



Devotional Day One

(Ephesians 5:15-16 VOICE) So be careful how you live; be mindful of your steps. Don't run around like idiots as the rest of the world does. Instead, walk as the wise! 16 *Make the most of every living and breathing moment* because these are evil times.

What is a moment?

Webster defines a moment as a "minute portion or point of time". A moment can seem so insignificant. Really, if you think about it a moment is only a short period of time that quickly passes. Maybe a brief pause in a busy day. A glance in different direction. A slight variation. Nothing monumental...just a moment.

But our lives are made of moments and I believe we are in a very unique moment in the world. No doubt this was an unexpected moment. I'm amazed everyday how the world is responding to this unprecedented moment called Covid-19. I've loved and tried to live by Ephesians 5:15-16 in recent years. After reading these verses for decades; in a moment they

seemed to jump off the pages of the Bible into my heart. It created what I call a "God Moment" in my life. I'm sure you've experienced these. You're just reading a devotional, a verse, humming a worship song from the Sunday service and all of a sudden you have a MOMENT! Well, in that moment something resounded in my heart that God was calling me to make the most of the moments I've been given. God has blessed each of us with 24 hours in a day or you might say 24 very special divine moments to make the most of! Let's take Paul's advice from Ephesians 5:15-16 to, "be careful how you live, be mindful of your steps. Don't run around like idiots...Instead walk as the wise".

In the coming days my hope is that this Miracle Moment devotional will encourage you to make the most of every living and breathing moment you have in your time with God, your family and loving and serving humanity in this moment in our world. Easter is coming and this is the moment that changed everything. What a moment to be alive!



Devotional Day Two

(Acts 4:13 TPT) The council members were astonished as they witnessed the bold courage of Peter and John, especially when they discovered that they were just ordinary men who had never had religious training. Then they began to understand the effect Jesus had on them simply by spending time with him.

Have you ever made this statement, "I'm not ready for this" or "I don't think I can do this"? Of course, we all have moments like this probably now more than ever. We've all been faced with circumstances that we felt were above our level of understanding, expertise, qualification or education. In those moments we can feel so unqualified and inadequate. That's why I love the verse you just read in Acts. Peter and John are just ordinary, uneducated men. One translation even refers to them as idiotas. Yes, this is where we get the English word idiot. Ever felt this way? You've probably said it to yourself, "what an idiot". Well, here's some good news Peter and John according to many were just idiots. Yet God used them in a miraculous moment. How could two seemingly unqualified,

uneducated and underdeveloped men be used in such a mighty way. It was the moments they spent with Jesus. You just read it, "Then they began to understand the effect Jesus had on them simply by spending time with him."

The lesson here is to pay close attention to who you spend your moments with. My dad wrote a book years ago about his life and ministry. The title of the book is In Search Of A Lovely Moment. We've laughed through the years that many things we experience are not lovely moments. I remember my dad telling the story of being out one night as a young teenager. Someone had the bright idea to steal hub caps as a prank. Unfortunately, they were caught and my dad happened to be in on that moment. They were in big trouble. I'll never forget my dad telling me the advice his mother gave him, "Roger, be careful, whoever you run with rubs off on you." That's still solid advice today. We become who we spend the most time with. This verse gives us powerful insight into the secret of Peter and John's lives. It says they, simply spent time with Jesus. Moments with Jesus qualify the unqualified, empower the powerless, give hope to the hopeless and encourage the discouraged. Now more than ever we simply need more moments with Jesus. Moments with Jesus make us more like Him.



Devotional Day Three

(Jeremiah 1:10 NKJV) See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.

Our lives are made of defining moments. These moments mark us, set a course, and ultimately shape who we are and who we'll become. Moments like choosing a college, meeting your spouse, the birth of your children, a painful diagnosis, a notable miracle or a devastating phone call can change the direction in your life forever in a moment. We don't always get to choose the moment sometimes the moment chooses you.

I remember standing in our kitchen on Schillinger Road in the summer of 1989. This was back when the phone hung on the wall and there was NO privacy. I picked up that phone and had no idea that conversation would be a defining moment. My friend Mark said these words, "John, I just met the girl you should marry". A few days later I would be helping that girl unload her suitcase out of van, and onto the Love Boat and 6 months later she would be my wife.

Twenty-one years and five kids later I was staring at a spot on the wall across the room desperate and confused. I'd been sensing

God calling me to step out into full-time ministry, but that would mean leaving behind everything we'd grown to love in our lives. We were a part of an incredible church, I owned a successful aviation business, Tracy had a wonderful career and our kids loved their school. We were in a very secure moment. I opened my Bible searching and read these words in Jeremiah 1:10, "See, I have this day...". That day would be a miracle moment. Later that afternoon I got a call from a friend in ministry who encouraged me to step out in faith and believe God. In the next few months we sold everything and left everyone to follow the call of God to plant South Coast Church. What is God calling you away from or toward? If it feels uncomfortable or even impossible it could be a defining moment. Begin to search the scriptures, reach out to a friend or mentor and don't harden your heart to what could be the voice of God. The next step you take could be a defining moment. The moments become monuments on your journey of faith to encourage you and inspire others.



Devotional Day Four

(Hebrews 11:1 NKJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Recently I preached a message on miracles and used a passage from John Chapter 2 where Jesus turned the water to wine. Look what this verse says about now, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now". So many people misquote this scripture. I've even made this same mistake. We say, "He saved the best for last," but that's not what the verse says. It says He saved the best for NOW. If we're not careful we can begin to live our lives this way. We start to live with the attitude of "Well I guess God's best, His blessing, His provision or the answer is just out there somewhere." We can't live our lives 10 years or 20 years out there. We're called to live our lives in the NOW MOMENT.

When Tracy and I have the privilege to counsel married couples, we always remind them that the best marriage they're in is the one they're in RIGHT NOW! We always encourage them to invest in their marriage now, their family now, their spiritual well-being right now. There's supernatural power in the now moments. The

enemy wants you to live your life looking down the road thinking someday I'll work on my marriage, love my kids, live my life for God. The enemy wants to weigh you down with the regret of yesterday and the worry of someday. We're called to live in the now.

The greatest gift you and I have is not what happened yesterday or what might happen tomorrow. The greatest gift we have is NOW. The Bible says, "This is the day the Lord has made. Let's rejoice and be glad today!" (Psalm 118:24 GW).

If you've ever had the opportunity to speak to someone who has come through a life threatening diagnosis and they get their life back it's amazing how they become so much more thankful and aware of the now. You hear them say things like, "I'm healthy today, I'm thankful for today, I'm spending time with my loved ones today." It's time to begin to live our lives for today! Did you know that NOW spelled backwards is WON? Jesus won the battle for us on the cross. Now is a gift from God. Let's not waste it. From NOW on it's worship over worry, faith over fear and peace over pain.



Devotional Day Five

(Ephesians 6:13 MSG) Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet.

When our kids were little Tracy and I were always looking for good, clean, wholesome television shows and movies for our kids to watch in the car when we traveled between Oklahoma and Alabama. To be honest, I've memorized the scripts and soundtracks to hundreds of kids shows and movies and can count on one hand the ones I've actually watched! The kids got hooked on a movie called Hoodwinked during that season. It was a crazy remake of the classic Little Red Riding Hood. In one scene Red encounters this hilarious billy goat that only sings. He sang a song that was literally stuck in my head for weeks. If you know the song get ready to have a moment. Here's the catchy part (imagine this is being sung in a billy goat voice), "Be prepared, be prepared, this lesson must be shared, this lesson must be shared, be prepared." You're welcome for getting that stuck in your head again after 15 yrs! I know it's ridiculous, but it's also momentous.

Preparation isn't celebrated in our culture. Everything in our world is wired for instant gratification and validation. Can you imagine if you woke up every day without a plan and with no preparation? What would your day, week, month, year and ultimately your life look like? I can tell you, it would be utter chaos. I believe taking responsibility to prepare for the moments in our lives has a lot to do with how we live out God's purpose for our lives. The verse you just read is so clear, "You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get...." To live moment ready we must be prepared for the moments. We must use "...every weapon God has issued...." The battle is won or lost in the preparation for the battle. Olympic medals aren't won in the stadium. They're won in the silence and solitude of preparation. A great marriage happens with preparation. A great family happens with preparation. A successful business venture happens with preparation. Spiritual maturity doesn't happen on the platform of public life it happens in the privacy and personal discipline of preparation. The last part of Ephesians 6:13 says if we live prepared for the moment, "...when it's all over, but the shouting you'll still be on your feet." Be prepared, be prepared, this lesson has been shared, this lesson has been shared...Live prepared for the moment. Make the most of every moment!

Pastor John Breland



Devotional Day Six

(Psalm 90:12 NKJV) So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

There is no doubt that we are experiencing unprecedented times globally as COVID-19 has taken center stage in the world. Here in the United States most communities are under strict guidelines that require people to stay home to stay safe. But something that has never changed and never will is the amount of time that all of us get each week. We all have 7 days or 168 hours or 10,080 minutes or 604,800 seconds as a gift from God. To make the most of our time, we must take responsibility for our time. It's so interesting to me that the verse implies we need to be taught, "So teach us to number our days...". If we're going to spend the time wisely then we must learn some valuable lessons.

Let me ask you a question, are you a morning person or a night owl? Tracy and I have been married for over 30 years and one thing she found out pretty early in our marriage is I'm a late nighter. She on the other hand loves to go to bed early and get up early. I bet you can see where this is headed. When our kids were little they knew that once 9:30 pm arrived the grace was up for Mom and it was time for them to get a book and get in bed!

That's something that we instituted in our home. It saved our sanity and our families' posterity if you know what I mean. Over the years Tracy and I have learned to adapt our behaviors and adjust our schedules. Now she will stay up a bit later and I'll get up a little earlier. We had to learn how to manage the time more beneficially for us individually and for our family. If you stay up a little later use the time wisely. If you get up a little earlier don't waste those precious moments. There's nothing wrong with being a night owl or a dairy farmer. It's just how you choose to use those moments.

God wants to use our lives in amazing ways. The problem is most people are just not naturally very good at maximizing the moments in their lives. We complain about how much we've got to get done and how much we're not getting done. Here's the truth, we can't change our circumstances until we change our choices. If we're going to maximize the moments in our lives we must stop making excuses and start making changes. There are three kinds of people in the world: accusers, excusers and choosers. You're not going to maximize the moments in your life if you spend them excusing yourself and accusing everyone else. God is calling us to be choosers! So "choose you this day" to maximize the moments you've been blessed with each day. Every moment is a blessing.



Devotional Day Seven

(Luke 21:34 NIV) Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap.

If there's one thing I've come to understand after 50 years on this planet it's that unplanned and unexpected things are unavoidable. Now I know what you're thinking, Pastor John couldn't you be more positive. Yes, I'm positive that you cannot avoid the unexpected. I learned this early in our marriage. It was December 19, 1995 and Tracy and I were expecting our third baby. Rose had just turned 3 and Caroline was 7 months old. Tracy and I arrived for her doctor's appointment at Springhill Medical Center. She had invited my mom to come along that afternoon. I'll never forget that day. We all piled into the ultrasound room to find out what we were having. Caroline was asleep in her seat, Rose was running around the room and I was standing and waiting for the big news. Little did I know the nurse would utter four words that were unexpected, unplanned and absolutely unavoidable. She looked up at me and said, "Well, they look fine." I thought she meant Tracy and the baby, but I must have had a confusing look on my face because she then

asked, "You guys didn't know you were having twins?". I nearly passed out. Once we began to grasp the news Tracy was excited and I was terrified.

Maybe it wasn't twins for you, but we've all experienced unplanned and unexpected circumstances in our lives. The anxieties of life have a way of weighing us down and when they do as the verse says, "that day will close on you suddenly like a trap". I truly believe that we can be prepared for the overwhelming moments in life before they arrive. Here are three things you must do. First, we must understand that no matter what God is good. You must settle this. Our circumstances never alter God's character. Second, you need to know that God is in control. Control for us is nothing but an illusion. Think about it for a moment. You can't control where you were born, who your parents are. You can't even control if the person in the car next to you in traffic is a decent driver. Fear and anxiety take over when the unplanned and unexpected moments happen. I love the story of the Hebrew children and the fiery furnace in Daniel 3. In an impossible situation they declared, "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace...." Thirdly, they decided before they entered the furnace that no matter what God was with them. When the unplanned, unexpected and overwhelming moments come remember God is good, God is in control and God is with us.



Devotional Day Eight

(Hebrews 13:16 MSG) Make sure you don't take things for granted and go slack in working for the common good; share what you have with others. God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship—a different kind of "sacrifice"—that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets.

I was driving home from work one day when we lived in a small town in rural Oklahoma. All of a sudden something caught my attention. It wasn't just something.... it was someone. A man was walking down the side of a busy highway with a long white cane out in front of him. He was alone and obviously visually impaired. I quickly thought, "I hope this guy makes it safely to where he's headed." After driving on a little further a voice inside my heart said, "Go back and make sure he does." When you hear things like, "pay for their groceries" or "pull over and help change that tire" or "pick up the check at the table of the family with all the kids," it takes you by surprise but it's a voice we should long to hear and obey. If you don't listen to everything God has to say you eventually won't hear anything He says. Hearing God in these moments may be the miracle someone was praying for.

I pulled up beside him and asked if he needed a ride. He quickly accepted and I soon found he lived near us. In a quick car ride I found out Steve and his wife Penny had 11 kids, and Penny was in the hospital about to give birth to baby number 12. I almost lost control of the car! As we talked, I found that this family needed more than just a ride home. This family was in a state of emergency. Seeing their house and all those children, I thought, "God, this family needs a real miracle." At that moment God immediately whispered something else in my heart, "You're here at the right moment." I realized that God wanted us to play a part in the miracle. While Steve and his wife were enjoying baby 12 in the hospital we helped them get their house back in order. We cleaned, made repairs, called the exterminator and filled the house with groceries. Homes need help and people need neighbors. One of the last mornings, we were there making pancakes for the kids I began to understand more clearly that I was their neighbor and this was God's plan. I could have just passed right by and missed the miracle moment God had planned for us all. I think the lesson here is simple. No matter who you are God can use you if you're willing to listen to His voice and just say yes! Remember, miracles can take place through anyone and anywhere even if they, "that take place in kitchen and workplace and on the streets." Let God turn your moments into miracles.



Devotional Day Nine

(Luke 15:17 NLT) "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger!'"

We've all experienced them, and they are undeniable. An AHA moment is defined as a sudden understanding, recognition, or resolution. These moments have the power to change our lives. This verse of scripture is a portion of the powerful story of the prodigal son who has an AHA moment of his own. If you read several translations they say he, "...woke up and finally came to his senses." In Pastor Kyle Idleman's book AHA, he points out that an AHA moment has three very important ingredients. If any of these are missed the process is short-circuited. There's a sudden Awakening, brutal Honesty and finally immediate Action. Did you catch that? Awakening, Honesty, Action = AHA.

The son had demanded his inheritance and through reckless living lost everything. Scripture says after he lost it all he had an awakening in the most unlikely place—with the most unlikely audience. He was in the pigpen with the pigs! This was the first step in his AHA process. He then had to be brutally honest with himself. This is the conversation in the mirror we have with ourselves. The verse says, "He said to himself." AHA demands honesty to yourself as well as from yourself.

The Prodigal Son knew what he had done and what he deserved. He then took action by getting up and heading home to his father. After arriving home in verse 19 of Luke 15 he says this, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called you son...." You know the rest of the story. His father ran to welcome him and threw a party in his honor. This young man could have simply had an awakening but not been honest with himself and nothing would have happened. It was only when he came to his senses, had an honest conversation with himself and took action that the AHA moment was fulfilled in his life. Ask yourself some important questions right now. Are there alarms going off in your life right now? Have you been hitting snooze on some things you need to awaken to? These awakening moments must lead to being honest with yourself. Regret without true repentance means you kill the AHA process. Conviction must lead to confession. Finally, you must get up and take action. Luke 15:20 simply says, "So he got up..." Take action today. Unless you get up nothing will ever change. The story in Luke 15 isn't just about two sons. It's about a Heavenly Father that loves you unconditionally and wants you to experience the supernatural healing and help the AHA moments are meant to bring in your life.



Devotional Day Ten

(Psalm 23:2-3 NKJV) He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul...

I heard someone say recently that rest is the root word of restoration. It made me think about how important rest is. Isn't it interesting that this verse says that God, "makes me lie down...He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul". God makes us, leads us and restores us. That's the perfect recipe for rest. The pace of our world pushes us to go, go, go. We must remember that God created both work and rest and they are mutually important and beneficial.

From the very beginning God's word is clear that we are commanded to rest. Resting is included in the Ten Commandments right along with "Don't murder". He said that every seventh day we should take the day off. That's how important rest is to God. We should rest our bodies, refocus our spirits by worshiping and recharge our souls by doing something that restores and re-energizes us. When is the last time you slowed down the pace of your life intentionally? This verse implies that if we don't God may need to, "make me to lie down". Can you remember the last time you just took a nice long walk? It doesn't have to be beside still waters even though we live in one of the most beautiful coastal communities in the entire nation. God wants to restore your soul but you must allow Him in by taking the necessary steps to slow down the pace of your life for a moment. Be still and make a plan to let God breathe fresh wind into your soul.



Devotional Day Eleven

(Joshua 3:4 NIV) Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.

You would probably agree that the first part of 2020 has been a year like no other. It feels a bit like the second part of the verse you just read, "since you have never been this way before." We're all such creatures of habit. We wear the same thing, we eat at the same restaurants, we sit in the same seat in class. We even say and do the same things daily. But 2020 has proven something to us once again that change is inevitable and how we respond to change is entirely up to us. If you take time to read the back story of Joshua you know that Moses has died and Joshua has come into leadership. Joshua 3 tells us that there's a river between the people and the promise God made to them over 500 years ago. Here's the truth, there's always a river between you and every promise God will ever make to you.

I believe this could be a season that God calls us to higher places than we've ever been before. What's the promise God has given you? Once you know the promise you need to understand that God also has a process to fulfill it. Before the Children of Israel could cross the Jordan river Joshua told the people in Joshua 3:5, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you." We must first dedicate ourselves completely to God. Believe that God is setting you apart to do amazing things among you. Next you've got to be willing to take a step. Joshua gave the people this command in Joshua 3:8, "When you reach the banks of the Jordan River, take a few steps into the river..." Listen, faith doesn't have to be a huge step, faith is just taking the first step. I was sharing with someone earlier today that Tracy and I always seem to take the first step of faith in the darkest seasons of our lives. They told us not to have any kids after Caroline was born so we had twins 11 months later. On September 11, 2001 the global aviation economy changed forever so we started an aviation company in October of 2001 that grew into a multimillion-dollar business. As a church we closed on 20 acres in West Mobile to start building our first permanent

location in December of 2019 the same month Covid-19 started a global pandemic. I can't wait to see what miraculous things God does through men and women who are consecrating themselves in this season of change. God's not just your miracle of yesterday, He's with you today and He's the miracle you're going to need tomorrow. Don't look at the size of the river in front of you without first acknowledging the size of your God within you.



Devotional Day Twelve

(Psalm 118:24 GW) This is the day the Lord has made. Let's rejoice and be glad today!

I've been asking God lots of questions these days and most of them lately seem to be about tomorrow, next week, next month or even next year. I keep a calendar on my desk just like many other people. I use it to plan my days, weeks, months and ultimately my year. My dad has always been a calendar guy and he still has every calendar he's ever used. If I asked him where he was on April 17, 1981 he could pull out one of those big brown executive planners and tell me exactly where he was and what he did that day. He could probably tell me what they fed TRUTH at the church that was hosting them for a concert. Calendars are wonderful tools. You can meet, plan, dream, forecast and even visualize each day of the year. It took me a while but learned a valuable lesson about calendars...always use a pencil because tomorrow is subject to change.

In Matthew 6 Jesus taught His disciples to pray this way, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread...". He was teaching them to trust God one day at a time. In verse 34 of the same chapter He offers this encouragement, "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today." Are you spending your todays worrying about tomorrows? Philippians 4:6-8 shows us four things we should do daily. "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray

about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done...Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." First, don't worry about anything. Second, pray about everything. Third, thank God in all things and finally, think about the right things. There are two days you should never worry about: yesterday and tomorrow. You can't live in the past and you can't live in the future. You can't build anything on regret and you can't solve tomorrow's problems with today's power. So keep a pencil next to that calendar and remember to approach today with power, perspective, grace and wisdom God gives you for TODAY.



Devotional Day Eleven

(Hebrews 13:22 GNT) I beg you, my friends, to listen patiently to this message of encouragement; for this letter I have written you is not very long.

If you ever been in a long-distance relationship you know it can be very challenging. However, it was much more challenging 30 years ago before cell phones and the internet were widely available. Tracy and I began our relationships 1000 miles apart. We talked on the phone and did something that not many people do anymore. We wrote letters. I think one of the reasons that the art of letter writing has faded is that we live in a NOW culture. Fifty years ago authors had 10-12 pages to hook the reader and moviemakers had 15-20 minutes to develop a character but things have changed. But the power of the written word will never change. God supernaturally wrote a love letter to humanity that is still transforming lives every moment in every corner of the world.

This week I read a post on social media about a father who started writing his daughter a letter every day when she was in fourth grade. It continued for many years and recently more than 500 letters became a college paper about a "guy who writes his daughter letters". She has realized over the years that they were all "insane devotions of his love". I guess you could say the term paper became the ultimate love letter. I was raised in church and remember vividly hearing about the annual Lottie Moon

offering. In 1889 Lottie Moon wrote a letter to Annie Armstrong. Lottie and Annie were the most influential women in Baptist life at the turn of the 20th century and both left incredible legacy's. Her letter called for a season of prayer and an offering for missions. That short letter has now raised billions of dollars and supported missionaries around the world for over 100 years. The Apostle Paul wrote thirteen letters included in the New Testament. These letters wove together messages of joy, suffering, grace, forgiveness, unity, and the power of the Holy Spirit. All of this included in a collection of letters that are still change the world. I want to encourage you to take a few moments and just write a letter to the first person that God brings to your heart. Take Paul's advice, write a letter of encouragement but also write one that "is not very long".



Devotional Day Fourteen

(Matthew 22:37-40 NIV) Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Sometimes Tracy will look over and ask me, "What are you thinking about right now?" Every once in a while my answer is, "Absolutely nothing." but not very often. Our minds are normally bombarded with random thoughts, concerns, worries or ideas. I read a book by Joyce Meyer years ago entitled *The Battlefield of the Mind*. The tagline of the book was "Winning the Battle in Your Mind". To be honest, since 1983 I thought "Love Is A Battlefield" thanks to Pat Benatar. But seriously, our minds are inundated with information, thousands of thoughts that can take us down a thousand different paths. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the Bible tells us we should, "...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." I asked our church this question last year, "What was on the mind of Jesus?" Imagine if you could have asked Him that question. Hey Jesus, what are you thinking about right now? It seems that people were constantly on the mind of Jesus. Why did Jesus have people on his mind all the time? I think people are the

Heart of God. Every time Jesus thought the Pharisees were placing more value on some-THING rather than some-One He corrected that. He was teaching them that it wasn't about rules and regulations it's always about people. There are approximately 7.8 billion people on the earth right now but the amazing thing is God doesn't see you as a number He calls you by name. God loves people and if we love God we must love what He loves. Jesus didn't die for numbers He died for names.

Let me ask you a question, "What are you thinking about at this moment?" Take a few minutes to slow down and think about what you're thinking about. God said the second greatest commandment was to love the people in your neighborhood. Mr. Rogers taught a generation that, "Real strength has to do with helping others." Think about that for a moment.



Devotional Day Fifteen

(Matthew 11:28-30 MSG) "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

In the world we live in rest is highly underrated. It seems busyness is worn as a badge of honor. If I'm busy it must mean I'm important. For many years people said, "Cleanliness was next to Godliness". Unfortunately, today that saying has become more like "Fatigue is next to Godliness". If that statement was true Tracy and I would have been the godliest people on earth back when we had 3 1-year-olds! The passage of scripture you just read are the words of Jesus. Jesus understood the pressures of life. He dealt with the demands of people, teaching, leading and meeting needs. Yes, Jesus understood stress, worry, anxiety, confusion and being completely overwhelmed. There are places in scripture where Jesus retreated to rest. When we're maxed out in our lives, we tend to go to extremes. You know it's true! If you're running on empty you just do stupid stuff. Everyone has experienced this. You overeat, overdrink, overmedicate, overwork, overspend and overreact. Luke 21:34 cautions us to, "Be careful, or

your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap."

We are so blessed to live in one of the most beautiful parts of the country. Many people use the water as a source of rest and relaxation. Several years ago I mentioned in a message on a Sunday that even Jesus loved the water and, "went off by himself in a boat to a remote area to be alone". About a week later a guy from our church sent me a message and said thank you for confirming that he needed a boat to relax. If you need a sign...there it is! Doing nothing is highly underrated. Work is good and the Bible is very clear that we are to work hard and be diligent. But don't forget the fourth commandment is clear that we should take an entire day to rest, not produce, relax, unwind, slow down, chill out. Matthew 11:28-30 is full of words like, getaway, recover, rest, walk, watch, learn how to live freely and lightly. This is what Jesus was trying to say, there is Power In A Pause.



Devotional Day Sixteen

(Matthew 7:24 NKJV) Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...

I've often said the plan we have today determines the place we are tomorrow. My earliest memories growing up are being in church. I grew up in a ministry family and have been involved and serving in ministry all my life, but that didn't keep me from asking the question everyone asks throughout their life... "What is God's will for my life?" What does God want me to do? Some people are planners and other people are what I call "wingers". Throughout our lives we face seasons of transition that bring decisions, directions, and also dilemmas. What am I going to do after I graduate? Should we buy a new car? What about having another kid? Take my advice on this one... think about it! The problems start when we make permanent decisions but have no plan for it. You know what I mean... we start regretting the place we are when we realize there was no plan, to begin with.

Matthew 7 is the powerful chapter where Jesus teaches the parable of the wise and the foolish builders. Notice that verse 24 starts by saying, "whoever hears...". Who are you hearing right now? Who are you listening to in life? Who you're hearing FIRST is far more important than what you're doing. God cares about who you're hearing... FIRST!

This is a big deal when it comes to the direction of our lives. Simple question, are you listening to God first? It matters! Second, God cares about who you're becoming more than what you're doing. I think, "What does God want me to do with my life?" is the wrong question. Jesus talked more about character and calling than a career. I think the right question is, who am I becoming? I'm a pastor, that's what I do, but the most important thing to God is who I'm becoming. What if we just decided to be a Jesus person where we are today before we worry about what we'll be doing tomorrow. It's impossible to get to the right place with the wrong motive. If we want to do what God has called us to do in the future, then we must be who God has called us to be today. Here's the bottom line, if you build the right who, God will help you choose the right do. If you build the right why, God will lead you to the right what, but you will never build a Godly Life without a Godly Plan.



Devotional Day Seventeen

(Romans 12:18 NIV) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

How can you live in peace with crazy people? Three years ago I did a series at our church called You Make Me Crazy. This is probably a series I should do every other month, right? Take a minute and think of the craziest person you know...can you see their face? Okay, let me ask you one more question, why do you follow them on social media? That's a recipe for crazy. I want to give you some powerful principles that will help you handle the crazy moments in life. First, dealing with crazy people starts with realizing and admitting you're a little crazy too. Many times we want to blame someone for making us crazy when we are making ourselves crazy. I love what David said in the Psalms, "Search me oh God...". David realized he needed to put down the magnifying glass and pick up the mirror. The first step in dealing with crazy people is realizing that you've been saved and forgiven of some crazy stuff yourself.

Another key to dealing with crazy is setting healthy boundaries in our lives. Our church recently purchased property to build our first permanent location and one of the first things we needed to do was get a survey done. Before we start any projects in our lives we better survey our lives. Christians shouldn't build barriers but we should have

boundaries. You can give unconditional love without giving unrestricted access to everyone. Boundaries are Biblical. Psalm 1:1 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." That sounds like boundaries to me. Jesus loved everyone but was not afraid to confront anyone. In Matthew 16:23 he warned Peter, "Get away from me, Satan!". Jesus loved him but backed him up. You may need to redefine some boundaries with crazy in your life. Remember this important principle, you can't help people that need help, you can only help people that want help. Equal love does not mean equal access. Sometimes you need to love crazy from a distance. You can inspire people but you can't change people. The key is to be so full of the love of Christ that you can truly love the crazies in your life. To be full you have to eat everyday...consume God's word, worship passionately, and get in God's presence daily. We must get to the place where we can believe the best about others and need the least from them.



Devotional Day Eighteen

(Psalm 113:1-3 NLT) Praise the Lord! Yes, give praise, O servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord! 2 Blessed be the name of the Lord now and forever. 3 Everywhere—from east to west—praise the name of the Lord.

Everybody in the world worships something; a career, a relationship, sports, or success. We're all wired to worship and our praise is powerful. Praise is defined as an expression of admiration, an expression of respect or gratitude. An expression is the act of making known one's thoughts, feelings or, emotions. So go with me here...if praise is an expression and an expression is an act then it's impossible to praise God without some action. I've heard people use this excuse that praise is something that's very personal and private to them. Well, tell that to your husband or wife. If you love them they want to see some action!

The verses we just read in Psalm 113:1-3 contain some very expressive language describing what our worship of God should look like. The word praise used here is the Hebrew word Halal which means to boast, to celebrate clamorously and loudly. Sound quiet, private, and personal to you? There are some supernatural things that happen when we praise God. First, our praise reminds us of who God is. He's supreme, He's the Alpha and Omega, He's our friend. Our praise

reminds us of who God is and what He can do. When everything in our lives is out of control He's the one that remains in control. Praise gets our mind off the problem and on to the promise. It's impossible to worship and worry at the same time. Second, our praise releases God's presence. Psalm 22:3 tells us, "God you are holy, and you sit down, remain, abide and dwell in the praises of you people." When we praise God we establish Him over our circumstances. When we invite His presence we invite His power. When we praise Him we're enthroning Him over our life, family, job, finances, and even our health. Praise changes your perspective. So take a Praise Moment right now and invite God's presence and power in.



Devotional Day Nineteen

(Acts 19:11 NKJV) Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul.

Have you ever had anything unusual happen in your life? Something unique, uncommon, extraordinary, or rare. We live in a world that is consumed by Stranger Things...if you have to ask you don't know! Our God is not unusual but He certainly specializes in the unusual. Tracy and I were talking earlier today remembering all the unusual things God has done in our lives. From our miracle meeting on a cruise in the Bahamas to us miraculously having five incredible kids when the medical professionals said we should give up hope. We've had a front-row seat to the unusual miracles God can do if you just believe.

Throughout scripture we see examples of God doing unusual things. From parting the Red Sea to the sun standing still in Joshua 10 and throughout the New Testament. There were unusual children born in the Bible...in Hebrews 11:23 Moses is referred to as an unusual child. Some of you are shaking your head right now agreeing that there are still some unusual children being born! Never underestimate what God can do through unique, rare, and extraordinary people. They always think outside the box and color outside the lines. Don't worry about unusual kids, just pray for them. They are the inventors, pioneers, trailblazers, business owners and church leaders. God always uses

people who can think, dream and color outside the lines. I truly believe the next generation needs unusual wisdom about what to allow into their lives in the day we are living in. We need some once in a lifetime leaders to be raised up to lead the next wave of technology, entertainment, medicine, research, and certainly the mission of the church of Jesus Christ. Exodus 35:35 tells us that God, "filled them both with unusual skills as jewelers, carpenters, embroidery designers in blue, purple, and scarlet on linen backgrounds, and as weavers—they excel in all the crafts we will be needing in the work." It's the Holy Spirit that empowers us to live a life of unusual moments. I'm so thankful that God can do the miraculous and unusual with very average people...aren't you?



Devotional Day Twenty

(Acts 2:17 NKJV) And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

The average person dreams about 4 times per night. If you're like me you rarely remember what they are unless it's the one where you're falling and you wake yourself up right before you hit the ground. I think that's called a nightmare! The Bible has more to say about dreams than any other book throughout history. A dream is something seen in sleep or a vision in a dream. Proverbs 29:18 is a powerful verse about dreams, "Where there is no vision the people perish". Simply put, without a dream you have no vision. The Message translation of that verse says, "If people can't see what God is doing they stumble all over themselves." It's important to dream but it's even more important to have a relationship with the dream giver. God is the dream giver. In Genesis 37 a seventeen-year-old boy named Joseph dreamed an outrageous dream that ultimately saved his entire family from destruction and a nation from devastation.

What dream has God given you? Have you ever asked Him what His vision is for your life? If you build your life and your family around a God-given dream you won't be stumbling all over yourself as the verse

says. When fathers and mothers lose sight of their dreams they don't instill vision into their sons and daughters. So how do you begin to dream? Start by surrounding yourself with other dreamers and visionaries. If you told me 10 years ago that we would see over ten thousand people make a decision for Jesus through our services, mission projects, and small groups I would have said that was a crazy dream. Well, we did and we're not done dreaming as a church. God causes these outrageous dreams to come true so we can never stop dreaming and casting vision. I tell our church all the time that we will always have more dreams and visions than we have resources. It allows God to show up and do the impossible. Anyone who loses their ability to dream for the future will always return to their past. The greatest gift we've been given for dreaming is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks in the language of dreams. Acts 2:17 reminds us, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy (the future), your young men shall see visions (what's not yet there), your old men shall dream dreams (something that doesn't exist yet)." I love what Willy Wonka said, "We are the makers of music, we are the dreamers of dreams." So take a few moments right now and just DREAM.



Devotional Day Twenty-One

(2 Corinthians 6:11-13 MSG) Dear, dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!

I love the picture the Apostle Paul paints in this passage. He's communicating to the people of Corinth that God has called them to live life expansively with no limits. At the same time he exposes something so critical. He says, "The smallness you feel comes from within you". It's amazing the limitations we put on ourselves without even realizing it. When we limit ourselves because of ourselves we can never become all God has created us to be. I truly believe that God wants to show us things and do things through us that we cannot dare to imagine. Here's a truth we all need to be reminded of...God is limitless and with Him the possibilities are endless. Paul understood that as human beings we can allow our natural tendencies to keep us from our God-given destiny. What's one thing you need God to do for you right now? Once you've determined what that one thing is I want to challenge you to apply this verse to your life. Isaiah 54:2 says, "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not

hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.”. This speaks of increase, growth, movement and, stretching.

When is the last time you stretched? If it's been very long you know it can be painful. But when you stretch you are increasing your capacity. You're making room for something supernatural. Sometimes you have to do things you've never done before to see things you've never seen before. What you pray about and how you believe says a lot about how you see God. Our destiny is always outside of our comfort zone. Don't let your past keep you from your purpose. Don't let your doubts keep you from your destiny. If we refuse to stretch ourselves spiritually we limit what God can do. To step into our destiny we must step away from our security. You don't have to have the faith to finish. You just have to have the faith to start. I love what St. Francis of Assisi said, “Start doing what's necessary, then what's possible, then suddenly you are doing the impossible.” This is the moment to start living wide-open, spacious, expansive and, limitless lives!