

# ***WALK THE TALK***

Devotional for Teens (2)

***'Reason is the slave of passion...'***

*('Crime and Punishment', Dostoevsky, 1866)*

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## Introduction

This is the second devotional I have written for Teens, the first one is called, *'Lose Life To Save It'*. The title of this second devotional, *'Walk the Talk'*, captures my heart for another important area of challenge and call to the Christian Teen.

At the outset I want to say – it is critical to say – that the call of Christ on us to 'walk the walk', to live what we believe, to practice what we preach, is not to kill our joy, or make us burdened or fearful in this Christianity thing! When I was a kid (more on my crazy life below), I would sometimes hear, feel and see, that a call to action was a kind of depressing experience, a sense of the heavy or religious kicking into gear. We'd all be enjoying donuts and sing- songs, and then suddenly be reminded by a preacher that we had to get out there and get martyred for the faith, or lose friends, or just be weird. This is not God's heart, nor what is meant or lies in wait for a true 'walk' of what we 'talk'. There is a way to be a strong, committed, free believer in Jesus Christ, and also be completely – to the core – saturated with freedom and peace and favor with God and man. Are you ready to explore this?

Now this quality, genuine experience and path of Christ is not easy, but it is definitely not that *'long dark cloud rolling in'* that Bob Dylan sings of when 'knockin' on heaven's door.' There is darkness, but it is an exhilarating, intoxicating

darkness (Psalm 139:12, Amos 4:13), and then there is light that you will see come from darkness (II Samuel 22:29). You will see Christ, the light of the world, and then by his power you will *become* the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)

I referred above to my 'crazy life'. If interested in a brief overview of it, check out the 'About' page on my website:

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I dedicate this devotional to anyone nearly out of the teen years, or not long out of the teen years.

# 1 (day and date: )

***'Darkness is as light to You.'*** Psalm 139:12

We all have 'dark' moments every day in this ***'present evil age'***. (Galatians 1:4) Maybe you feel these moments as loneliness. Maybe you feel them as a sense of not being attractive, or not being liked by others, or just being lost at sea in a large and overwhelming life. It is critical that we bring God into these moments, and I will explain why...

Areas of sorrow, or sadness in our life (what I refer to above as 'darkness'), are not only hard to deal with in ourselves, but also are areas of weakness where the enemy can attack and steal. I have known people who feel they are not 'lovable' or pretty, and because of losing hope in this area of life, they are very vulnerable to someone who comes along and makes them feel lovable or pretty. And the enemy has used this insecurity and brought the wrong person into this space to do just that. I have seen strong Christians fall in this area.

We need to bring Jesus into our areas of darkness and insecurity, which are also our areas of weakness. It is critical that in this place we allow the presence of Jesus to be with us, and we need to listen to his report to us here, and believe it. He will whisper to you in those 'dark' moments, if you let him, and he will

transform your dark places into times and spaces that are sweet with his presence and voice. (Psalm 73:25-26; Psalm 42:7) Your darkness is not something he cannot handle (Psalm 139:12), and he can and will ***‘turn your darkness to light.’*** (II Samuel 22:29)

Devotional Activity: Look up and write out in full each verse referenced above. Pick one and work to memorize it today.



# 2 (day and date: )

***'To the one who is victorious, I will give... a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.'***

(Revelation 2:17)

Who writes the story of your life? I mean, you are doing this and that, studying or working, going places, friends and friend groups, etc. But what does it amount to? What guy or girl are you, actually?

What does it all mean? How does it come together and stack and 'be'?

We all strive and struggle to be something and someone in this life. We do. It is a powerful drive and force from within. This is because, way back when in the Garden of Eden, we unplugged ourselves from the source of our truest, holy, whole self and spirit: God. Since then, we are born scrambling, in search of self and meaning. As we get older, we seem to get farther from this goal, not closer. That tree of knowledge fills us with knowledge of being lost.

The true you? You want this? It does exist, but is found in the palm of God's hand. He said he carved your name on the palm of his hand (Isaiah 49:16), and then bought you with his blood (Revelation 5:9). Listen, your truest self, now in your youth and forevermore, is '**hidden**

***with Christ in God.***' (Colossians 3:3)

Devotional Activity:

Pursue Jesus today. Really. Get to a quiet place, and literally get on your knees, and pray to Jesus. Say you want to come through that door that he offers, and find him. Here you will find your true self, that words will never be able express. (John 10:9).



### # 3 (day and date: )

***'Now show me your glory.'*** Exodus 33:18

So what's my goal today? What's your goal? God gives us an over-arching goal every day, which the rest of our mini-goals should fit into, or fall in behind. It is this: to get, and keep, his light in our eyes, his presence in our heart.

Moses was a 'friend' to God like no other man (Exodus 33:11), humble (Numbers 12:3), and set apart (Matthew 17:3). It is extraordinary that even after 'talking' with God, and winning his heart in dialogue and discussion over a number of days, even after all this interaction with God himself, Moses asked this at the end of it all: ***'Now show me your glory.'*** (Exodus 33:18).

Jesus endured the cross because of the 'light' in his eyes (Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 12:2), and Stephen endured martyrdom because of the light in his eyes (Acts 7:54-60).

#### Devotional Activity:

Are you running through the Christian motions but have lost that living light in your eye? Check out these couple of scriptures, meditate on them a few minutes, then kneel and pray. Ask God to refresh your vision of him: John 7:37-38; 8:12; 1:1-5,9

# 4 (day and date: )

***‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe.’***

(Proverbs 18:10)

You are righteous – by God’s blood and your faith – and in the name of the Lord you are safe. I love the image of a fortified tower that this verse depicts. It is not only a place of escape from danger (and God *does* give you escape from danger, Psalm 118:21), but also a place to ‘do life’.

Let’s dwell on this picture – and reality – for a minute. Where do you feel ‘safe’? Maybe at home, or at church? Maybe home is not a safe place for you, but a place where you have been hurt. Safe places and spaces are different for all of us, and they change as life twists and turns.

Now imagine that rather than finding a safe place in this life, your whole life was lived *within* the walls of a safe place. This is what we do when we take our lives and place them in the strong tower that is the name of the Lord.

This is a tough life. Yes, it is. Jesus himself said it would be. (John 16:33) But here is our challenge, and the one Jesus gives us: Are we going to live, and pray, that ***‘His kingdom come, and will be done, in our life as it is in heaven’?*** (Matthew 6:9-13) We do have this

option. We can pull his Kingdom down over us, draw his Spirit up into us (Ephesians 1:13-14), by taking our lives into the cover of his name.

So where do you *'do life'*? Do you do life in his name, and build life within the protection of the walls of his strong tower? Or are you doing and building life outside of the walls of his name?

# 5 (day and date: )

***'Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.'***

(Exodus 17:11)

*(Read this story in Exodus 17:8-13)*

So my thought here is that in the 'natural', the Israelites were probably weaker than Amalek. Moses is looking on, and if he just 'looks on', hands dropped to his side like any onlooker anywhere, the battle was lost to the enemy. They were stronger. So God directs and challenges Moses. He wants Moses to not just look on, but to come, stand, and look over the battle, to face it head on. No fear, no cowering. And in this place he wanted Moses not to let his hands fall limp at his side, but lift them to the sky, a statement of worship and faith. In this place, before his own eyes, Moses saw power released and victory won.

It says in Hebrews 11:6 that ***'without faith it is impossible to please God.'*** God's identity is 'impossible' for man to understand, even in how God defines himself:1-in-3, 3-in-1. But God wants us to know and accept his impossible identity because of his revelation. (Exodus 3:14) He wants us to believe what we do not see. (2 Corinthians 5:7) He wants faith. This is not God trying to be difficult or hard on us. Rather it is

God trying to bring us into the very heart and reality of who he is, and what life really stands on.

Seeing is not believing (*look at what the people did who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, John 11:45-53*). Believing what we see with our hearts – Jesus Christ as Lord – is true knowing, and living, now and forevermore.

Here are a few of my favorite verses about this true seeing: Exodus 3:14; Job 19:25-27; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Romans 11:33-36; Isaiah 55:9; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1 Corinthians 1:20, and really the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 2; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 2:3; Colossians 1:27.

If you have some time, look up some of these verses and write them out.

# 6 (day and date: )

***'I care very little if I am judged by you, or by any human court. Indeed I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.'*** (1 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Paul writes these extraordinary words to the church in Corinth. What most impacts me in this list of people that Paul mentions, is that Paul says he does not even trust his own judgment. This is a key to the freedom that Jesus gives us.

Everybody has a 'report' on everybody, all the time. The most powerful one is in your own head about yourself, because your head goes with you everywhere, even when others have forgotten you... Paul tells us that yes, he does have peace (***'my conscience is clear...'***), but that is not his ultimate sense of being 'right' or 'righteous'. Remember, our own heart can get it wrong. (1 John 3:20) So who has the ultimate say on who you are, in any and every situation? The Lord.

God made you, and names you. (Revelation 2:17) He claims your life and your cause, calling you to access it through faith – not feeling, not people's opinion (not even your own), not 'fact' and definitely not fiction.

Faith. Say 'yes' to every truth that God speaks to

your heart, and you will find yourself deep in real faith. Begin, of course, with saying ‘Yes!’ to Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, one with God, your God.

Devotional Activity:

Kneel and pray. Ask God to help you see and know – with your heart and spirit, even if not with your mind – who you are and where you stand in Jesus.

# 7 (day and date: )

***‘But Jesus did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people... he knew what was in a man.’*** (John 2:24-25)

This verse has always amazed me, but also freed me from some shackles on my feet. Jesus was not an ‘untrusting’ person, because ***‘love always trusts’*** (I Corinthians 13:7).

The context of this verse is that Jesus was getting ‘the love’ from the crowds. They were seeing his power and he was getting popular. It is here that he ***‘did not entrust himself to them’***.

Do you entrust yourself to people who make you feel ‘good’ or popular? What happens here is they ‘praise’ you, and this praise – if ‘trusted’ – catches you like a hook catches a fish. You find yourself being who they want you to be. They buy you with praise – because you believe it – and then they steal you away.

God has got your ‘person’ in the palm of his hand. You are hidden there (Colossians 3:3), your name is etched in blood. (Isaiah 49:16) You’ve been bought with blood. (Revelation 5:9) And this ‘definition’ or ‘name’ of who you are – this praise, as it were – is trustworthy. Unlike that of people.



Devotional Activity:

Love people, but trust what God says to and about you. You need no other 'praise'. Get to know God's report about you.

# 8 (day and date: )

***'The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.'*** (Exodus 14:14)

This is an amazing moment in history, right before the parting of the Red Sea. The people are panicked because they see the Egyptian army coming for them. They complain to Moses, and he enquires of God. God says, ***'The Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.'***

Still? That is the hardest thing to really do or 'be' before God and man, even in times of peace. But when there is danger coming right at you, a dust storm of vicious attack, God sometimes calls us to evidence our faith in him, and show we know his voice (John 10:27), by being 'still'. Very, very hard. This is maturity. This is not the same as being passive, scared stiff, or ignoring something. It is seeing the real danger, and being still because God has said so.

***'Do not fear!'*** is all over the scriptures. Why? Because we fear all the time. Fear is a motif all through the Psalms. This is because David, the great warrior and Psalmist, feared. Paul feared for his life (2 Corinthians 1:8), Mary feared when she saw the angel (Luke 1:30), the disciples ***'were terrified'*** when they saw Jesus. (Matthew 14:26) God calls us to really tackle this, through knowing him. (1 John 4:18)

### Devotional Activity:

One way to practice being still in and with God, is to be still in and with God! In other words, take time every day to sit quietly, eyes closed, whispering prayer to Jesus that he will open the eyes of your heart, spill his word over your soul. Be with him.

# 9 (day and date: )

***‘Anger is cruel, fury overwhelming, but before a jealous man, who can stand?’***

(Proverbs 27:4)

Jealousy is ‘beyond’ anger and fury. This proverb tells us what we know and feel. We need to turn our spirits towards the light of God, so that he can burn our jealousy to ashes. It must go.

Remember, the ‘angel’ was not happy with his position of power (or shall we say, was jealous of God’s power), and this made him the devil. (Jude 1:6) Adam and Eve were not happy with Eden (with paradise, perfection), were jealous of God, reached to ***‘become like God’*** (Genesis 3:5), and this brought us death and sin. Jealousy is not about what your neighbor or friend has and you don’t have. It is about you not being content with God, and his word and spirit to you.

To want this or that, is not the point. It is what surges in you to want this or that. You can admire – and indeed to ***‘rejoice with those who rejoice’*** (Romans 12:15), there needs to be some admiration, or desire, going on. If not ‘desirable’, you would not rejoice with someone who gets something. But jealousy is different. It is not a pure, childlike ‘liking’ or ‘wanting’. Jealously is a type of hating, and it is not even the person (because the ‘person’ you are jealous

of keeps changing); it is between you and God.

Devotional Activity:

God wants to free us from this hold. We have power in Christ to demolish strongholds of this type. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) Do you struggle with this? There is complete freedom available to you. Kneel and pray.

# 10 (day and date: )

***‘For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and we as your servants.’***

(2 Corinthians 4:5)

What about our ‘testimony’? Have you ever felt insecure about telling someone about Jesus?

When I was starting out in my walk with Jesus, about 16 years old, I remember feeling inadequate to share Jesus in certain settings, because I could not really relate to people’s lives or stories or experiences. How could I, for example, tell an older, homeless, drug addict about the love and salvation of Jesus, when I had not walked his walk? Two things here:

First (*and I’ll save the best for ‘second’*), Paul helps us get a healthier ‘take’ on what we’re doing in sharing Jesus with people. He says in today’s verse (2 Corinthians 4:5) to the church in Corinth that he is not preaching himself. If my message was about me – how ‘I understand you’ – I would be restricted to speak only to those people I understand. And that is very, very few.

But I do not preach myself; I preach that God, Jesus Christ, understands you. He knows your story. He reaches out to you with his message. So I do not need to personally know and understand all aspects of ‘your’ story, to tell you Christ’s story.

But yes, I do need to know Christ, and know *his* story.

Secondly (drum roll, please...), the most powerful witness to the widest range of people and backgrounds – from prostitutes to addicts to millionaires – was a man who never ‘knew’ these struggles: Jesus Christ.

Jesus, who ***‘knew no sin’*** (2 Corinthians 5:21) reached the deepest and the darkest of sinners. Jesus reached and healed the man called ‘Legion’ (Mark 5:9, with ‘many’ demons inside), and Jesus reached me!

#### Devotional Activity:

I have sometimes said to people, *‘I cannot relate to your life and story, but Jesus can, and I want to tell you about him, and his love for you...’*

Make a commitment today to learn how it is Jesus relates and reaches people with his message, not how you relate and reach people. Know Christ deeply. And do not preach yourself, but Jesus as Lord, and you as people’s servant of this message.

# 11 (day and date: )

***'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony.'***

(Revelation 12:11)

You have an enemy. One of his characteristics is that he is an 'accuser'. The verse before the one above, verse 10, says that he, the devil, is accusing you before God night and day. That's intense. God does not seem perturbed by this, but when the enemy starts to accuse you directly – to your heart and mind - it can be one of life's deepest spiritual challenges.

There are some things that the *Holy Spirit* will convict your heart about, and be calling you to repent of – such as lying, stealing, pornography, jealousy, etc. But having repented of these sins, and walking in and towards the light, the enemy will not relent. He will recall to your mind things in your past – things God has forgiven you for – and remind you of them. He is trying to weaken you, and make you feel unworthy in the work, and person, God has for you. It is here, my friend, that you need to rise and say, *'The blood of the lamb covers me. I am forgiven.'* You will need, at times, to say this over and over, because your own heart may join the enemy's chorus and 'condemn you'. (1 John 3:20)

This is not just a magic phrase to overcome the enemy; it is a prayer walk, a road, a reality to



believe, act on, live in. This is faith, and pleases God. (Hebrews 11:6)

Devotional Activity:

It is essential to harness and hold the identity that God gives you. This is not easy; it is a life-long discipline. You need to first 'know' what God says about you, in order to believe it. So make a commitment today that you will read and meditate on God's Word as a daily discipline.

## # 12 (day and date: )

**'All things are yours...'** (1 Corinthians 3:23)

Are you generous? Think on this for a minute... Generosity is so challenging for a number of reasons. First, we want to have and hold stuff here on earth, and to give it away goes against that 'want'. Giving is simply hard. Now, there are different levels of giving, all good, but some harder and deeper than others. The harder it goes, the closer to Christ – and eternal truth – you are. Here goes:

Level 1: Giving to people who can and will give back. This is still very important, and the first rung on the ladder. And I'm not talking just about people who give stuff back – like an invite for an invite, a dinner for a dinner; I'm talking about people who give back in *any* way, e.g. gratitude (*'Thank You! You're awesommmme!'*), or respect, or honor: Jesus said even the 'pagans' do this. (Matthew 5:46)

Level 10 (*yes, I've skipped a few...*): Giving generously to those who not only cannot and will not give anything back, but will not thank you, either. Ouch! Yes, this is really tough to do, and I'm sure you've experienced this. Now, this is 'deep' giving in 2 ways:

(1) Giving in this way is exactly how Christ has given to you, to me. So here, in this ungrateful

experience, you are 'feeling' Christ to the world, to you personally. He was brutalized and killed for me, to give me forgiveness, and I don't often ask for it, nor thank him for it.

(2) Here you touch on the truths of heaven. '**All things are yours...**' (1 Corinthians 3:23)

Nothing you actually have is yours to keep here on earth. And yet, in another mysterious sense - deep, spiritual sense - we can give it all away because it is all ours to keep forever.

# 13 (day and date: )

***‘Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ (James 4:13-15)***

Read and re-read these verses a couple times.  
Think about it for a minute...

When I was a young lad I had dreams of being a pro’ soccer player, or a pro’ something else, and that’s OK! Dreams and wants and longings are OK. God made you special, and I do believe that many of our dreams from within, are tied up in the fabric of our spiritual gifts, and also personal destinies. Dreams are good. But what do we do with these dreams?

Well, we can dream these dreams and just go after them, and when we think of it, pray a prayer and ask God to bless ‘em. This is one option, and the most popular road to travel: use all your heart, soul, mind and strength to get what you want.

Or... we can bring these dreams to God, lay them at his throne, and ask God if he has any

plans or dreams for us. This is option 2, it's scary, risky, and faith-filled. It says that my life is not my own, and I believe God has better, deeper plans for my life, and power to deliver.

***'Without faith, it is impossible to please God.'***  
(Hebrews 11:6)

Remember, Jesus said the most important command was to love God passionately. (Matthew 22:36-40, Deuteronomy 6:4-5) Do you trust him with your dreams?

# 14 (day and date: )

***‘...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.’*** (2 Corinthians 11:14)

They say imitation is the highest form of flattery. Like, if someone is trying to be like you, then they must admire you, right? On most innocent levels this is true, but not when the stakes go up. In fact, the craziest of fans – the one that will end up shooting that celebrity – is usually the most ‘adoring’ or ‘obsessed’. When one business – like a food or fashion product – imitates another business, it is not to flatter anyone, but to get in and compete, steal profits.

Satan’s first temptation to mankind was to say that we would become ‘like God’, if we disobeyed him. (Genesis 3:5) We had seen God’s power, seen his glory, and we were not content to just enjoy it. We wanted to ‘own’ it. We wanted, as Nietzsche says, to be worshipped!<sup>1</sup>

You are made by God in his image. (Genesis 1:27) Believing in Christ you are forgiven, given special gifts, a deep, true and secret name. (Revelation 2:17) The devil envies this redemption, and wants to steal from you what you really are, and who you really are. He knows that you access these truths through faith, that

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<sup>1</sup> *‘If there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god? Therefore, there are no gods!’* Thus Spoke Zarathustra, F Nietzsche, 1891

this is God's way, and it is hard for humans. So the devil will come through the avenues of doubt to derail you, and leave you motionless. He will say, 'prove it!' (because faith is not on the spectrum of 'proof', and if you engage this debate, you simply free-fall to nothing at all...)

His ultimate trickery is to dress up just like you ('masquerade'), show you the same 'look' in the mirror – physical and spiritual – but tell you it is him – not God – on the inside. You will say, if the devil can look like me, how do I know that I am truly the redeemed me - the one with God - on the inside? Faith, my brother, my sister! You can only fight this false report of the devil by declaring that you believe, and stand on, the 'report of the Lord' about your true self!

*(Romans 10:9; Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 2:17; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 11:6)*

# 15 (day and date: )

***‘But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining for what is ahead, I press on towards the goal.’*** (Philippians 3:13-14)

Sometimes we can be ‘too serious’ about this and that. This is true. It is not so much about how much we value a thing, but ‘too serious’ is about ‘spirit’.

Usually what we mean by ‘too serious’ is that someone is heavy-spirited about something. We don’t want that. Ask God to free you from that kind of ‘too serious’.

However, if you look through history (or sports!), those people we admire and who rocked the world, were very serious about their goal. They were passionate and focused. They sacrificed and kept walking when others had faded. Their ‘love’ and passion ran very, very deep.

It is important to reflect on Jesus’ words which we have referenced a number of times already:

***‘The most important command is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength...’*** (Matthew 22:36-40, referencing Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

The love of Christ was not heavy-spirited, but it was intentional from start to finish, and was often



a lonely road. People accused him of being ***'raving mad and demon possessed'***. (John 10:20)

Read about the 'heroes of faith' in Hebrews chapter 11. And also, as you work through the scriptures in the future, over time, take note of the intense and sincere men of God, how they 'loved', and held onto God (for example, Genesis 32:22-33). Note Elisha's resolve in 2 Kings 2, and the straight, challenging words of Jesus in Luke 12:4-5, 8-9, and John 8:31-32 and Matthew 10:34-38.

Radical is not 'found' by trying to be radical (anymore than prosperity is found by seeking prosperity - Proverbs 21:21). Radical is anyone, anywhere, known or not known, that seeks and loves God above all else. (Psalm 73:25-26, Job 19:7-14, 25-27)

There are lots of Scripture passages referenced above. If you have some time, look some of them up and read and enjoy.

# 16 (day and date: )

***'I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!'*** (Job 19:25-27)

God is an all-or-nothing God. This is not the same as being super-intense and overwhelming. God is the giver of peace. Angels would appear and say, *'Do not be afraid!'*, and Jesus would appear and say, *'Peace be with you!'* God is the giver of peace, however this peace is through a door that is so precious to God, that he does not honor one-foot-in-and-one-foot-out. Jesus said, ***'I am the door.'*** (John 10:9)

Light comes from truth, and that light falls on everyone near it. That does not mean everyone is in it. Jesus even said to the Pharisees in rebuke, about John the Baptist, that they ***'chose to enjoy his light for a time.'*** (John 5:35) You can enjoy the light coming out through a door, without yourself going through that door. Jesus was challenging on this, all the time, not because he wanted us to be stressed out in our faith and relationship with him, but so that we would not be stressed out in our relationship with him! The 'lukewarm thing' is very, very stressful. (Revelation 3:16) I've been there, and it is exhausting.

Jesus said to some people, '**You are near to the kingdom.**' (Mark 12:34) We don't want to be just 'near' to the kingdom! Go deep. Get closer. Know him better. Know more peace.

Devotional Activity:

A couple challenging verses to look up are John 8:31-32 (*note here that Jesus is talking to 'believers'*); John 14:21; Isaiah 29:13; Revelation 3:16.

# 17 (day and date: )

***‘...and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.’*** (Philemon 1:6)

This verse is an extraordinary one, in that it indicates that by ‘sharing your faith’ you access deeper understanding of Christ in you. It is as if God has reserved ‘levels’ of knowing him, for those that are active in sharing him. This can be scary. How, where, to whom? Did I mention, ‘How?!’

This is where we need to stop for a minute. Don’t think on the ‘how’ at this time. We need always to be situated in the ‘Who’: Not you, not even others, but Jesus Christ. Remember (this is key), as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:5, you do not preach yourself, but Jesus Christ, and you as a servant to this message, to others.

We share Jesus because this honors God, and in honoring God we hope and pray that he will pour out his Spirit, and open hearts to himself. Always keeping our eyes on the Lord. As Paul writes, ***‘...from him and through him and to him are all things...’*** (Romans 11:33-36)

Another key verse to batten down this perspective is Ephesians 3:10, which speaks of the church, in preaching to others, ***‘making***

***known the wisdom of God to heavenly bodies.***’ In other words, there is a lot more going on – both on earth and in heaven – when we share Jesus. In our witness, we are in an eternal flow, and timeless mission, touching people (earthly bodies), but making God’s wisdom known to heavenly bodies. Lots of dimensions intersecting here.

Yesterday I was writing this devotional at a public park table, and a guy asked me what I was doing. Because I was doing what I was doing, I was able to ‘respectfully and with gentleness’ (1 Peter 3:15) tell him about it, and therefore speak naturally about the Lord.

Sometimes we need to just be involved in more Christian work and activities, so that what we’re doing, helps us speak about what we’re doing - Jesus Christ, and his life. But if we’re not ‘doing’ much Jesus life, it can be harder sometimes to bring the gospel into life conversations.

One of my most common ways of beginning a conversation about Jesus, is simply *answering* (not asking) the question, ‘*What are you doing this weekend?*’ When I am asked this, I always share that on Sunday I will be going to church. This often leads to a fruitful conversation about faith. If you are involved in any fellowship or church activities, just make a commitment to be honest about these things when asked about your life.

# 18 (day and date: )

***‘Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’*** (Matthew 11:28-30)

Two things strike me about this passage. One, Jesus is so meek, such a strong hand of peace. And yet, like the almost paradoxical image of a ‘strong hand’ and ‘peace’, is this interesting offer of Christ: He does not here say that he will *remove* our burden (*though he does* – 1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 55:22), rather he invites us to *take up* another ‘yoke’, another ‘burden’: his life and cause. He promises that it is light, but it is a yoke, most definitely.

The ‘lightness’ of Christ’s yoke is in the fact that to take up his life and cause, is to let go of your own life and cause. It is an RIP, of sorts. And indeed, we do ‘rest in peace’ (or have a light burden), when we die to this life. Christ calls us to peace, by dying to ourselves, and living for him.

Paul says, ***‘I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’*** (Galatians 2:20)

Jesus spoke challenging words to us about going *all-in*: Look up Mark 8:34-38, and when you have another 5 or 10 minutes I encourage you to read the words of Christ that are not in any of the gospels – they are in Revelation chapters 2-3. In these chapters, Jesus writing to 7 different churches, look at how he starts by saying each time that he knows the trials and struggles that the people are in. But then carefully consider the ‘strength’ with which Christ calls them to ‘persevere’, press on... Why? He knows the glory that awaits the faithful. (Hebrews 12:2; Romans 8:18)

# 19 (day and date: )

***‘Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.’*** (Matthew 18:18)

We have seen how Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12), but that Jesus put this ‘light’ responsibility and reality back on us – ***‘You are the light of the world...’*** (Matthew 5:14) This is deep and wide, and catches us up in eternal winds and currents. When Jesus *is* you, we are really becoming one with God’s mystery – ***‘Christ in you, the hope of glory.’*** (Colossians 1:27)

Today’s verse above (Matthew 18:18) is another ‘weighty’ truth of Christ, for the mature. What you do and say in Jesus’ name really does make things happen. But honestly, there is no other way if the words and ways of Christ are true.

You and I as believers, walking in and with Christ, pray, for example, and things *do* happen. Here we are ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’, and the exchange is one happening here on earth, happening also in heaven. To believe in Christ, and to ***‘keep in step with the spirit’*** (Galatians 5:25), is to be spirit-walking, and spirit-doing. This may seem all weird and wacky to some – even to us in the natural at times – but is actually the more ‘true’. It is walking on the true ‘foundation’ of life and the eternal, which is



deeper and 'other' than the physical floor under your feet.

***'So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal'***  
(2 Corinthians 4:18)

***'We live by faith, not by sight.'***  
(2 Corinthians 5:7)

***'We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written:***

***"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard,  
and what no human mind has conceived"<sup>2</sup> —  
the things God has prepared for those who love him—***

***these are the things God has revealed to us  
by his Spirit.'***

(2 Corinthians 2:6-10)

# 20 (day and date: )

***'... when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'*** (1 John 3:2)

Seeing Christ is how we become like Christ.

We get to know Christ by learning about his life, and spending time with him. This 'seeing' is how we are transformed. Do you want a closer relationship with Christ? You need to know him better, both head and heart knowledge.

The Bible is God's provision – and challenge – to us who say we want more of God. It is God's love letter to us, and he calls us – as a first and most important command – to love him with all we got. (Matthew 22:36-40; Deuteronomy 6:4-5) So do we pick up and read, and re-read the love letter already sent to us? If not, how sincere are we when we say we want to know the Sender better?

God's Word describes in amazing, packed detail, aspects of Jesus' emotions, actions and reactions. We can study these gems of insight, if we, well, look for and find them. We are told that the 'seeker' will be rewarded in deeper ways than he or she who does not seek. (*Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 13:44; Colossians 2:3*) This makes perfect sense. The more you know about someone, and the more time you spend with someone, the closer you become to that person.

Jesus is a person.

Our times in the Bible should not be 'pressured'. I spend only about 10 minutes a day in 'quiet time'. I read one chapter (or less) of the Bible, and I sit quietly with Jesus and pray, listen, rest. Seeking God is not about lots of time and intensity, it is about a sincere love in action.

LIFE Activity:

*Keep following Jesus!*

*(Psalm 19:1-2; Amos 4:13; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:1-7; Isaiah 53; John 1:1-5; John 1:9; John 3:8; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 12:4-5, 8-9; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 11:1, 6; 2 Corinthians 5:7; John 5:39-40; Matthew 22:29; John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; John 4:24; Psalm 139:12; 2 Samuel 22:29)*

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## Note from the Author

No devotional or other Christian reading should ever take the place of a disciplined reading of the Bible.

Jesus quoted the Bible a lot (*Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:18, John 10:34, Luke 20:17-18, etc.*), as did the apostles, as can be seen throughout Acts and Paul's writing. We are told it is the **'sword of the spirit'** (that attacking piece of armor – Ephesians 6:17), and that it is sharper than a double-edge sword. (Hebrews 4:12) Timothy is told that his knowledge of, and instruction in the Scriptures is what made him **'wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ'** (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul goes on to say that Scripture (referring at that time only to the Old Testament), is useful for **'teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'** (vs 16-17)

Jesus once said, **'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures together with the power of God.'** (Matthew 22:29)

Set aside time each day, designate a place, and put on the coffee! Make it a habit if you can. It will become the sweetest time of your day. Make sure, however, your reading of the Bible and time with the Lord, is a love relationship with him. Let his Spirit give you peace. Talk to him as

a friend. (John 15:15)

***'You keep in perfect peace, whose mind is staid on You.'*** (Isaiah 26:3)

***'He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth — the Lord God Almighty is his name.'*** (Amos 4:13)

For more information about Peter Walker's work, and for links to his YouTube channel and other devotionals, visit:

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