

What verse stood out to you?

O - Observation

What do you think God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you.

What is God saying to you?

A - Application

Personalize what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today.

How can you apply it today?

P - Prayer

This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or even a prayer for a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.

Ask God to help you use what you've learned.

HOW TO PRAY

The ACTS Model

A - ADORATION

Tell God how much you appreciate Him.

This is a great way to begin your prayer time. Tell God how much you appreciate him. Express your love for him. Praise his power and majesty. You should never run out of praise.

C - CONFESSION

Tell God where you have fallen short.

Tell God where you have fallen short. Be specific. Thank him for the forgiveness you have in Christ and ask for help and strength to turn away from future temptations.

T - THANKSGIVING

Express gratitude for what He is doing in your life.

We have so much to be thankful for. Thank God for his love, his faithfulness, his patience. Express gratitude for what he's doing in your life.

S - SUPPLICATION

Share your desires with God.

Share your desires with God, no matter how big or small they may seem. Nothing is too big or too small for God. He cares about every detail of your life. Pray for your own needs and for the needs of others.

HOW TO FAST

HOW TO BEGIN

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage, or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray daily and read the Bible.

PREPARING SPIRITUALLY

Be honest with God. Let him know where you need help. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Invite him to challenge and change you over the course of your fast. Watch as he expands your vision and strengthens your faith.

DECIDING WHAT TO FAST

Fasting is about giving something up for a time in order to seek God more deeply. It's not about losing weight, it's about gaining vision! The type of fast you choose is up to you. Whether you choose to follow biblical examples and give up food or apply the same principle to other areas of life like TV or social media, we believe that as you remove distractions you will hear from God more clearly.

DECIDING HOW LONG

Twice a year at Community Church, we set aside 21 days to fast and pray together. You're invited to come on the journey! Feel free to adapt the period of time to what is healthy for you. Fasting is not an obligation, it's an opportunity to go deeper in our walk with God. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. If it's your first time fasting, decide what you can commit to and go for it!

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God.



week 1
GOD'S PLAN

week 2
GOD'S INVITATION

week 3
OUR RESPONSE

Week 1

GOD'S PLAN

MONDAY

Can I Save Myself?

TUESDAY

Independent by ~~Birth~~ Sin

WEDNESDAY

My Way or God's Way

THURSDAY

The Better Plan

FRIDAY

A Disciple of Jesus

SATURDAY

The Future Promise

SUNDAY

Sunday Sermon

MONDAY
CAN I SAVE MYSELF?

ROMANS 3:23

“The most basic distortion of God’s truth is the lie that we can save ourselves.”

-R.C. Sproul

The question of whether we can save ourselves has been at the heart of human struggle since the start. The idea that salvation, whether from sin, suffering, or despair might be something we can achieve through our own efforts is not new. This struggle reveals itself in our daily actions, as we strive for perfection, seek validation, and try to overcome our flaws with our willpower. Yet, as profound as our efforts may seem, the Bible makes it clear: *we cannot save ourselves*.

From the earliest stories of humanity, we see the tendency to try and "fix" ourselves. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve, after sinning, attempted to cover their shame with fig leaves. Their attempt to fix things themselves didn't work, so God had to step in and help them. This pattern persists in human behavior: when faced with our brokenness, we often respond with pointless efforts to mend ourselves. Today, this manifests in different ways. People pursue success, wealth, and recognition, believing these achievements will fill the void within. Others turn to moral or religious practices, hoping doing good things will make up for their mistakes. While self-improvement and morality have their place, they cannot address the deeper issue of sin that separates us from God. The Bible makes it clear, salvation is not something we can earn. Ephesians 2:8-9 states, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...” This truth humbles us, reminding us that no matter how hard we try, we can’t close the gap between us and God the Father. If we cannot save ourselves, then what hope do we have? The answer lies in Jesus. John 14:6 records Jesus’ words: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” As Tim Keller writes in *The Prodigal God*, “*The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.*” This dual reality, our unworthiness and God’s grace is difficult for many to embrace but reminds us that only in Christ we can be found and saved. Can I save myself? is ultimately answered with a resounding NO. We are powerless to overcome sin and death on our own. But the beauty of the gospel is that we don’t have to. Jesus has already done what we could never do, offering us salvation as a free gift. All we have to do is receive it.

To Meditate:

-How can I cultivate a deeper sense of dependence on Christ, recognizing that I cannot achieve true fulfillment apart from Him?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

TUESDAY

INDEPENDENT BY BIRTH SIN

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

“Sin is the creature’s
declaration of
independence
from the Creator.”
-R.C. Sproul

Throughout history, humanity has struggled with a deep desire for independence. This desire to find our own way and rely on ourselves isn't necessarily negative when seen as a part of personal growth or taking responsibility for our lives. However, when it manifests as a rejection of God's authority and guidance, it becomes a reflection of the sin nature that has plagued us since the fall. The Bible makes it clear: *humanity's quest for independence from God leads to spiritual ruin. Every act of sin, whether intentional or unintentional declares that we prefer our autonomy over God's rule.* The first act of human rebellion came from a desire to be independent of God. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's command, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their motivation was not mere curiosity but the temptation to “be like God, knowing good and evil”. In seeking autonomy, they damaged their intimate relationship with their Creator. This pattern of rebellion has continued ever since. Our daily lives often bear the marks of this struggle for independence. Consider how often we: Rely on our own understanding, prioritize our desires over God's Will or we ignore God's Word. While sin separates us from God, Jesus bridges the gap. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection provide the only means of reconciliation with God. His sacrifice paid the penalty for our sin, and we receive His righteousness as a gift when we trust in Him. *The paradox of the Christian life is that true freedom comes not from independence but from dependence on God.* Jesus said, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). This freedom is not the autonomy to live as we please but the liberation from sin and the ability to live in alignment with God's perfect will.

Our struggle with independence will continue as long as we live in this fallen world, but through the power of the Holy Spirit we can learn to surrender daily, trusting that God's ways are higher and better than our own. Let us lay down our pride, confess our need, and embrace the truth that only Jesus can save us. In Him, and Him alone, we find true life.

To Meditate:

-What areas of your life are you still trying to control rather than surrendering to God?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



WEDNESDAY

MY WAY OR GOD'S WAY

ISAIAH 53:6

“The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become.”

-C.S. Lewis

Life is often described as a journey, and along this journey, we are confronted with countless crossroads. At these spaces, we face a profound choice: will we follow our way, guided by our desires and limited understanding, or will we surrender to God's way, which is rooted in His eternal wisdom and love? This struggle is central to the human experience. From the Garden of Eden to our modern lives, the tension between self-reliance and submission to God has remained a defining challenge. At the heart of this tension lies human pride. From the very beginning, humanity has wrestled with the temptation to define good and evil on our own terms. In Genesis 3:6, Adam and Eve chose their way over God's, believing the serpent's lie that they could be like God. This act of rebellion introduced sin into the world and established a pattern of self-centered decision-making that continues today. Proverbs 14:12 warns, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." This verse highlights the deceptive nature of human wisdom. We often convince ourselves that our plans, rooted in personal ambition or cultural values, are superior to God's will. However, our limited perspective prevents us from seeing the bigger picture, leading us down paths of destruction. Timothy Keller, in his book *Counterfeit Gods*, writes, "*The human heart is an idol factory that takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things.*" When we put our own wants ahead of what God wants, we act like we are in charge instead of Him. Choosing God's way requires humility and trust. Jesus exemplifies this surrender in the Garden of Gethsemane. Facing the cross, He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). His obedience paved the way for our salvation, demonstrating that true freedom and fulfillment come through aligning with God's will, even when it requires sacrifice. The core of the decision between my way and God's way is whether I trust in my own abilities or depend on God's guidance. While our ways may promise immediate gratification, they lead to emptiness and separation from God. In contrast, God's way offers life, purpose, and eternal joy. Only by choosing Jesus can we experience true salvation and the fullness of life He intends for us.

To Meditate:

-Chose to let lay down your pride, surrender your plans, and follow the path that leads to everlasting peace and joy in Christ. Choose today to live God's Way!

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



THURSDAY

THE BETTER PLAN

PROVERBS 16:9

“Never be afraid to trust
an unknown future
to a known God.”
-Corrie Ten Boom

Life is filled with choices, ambitions, and dreams. We often try to plan our own lives, thinking we know what's best for us. Yet, time and again, we encounter the reality that our limited understanding falls short of the fullness and wisdom of God's plans. Scripture and life experiences reveal a profound truth: *God's ways are better than ours*. His plans are perfect, not only for our individual lives but also for the unfolding of His grand purposes. Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us of this foundational truth: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” God's perspective transcends our finite understanding. While we may see only the immediate and the tangible, God sees the eternal and the infinite. When we attempt to plan our lives independently of God, we often encounter frustration and failure. But God's purposes will always stand firm, providing security and direction for those who trust in Him. Trusting in God's plans brings a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). When we let go of control and submit to His guidance, we are freed from the anxiety of trying to navigate life on our own. God's plans lead us into the purpose for which we were created. Ephesians 2:10 declares, “For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Following His path allows us to walk in alignment with our divine design, bringing true fulfillment that worldly achievements cannot provide. Often, God's plans protect us from harm we cannot predict. Jeremiah 29:11 assures us of His good intentions: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” We might not understand God's plans right away, but later we often see how He guided us away from trouble.

God's plans are infinitely better than ours. While we may be tempted to rely on our own understanding, true peace, purpose, and salvation are found in surrendering to His will. His ways are higher, His purposes are good, and His love is unfailing.

To Meditate:

-What steps can you take to increase your trust in God's guidance for your life?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:


FRIDAY

A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

MATTHEW 28:18-20

“Christianity without
discipleship is always
Christianity without
Christ.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer



The call to discipleship is at the heart of the Christian faith. Jesus' invitation to follow Him resonates through history, not as a call to self-improvement or allegiance to an organization, but as a transformative relationship with the Savior of the world. Discipleship is not about crafting our own identity or elevating a human institution. Instead, it is a life of surrender to Christ, who alone holds the power to save and transform. Jesus' first disciples were ordinary men called to an extraordinary journey. In Matthew 4:19, He said to Peter and Andrew, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." This invitation was not a request to follow a set of rules or join an organization but a call to a personal and transformative relationship with Him. To be a disciple of Jesus means to align every aspect of life with His teachings and example. Dallas Willard wrote, *"Discipleship is the process of becoming who Jesus would be if He were you."* This makes it clear that discipleship is about our individual transformation. It is about becoming more like Jesus, not replicating human leaders or institutions. Paul tell us in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." Discipleship is a radical reorientation of life around Christ as Lord. We started this week asking ourselves the question: "Can I save myself?". The essence of discipleship is acknowledging that we cannot save ourselves. The gospel begins with this truth: we are sinners incapable of earning our salvation. Salvation is entirely a work of God, accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel continues with this truth: we are called to a process of sanctification, to become more like Jesus everyday; and we can not accomplish this without God's constant work in us. To be a disciple of Jesus is to recognize that He is the Holy One, the only Savior, and the ultimate authority. Discipleship is not about elevating ourselves; it is about surrendering to Jesus, being transformed by His grace, and inviting others to experience the same. May we embrace the call to be and make disciples, always pointing to Christ as the source of salvation and life. In Him alone, we find the hope and purpose to fulfill this calling.

To Meditate:

-How can you cultivate a stronger relationship with Jesus, understanding that you are completely reliant on His grace?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

SATURDAY

THE FUTURE PROMISE

REVELATION 21:4

“I have come home at last!
This is my real country!
I belong here. This is the
land I have been looking
for all my life...”
-C.S. Lewis

Being a Christian is like a journey, with ups and downs. But sometimes, in the busyness of everyday life, we lose sight of the bigger picture of what our faith is all about: the promise of eternity with Jesus in the new Heavens and the new Earth. The Bible reminds us again and again of this glorious future. While we are called to live intentionally and purposefully in the present, keeping our eyes on the eternal promise empowers us to endure, to take heart, and to remain steadfast on our journey with Jesus. Life's demands have a way of clouding our spiritual vision. We get consumed by work, relationships, personal ambitions, and the never-ending cycle of responsibilities. In the parable of the sower, Jesus warns us about the dangers of such distractions: *“The worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful”* (Matthew 13:22). The reality is that we often trade eternal significance for temporary satisfaction. This forgetfulness is not new. Israel, too, frequently lost sight of God's promises. Even after being delivered from Egypt, they longed to return to their former life of bondage when faced with challenges in the wilderness. Similarly, we often forget that our ultimate destination is not a better version of this life, but *eternity with God*. The promise of eternity with Jesus is not just a distant reality; it is a living hope that should shape our present. Paul exhorts the Colossians, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:2). This heavenly focus does not mean neglecting our responsibilities or disengaging from the world. Rather, it equips us to navigate life's challenges with resilience and purpose. Fixing our eyes on the eternal promise allows us to face trials with confidence, knowing that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Practically, this means living with the Kingdom's mindset. When we face setbacks, we remind ourselves that this world is not our home. When we feel discouraged, we hold onto the promise of eternal joy. And when life feels meaningless, we remember that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. The promise of eternity with Jesus is not just a future hope; it is a present anchor. It reminds us that our lives are part of a greater story, a story authored by God and fulfilled in Christ. Let us not lose sight of the end goal. Instead, let us live each day with purpose, fixing our eyes on the eternal promise.

To Meditate:

-How often do you allow this eternal hope to influence your daily life?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

Week 2

GOD'S INVITATION

MONDAY

Know The Lord

TUESDAY

Pride

WEDNESDAY

Appointed Tears

THURSDAY

Vulnerable as a Rock

FRIDAY


Lose

SATURDAY

Yet, Even If

SUNDAY

Sunday Sermon



MONDAY

KNOW THE LORD

EZEKIEL 37:11-14

"The knowledge of God is not merely intellectual; it is experiential. It is to know Him in the depths of our being, to feel His presence in our lives, to taste and see that the Lord is good."

-A.W. Tozer

Ezekiel is one of those books that are a bit challenging to endure as it is packed with judgment, destruction, death and lament. Along with the "harsh" narrative is a phrase that is repeated over and over: *"Then you will know that I am the Lord"*.

The Bible mentions this phrase over 70 times. And if there's one thing we know about parents, it's that they repeat the things they want their children to remember. God wants us to know Him, to really know Him. Deeply.

The Hebrew word translated as "know" in this context is the word "yada" that implies a deep, intimate understanding that goes beyond mere intellectual knowledge. More than knowing about God, it means to recognize, acknowledge, understand and intimately be one with Him.

The Bible precedes this action with the word 'then,' which implies that something must happen before we can truly know God. Ezekiel provides a powerful illustration of this: a valley filled with dry bones, a picture of death and despair.

The image of dry bones speaks to death beyond death, all hope lost. At the same time, it is at that moment when God steps into the picture and commands His breath to restore life over the bones.

Dying to our man-made idea of life might leave us feeling as dry bones, but true life starts when God breathes His Spirit over that act of surrender. He reaches in and opens the graves of our hearts to raise them back to life. The promise of God is that when we surrender our life, He will breathe in us His purposeful life and we will be able to see us through His light. In His eyes, we are in the image of an exceedingly great army.

To Meditate:

-What do you think needs to die so you can truly start living in the purpose and plan God has for you? Maybe is your ego, your plans, your idea of success, your idea of self preservation or perhaps pride.

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



TUESDAY
PRIDE

PSALM 73:2-7

“Pride is the illusion that we are competent to run our own lives, achieve our own sense of self-worth, and find a purpose big enough to give us meaning in life without God.”

-Timothy Keller

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

ISAIAH 23:9

PSALM 17: 14-15

According to psychologist Barry Schwartz, a leading researcher in this area, the bottomlessness of our choices may actively harm our wellbeing, and might even contribute to depression and anxiety. Schwartz argues that, because we are now faced with so many choices, big and small, we spend an increasing amount of time and energy simply being preoccupied with decisions, decisions we will have to make in the future, and ones that we have made before and now regret. The research is clear that “choice overload” does lead to negative emotions and stress. Schwartz's research has also found that maximizers (as opposed to satisficers) are less happy, less optimistic, and more depressed.

Our human nature reaches for more and associates having and achieving more with happiness. This culture has nurtured in us a sense of bottomlessness when it comes to what will make us feel completely satisfied in life. Psalms shows a clear picture of our current culture. Being envious of those who "have it all", the prosperous ones who seem to struggle with nothing. These are the individuals who are well-fed, dining at fine restaurants and traveling the world, those who are not afflicted and have others carry their burdens. In simplest terms, that famous content creator swimming in money and sharing their seemingly unending, Instagrammable experiences with the world. The world we live in is full of picture-perfect images that feed our brains and make us crave that type of life for ourselves. But for God that is pride, and His plan is to to defile all its glorious beauty and to disgrace all the renowned of the earth (Isaiah 23:9).

It is easy to become adjusted to the ways of this world but God is calling us to realize that our satisfaction is not found in the glory and beauty of our own ideas and imagination, but instead in being satisfied in seeing His likeness. We are complete when in His presence, we are transformed into His likeness. In His presence, we become more like Jesus.

To Meditate:

-In what areas of your life are you striving for more, believing it will bring happiness? How can you redirect that desire toward seeking transformation in God's presence?


S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



WEDNESDAY

APPOINTED TEARS

PSALMS 55:4-8

"We need to learn to see our sufferings not as interruptions of our plans, but as opportunities for God to work in our lives."
-Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

PSALMS 56:8

PSALMS 55:22-23

One of the greatest revelations we have as children of God is to know that God has a perfect plan for us. His word teaches us that He wrote each of our days in His book; our days are predestined by the almighty God. "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalm 139:16).

As hopeful as that sounds, life is full of seasons of pain, anguish and restlessness. Just as each of our days were appointed by God, so were the tears and pain we are to experience throughout life. (Psalm 56:8) Wait, is anguish part of God's plan for my life? Yes, and He purposed each tear and each moment of hardship we will go through.

Psalms describes our personal response to discomfort at times. "Oh, that I would have wings like a dove so I could fly away far from this unbearable struggle and find "rest" somewhere else." The truth is that we do not want to experience pain, we would rather skip it. We think that escaping will give rest to our pain.

Booking a getaway will give our restless minds a break. But what if we started thinking of our appointed struggles as opportunities God gifts us to experience His company, sustenance, and deliverance?

To Meditate:

-Today, place your burden, your stress, your anxiety on the one who has dominion over all. The One who wrote your story sustains you. Imagine His almighty hand holding the entire timeline of your life. He is never out of control, but He wants you to trust Him with the control of your life.

S.O.A.P

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THURSDAY

VULNERABLE AS A ROCK

MARK 5:22-42

"The strongest people are not those who show no weakness, but those who face them with courage, honesty, and openness."

-Jean Vanier

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

JOB 14:18-20

"Hard as a rock" is a phrase used to signify something is very strong and dependable. I love the great outdoors; Rivers, animals, and big mountains are my thing. A couple of months ago, we made a trip to Colorado, and I got to see these huge mountains which I had only seen in pictures before. In these images, great peaks were fully covered with snow. But it was the beginning of fall when I got to see them in person. There was something different; there was no snow, and it revealed a different aspect. You could see patches all through the different mountains. It was as if from afar, you could see them very slowly crumbling away.

In the upside-down kingdom of God, things are not as they seem. Man has a different idea of strength. In this culture, strength is often associated with muscles, looks, money, and power. I read a phrase that changed my perspective: "*Desperation makes men bold.*" Mark 5:22-42 shows us a ruler, in a role of power, knowledge, and influence, that experienced this firsthand. Someone who, stripped of all accolades and titles, was left as vulnerable as a rock. *Jairus* was suffering great hopelessness because no one could help his daughter. His knowledge, his strength, and his wisdom all proved insufficient to save her. We are all *Jairus*, and we are all stones. It doesn't matter how big or how strong we seem; we are all vulnerable and limited beings. We all crumble eventually, and all of our days are numbered.

Our hope is that our desperation will drive us to the place *Jairus* ended up: at Jesus' feet. We are bold when we place our trust in Jesus. Even when hope is lost, even in the waiting, even when others speak doubt and disregard for our faith, place your trust in the founder and perfecter of our faith, Jesus.

To Meditate:

-In what areas of your life have you relied on your own strength, resources, or influence, only to find them insufficient? How does recognizing your vulnerability help you grow closer to Jesus?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



FRIDAY
LOSE

MARK 8:31-37

"The greatest victory
is often found in the
midst of apparent
defeat."

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

No one likes losing. Especially those who have played competitive sports throughout our their life. It is not part of the strategy or the game plan. I mean, no coach has ever sat their team down and encouraged them to lose as part of the next season's goals.

Well, Jesus did. Peter, concerned about the idea of losing his closest friend, rebuked Jesus when He was telling them about suffering, being rejected, and being killed. A natural reaction if you put yourself in his place. You wouldn't want to see your best friend suffer, be rejected, and die. Jesus harshly corrected Peter, calling his attention to this: *"You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men."* Here is a lesson Jesus wants us to understand: There is a way to accept losing well. Sometimes we seek to understand the things of God, which in our eyes may look upside down. Why am I going through suffering? Why did I have to lose my financial stability? Why did I have to lose my loved one?

Although losing is difficult, accepting loss as part of our calling in surrender and for the sake of the gospel is part of God's will for our lives. If it is meant for the sake of the gospel, the story God is writing and displaying through your life will ultimately be a life-giving offering for you and for others to believe!

Losing is required. "Whoever would save it will lose it, but whoever loses it for the sake of the gospel will save it." (Mark 8:35) We can go after self-preservation, self-success, and self-advancement, but we will eventually be left with a lifeless result.

Real life is found in losing our own idea of life, our own plans for success, and our own desires to accept the higher calling of God. We can experience "losing" in a different light by seeing an almighty God choose to leave His throne and Kingdom and swap it for the most vulnerable role: a mortal baby who would eventually, out of eternal love, live and die for humanity's salvation.

To Meditate:

-Close your eyes for a moment and let the Father bring to your heart what He means to do in your life, even amidst your current season. Surrender and know that He sustains your entire existence.


S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



SATURDAY

YET, EVEN IF

HABAKKUK 3:6, 16-19

"We see but a part of the picture, a fragment of the design, a glimpse of the glory. But even this partial vision should be enough to fill us with awe and wonder."
- A.W. Tozer

ADDITIONAL VERSES:

ROMANS 8:18, 28

Habakkuk 1:5 tells us that God is working on something new. Something that will be uncommon to understand and even difficult to believe.

This new work of God is a deeper revelation and conviction of His ways, His everlasting ways. We cannot fathom the entire reality in which God operates because we are limited by time and space. We can only operate in our here and now. Take a moment and ask yourself, What is your here and now telling you?

At times of my life, my here and now speaks loudly about my insecurities and doubts. My here and now makes me feel I will not have what it takes to fulfill my calling and purpose for my life.

Habakkuk's choice is a bold one. He says: In spite of my here and now, I will exult the Lord. I will rejoice in who God is for me and not in how sufficient I can be.

Relying on God as the one who holds the everlasting timeline for our life will allow us to confidently follow His lead and direction regardless of our current situation. Our perspective of our plans in this season can change once we rely not in the specific outcome we desire but in rejoicing because God is our salvation. When all seems to fail, even our strength, we can depend in the God who promises to be our strength and our salvation.

Choose today to see God above your here and now. You can lean on His promise that the current suffering is nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed to us and that all things work together for the good of those who love Him and were called according to His purpose.

To Meditate:

-When you consider your current "here and now," what emotions, doubts, or challenges are speaking the loudest, and how can you bring them before God in faith?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

Week 3

OUR RESPONSE

MONDAY

Consider Your Ways

TUESDAY

A Call to a Change of Heart

WEDNESDAY

The Consequence of Apathy

THURSDAY

Hear and Obey

FRIDAY

The Presence of The Lord

SATURDAY

I Will Bless You

SUNDAY

Sunday Sermon



MONDAY

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

HAGGAI 1:1-6

"Conversion is not a single, dramatic event, but a lifelong process of dying to self and being renewed in Christ."
-Dallas Willard

This week, we will be studying the book of Haggai. We encourage you to take time to read the entire book before we begin studying its individual parts.

As we dive into today's verses, we see that verse 5 encourages us to "consider our ways" or "give careful thought to our ways." The word of the Lord came to the leaders of Judah after they had been living in the land for many years following their return from exile. Yet, the temple had not been rebuilt. In verse 2, we read that the people believed it was not yet time to rebuild the house of the Lord.

The temple was crucial back then because it was the place where the people worshiped God and where the presence of God resided. Upon their return from exile, the people thought there were more important things to do such as building their houses and establishing their economy. God had no dwelling place, and worship was forsaken while His people carried on as if nothing was wrong. This is a powerful reminder that *delayed obedience is not obedience*.

Their focus and priorities were placed on the mundane, and as a result, they forfeited the presence of God. Like the people of Judah, we too are prone to distraction. We may be tempted to focus on building our own lives, putting off obedience to the Lord, thinking we will "get around to it eventually."

Just as God called His people to consider their ways, we must also consider our ways thinking deeply about our motives and priorities. This requires self-examination, an honest look into our hearts to identify the idols we've formed. These idols often lead us to delayed obedience and apathy toward the things of God. As we reflect on our ways, our sin, and our brokenness, let us also consider Jesus, who conquered death, sin, and hell so that we could be united with Him.

To Meditate:

-Consider your ways. How can you better walk in obedience to the Lord? How can the gospel enable you to walk in obedience?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

TUESDAY

A CALL TO A CHANGE OF HEART

HAGGAI 1: 7 - 8

"True worship is not merely singing hymns or attending church services; it is a lifestyle of obedience and surrender to God's will in every area of our lives."

-A.W. Tozer

Again, we see the Lord encouraging the people to "consider their ways" or "give careful thought to their ways." This time, God is calling the people to take action, which requires a change of heart. The people needed to realize that their belief that "it's not yet time to build the temple" was inaccurate. They needed to repent and acknowledge God's will for them.

God was calling the people to stop treating Him as an afterthought, something merely added to their ordinary tasks, and instead to radically center their lives on His glory. We believe that God calls us to do the same day in and day out. However, for us to truly understand this, we must acknowledge God's will for our lives and repent. We must turn to God, which by nature means turning away from our sin and anything that keeps us from following His way.

As God called the people to action, He also gave them a purpose for that action: *to work for His pleasure and glory*. And through their obedience and worship, He is glorified. Let us always remember that God's deepest desire is for our worship and attention. We were created by Him and for Him, and everything we do should be done for His glory. There is no greater purpose for our lives than this.

To Meditate:

-Has there ever been a time that you have been tempted to delayed obedience?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



WEDNESDAY

THE CONSEQUENCES OF APATHY

HAGGAI 1:9-11

"The greatest enemy
of faith is not doubt,
but indifference."

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Through these verses, we see that the Lord points out the consequences of the people's apathetic lives. The people in Haggai's day believed their own concerns were more important than the things of God. Even though they had been delivered from exile and were back in the Promised Land, they failed to recognize the great things God had done for them, blessings that were right in front of them.

They also didn't realize that their apathy and sin had brought about judgment. God sovereignly withheld the morning dew and the produce of the earth, but they failed to see that it was His doing. (They probably thought, "It's just part of life.") While they focused on building their own houses and ignored the Lord, they missed His call to return to Him.

Similarly, we can grow apathetic, believing that we have it all together, while failing to recognize that we are broken and blind. The truth is, our hearts are prone to wander, creating and believing their own ideas of what is best. The call to build the Lord's temple wasn't primarily about the building itself; it was about hearts that were passionate for and fully devoted to Him. God longs to dwell with us, but for that to happen, our hearts must return to Him and stop wandering far away.

To Meditate:

-How should God's desire to dwell with His people reshape the way we think about our everyday lives?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

THURSDAY

HEAR AND OBEY

HAGGAI 1:12-15



"We do not obey God to earn his love; we obey him because we love him."
-C.S. Lewis

I love these verses. They almost feel like the happy ending of a movie. The people heard the Word of God, and then they obeyed. It sounds so simple, but the truth is that obedience is hard, it requires sacrifice. These verses teach us what our response to the Word of God should be: listen and obey.

If you're a parent, like me, one phrase I constantly tell my kids is, "We listen with our ears and obey with our heart and our body." When I don't want to say all of that, I just say, "*Listen and obey.*" That is exactly how our response to God's instructions and Word ought to be. The people repented and obeyed when they were confronted with their sin, and again, this should be our response as well. Verse 12 says that the people feared the Lord, and that is crucial to walking in obedience. It is our fear (respect) of God that leads us to recognize that He is worthy of our worship and obedience.

However, for the fear of God to take root in our hearts, we must understand who God is, His attributes, and His character. Understanding His character humbles us, encourages us, and drives us to worship and obey. In verse 13, we see a promise for their faithfulness: the promise that God was with them. So, what should our response be? Back then, the presence of God dwelled in a temple, but today, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we are the temple, and His presence dwells in us.

To Meditate:

-How are you building your relationship with God today? Have you been wandering? Has God been calling you into His presence, but you've been putting it off because of ordinary responsibilities that have taken priority in your life?

What will be your response?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

FRIDAY

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

HAGGAI 2:1-9

"The Lord goes before you; he will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."
Deuteronomy 31:8

The Lord brought a message of encouragement to the leaders of Judah and its people. He said to them, "Be strong and get to work, for I am with you." It is important to understand why God was telling the people to be strong.

In verse 1, we are provided with a date, which might seem like a small detail we could skip while reading, but this date is significant. Theologians believe it was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the most important feasts on the Jewish calendar. This celebration was ordained by God to commemorate His faithful provision for His people during their time in the wilderness after coming out of Egypt.

Theologians also believe that this message came about one month after the people began rebuilding the temple. By then, they probably hadn't made much progress and were feeling discouraged by the enormity of the work ahead. Personally, I can relate. Who doesn't feel overwhelmed when faced with too much on their plate?

We can agree that the word of the Lord came as encouragement rather than a rebuke. It seems the people were comparing their present reality to the former glory of the temple, perhaps thinking it could never measure up. They believed the glory days were behind them, but the Lord encouraged them to look forward.

The glory days are not confined to the past. His glory shines before us every day, and we ought to believe that the most glorious days are still ahead. Just as He promised the people of Judah, He is with us. I am certain of this because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Understanding and believing that His presence goes before us strengthens us to keep moving forward and following His way.

To Meditate:

-How can this passage encourage you in your own life?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:

SATURDAY

I WILL BLESS YOU

HAGGAI 2: 10 -19

"God's grace is
greater than
all our sins."

-Augustine of Hippo

In verses 10–17, we encounter some obscure questions being asked. It is important to understand that the date provided marks the day the people laid the foundation of the temple, the same day the Lord brought His message to them. Through the questions directed to the priest, the Lord intended to make a clear point: uncleanness is far more contagious than holiness. The Lord essentially reminded the people that they were weak, unclean, and dead in their sin, with nothing of value to offer Him. Once again, we see the need for a change of heart. However, the end of this message declares God's blessings on these people. Blessing was coming to an unclean and defiled people, not because of anything they had done, but because of what God had done.

This story is full of truth, and the theology it teaches is as relevant today as it was then: God is sovereign over salvation, and there is nothing we can do to earn it. We are made clean only through Jesus. Blessing comes through Jesus, our true foundation. Through Him, we find life where there was once death.

What a beautiful reminder that grace triumphs over sin. God works even while we wait, even when, from our perspective, nothing seems to be happening. Just as the people in Haggai's day did, we walk forward by trusting and obeying. We may not yet see the harvest, but He is working and growing things deep beneath the soil. Through it all, we trust His sovereign hand.

To Meditate:

-How does the promise of a blessing that is not immediately seen point us to Jesus?

S.O.A.P

S - Scripture:

O - Observation:

A - Application:

P - Prayer:



COMMUNITY