



# PRESTONWOOD STUDENT DEVOS



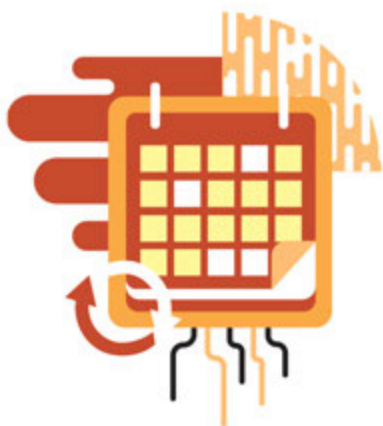
summer 2020



PRESTONWOOD  
S T U D E N T S



# Daily Devotions



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of June 14th

Day 1

## James 1

When was the last time you read a book of the Bible from start to finish without rushing through it? This week let's study James together as we see what the Lord has in store for us in His living and active Word.

James 1 lays a foundation for the role of faith in the life of believers who desire to live out their walk with Christ beyond lip service. This faith plays a role in our lives beyond the moment of salvation; it becomes that basis by which we can be obedient in all aspects of life. James shows believers that faith plays a role in the following aspects of life, just to name a few: trials, wisdom, change, temptation and obedience to God's Word.

**Pick two of the aspects above and answer this question for each: How does my faith impact this aspect of my life?**

As we go through the book of James, you will be answering two consistent questions that can be asked of all of Scripture. Our hope is that this week would serve as a foundation for learning to study God's Word.

**What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage encourage you to apply to your life?**

## James 2

Have you ever tried to quit something, only to pick up the habit again within a couple of hours or days? Why is it so hard to stop these things? Many of us get trapped because our thoughts are only centered on what not to do. After all, how hard is it not to do something if that's all you think about? What if, instead of focusing on what we are fleeing from, we turn our attention to something else that will give us freedom?

**What sin struggle do you often feel trapped in?**

The second chapter of James discusses two theological topics: sin and the connection between faith and works. Do these topics seem disconnected? This chapter shows how they build on one another. As we flee from sin, we get to run to something else: obedience to God's Word. We won't be victorious in fleeing from sin if that's all we try to do. Let's run toward obedience to God's life-giving commandments together.

**What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage encourage you to apply to your life?**

## James 3

What do you think is going to be the greatest battle in your Christian walk? Some might say that the biggest challenges will come as you step on to a college campus or are faced with physical temptation with someone you date. But ...what if the biggest battle you face in your Christian walk is something a little more unsuspecting?

James makes an interesting point, an unsuspecting one even. According to James 3, the biggest battle we face in our walk may be with our words instead of our actions. Does this mean that our actions matter less? No, not at all. We learned yesterday that God sees all sin as sin. So, what's so special about words? Words are ingrained in everything we do. If we let the Enemy take a foothold in something foundational to our everyday life, we create a wide-open door to step into sin in other areas too, perhaps without even recognizing it.

**Think back to your conversations yesterday. How are you encouraged and discouraged by the way you used your words?**

**What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage encourage you to apply to your life?**

# James 4

As you have been studying James this week, have you noticed that James talks about a lot of different things in our walk with the Lord? Have you been overwhelmed trying to think about applying them?

Chapter 4 covers several new experiences we are called to in our walk with the Lord. But, just like the rest of his book, James isn't just giving us a list of things to accomplish. Instead, he is showing us how different parts of our walk all point back to one common thread: faith.

In James 4, James points to our relationship with others and our desires to remind us that the way we handle them communicates a lot about whom our loyalty is tied to. Our relationships with others and the way we treat them often reflects the desires in our own hearts, and the way we handle these desires says even more about what we value. Is our loyalty tied to our loyalty in Jesus or the world?

**What do your desires in this season communicate about whom your loyalty is tied to?**

**What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage encourage you to apply to your life?**

# James 5

What did you miss most during this time of quarantine? Going to practice, eating Chick-fil-A in an actual restaurant, or talking to your friends in the hallway? Whether we want to admit it or not, this season revealed a lot about our desires, especially our desires beyond food and friends.

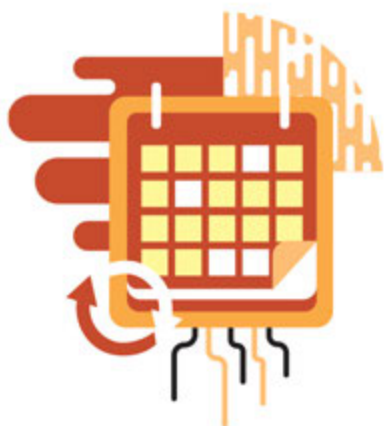
What has this season shown you about your desire for the Lord? Did you desire more of Him as the world let you down, or were you stuck wanting the world to fulfill the desires it had failed you on?

Yesterday we learned that our desires reveal a lot more about us than we would want. Today's chapter reminds us of the reasons why our desires hold so much weight. In the kingdom, our desires aren't just something that may or may not happen, but instead they are something that, when they are rooted in God's Word, will be fulfilled. When our desire is for the Lord Himself, and just what He can do for us, that is a desire worth hoping for.

**How has your desire for the Lord changed in this season?**

**What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage encourage you to apply to your life?**

# Daily Devotions



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of June 21st

Day 1

## Genesis 1:28

God created the world in a matter of six days, resting on the seventh. Something distinct happened on the sixth day, though. God created man in His image, bearing His likeness. Later, God created a woman so that man would have a suitable helper and not be alone. Upon God's blessing and decree, they began to multiply and fill the earth. We know that the mandate to be fruitful and multiply was not a result of sin for two reasons: First, Moses writes that what God had created "was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Second, sin had not yet entered into the world. Adam and Eve were living in perfect relationship with God, absent of sin. In the beginning of mankind's story stood a God whose plan involved a nation, and by His sovereignty, would eventually become the nations.

**How have you seen God's plan and sovereignty working in your life?**

# Genesis 11:1-9

In Genesis 11:1–9, humankind shared one language, using the same common speech. The Tower of Babel is the setting for that part of history when God purposefully and intentionally scattered mankind by means of confusing their speech.

In Genesis 11:4, men sought to make a name for themselves by building a city and a tower that reached the heavens. In the minds of men, building this tower placed them at the same or a greater level than their Creator. When God saw man's efforts in pursuing godship, out of love, He crafted a barrier between their communication. In the middle of the building process, confusion took over. What previously was easy became almost impossible. In a moment's time, the nation became the nations.

**Think about a time when God did something in your life that you originally thought was terrible but turned out to be a blessing. How has your view of God changed?**

# Genesis 12:1-3

In God's pursuit of making His name known, He called a nation to become missionaries for His cause. This nation began with a man named Abraham.

**Why do you think Abraham was used for this specific purpose?**

In Genesis 12:1–3, we see two details about the nations. First, God desires to make Abraham into a great nation. God fulfills this promise by making Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5). The second thing we see about the nations is that through Abraham, "all families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). The Lord blessed Abraham and his family; he and his descendants became not only a missionary family, but a missionary nation.

**What keeps you from thinking God can use you in some of the same ways He used Abraham?**

## Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 2:11-19; Romans 9:8

The missionary family didn't just begin and end with Abraham's immediate descendants. It did begin with Abraham, but it certainly didn't finish with him. If you're wondering what the connection is between believers today and Abraham, the simple answer is found in Galatians 3:29, where it says, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." People of God are to assume the same mission given to Abraham and his descendants. Their primary purpose was to remain faithful to God and in doing so, make His name known among the nations. In the same way, it is our job to make Jesus' name known.

**What does it look like for you to live a mission-minded life?**

**Practically, what can you do to fulfill the purpose of being a part of God's missionary family?**

## Revelation 7:9-12

It's a beautiful thing to realize that God's plan for the nations extends from the beginning of creation to the end of time. The book of Revelation is sometimes hard to understand, but one thing that is clear is the role the nations play in the worship and praise of their victorious God. In a visionary experience, John sees "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (7:9). Although a vision, it's a depiction of reality. What a beautiful image and reflection of God's people! The vision is bursting with people who are different from one another in ethnicity, speech and culture, but are united by one thing—their intimate and personal relationship to God.

**Do you see yourself and the part you play in this vision of God's people united in eternity?**

**What are ways you can be seeking unity with other believers here and now on this earth?**



# Daily Devotions



Week of June 28th

Day 1

## John 3:16; Matthew 22:39

Whenever you do something kind for someone else, it is usually because that person has already been kind to you. You love because they love you. And if they are unkind to you, you typically stop showing love to them. The difference between this type of love and God's love is that God's love is pure and unconditional. There are no conditions to God's love for us. He loves us so much, in spite of our sin and shame, that He sent us His Son. His Son, Jesus, didn't have to come to earth to save us, but He willingly chose to come. He chose to love us. What an amazing thing true love really is! Jesus died on the Cross for people who don't deserve such unconditional love, but instead deserve punishment. Because of this we, as believers, are called to love as Christ loved. We have always heard the phrase, "What would Jesus do?" The answer is love—He would love. We are called to love those around us and love them well!

**How does knowing that God's love is pure and unconditional affect you?**

**In what ways is God challenging you today to love someone who may not deserve it?**

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



## Day 2

**Luke 4:42–43;  
Mark 16:15;  
Acts 1:8**

As Christians, we are called to live as examples of Jesus here on earth. We are called to be like Him. And if we are called to be like Jesus, then we are called to take His kingdom to every sphere of influence we may have—everywhere in our daily life—at school, work, with friends, with family, on a mission trip across the country, or on a mission trip across the world. No matter where we are, we are called to live on mission and participate in spreading the Gospel. We need to be more willing to listen to what Scripture says and what the Holy Spirit is speaking to us, so that we can be prepared to go to the ends of the earth to share the Good News of Jesus! But we cannot do this in our own power—we have access to the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the words, the boldness and the compassion that we need to be a witness for Jesus.

**What are some ways you are already bringing the kingdom of God to your spheres?**

**In what areas of your life is spiritual growth needed in order to bring the kingdom of God there?**

## Day 3

**John 4:1–26;  
Luke 8:43–48**

When we think about Jesus and His ministry, we know He was super-intentional in every situation. He often chose an off-the-beaten-path route where He could talk to people in a one-on-one setting to know them and their needs, and bring them into a relationship with Him. If we are called to live like Jesus, then we are called to be intentional like Him in our conversations. The majority of the people who came to know Jesus as their Savior did so because of the time He took to be intentional. If we are not being intentional with the people around us and asking them about their spiritual life, how can we be living like Jesus? We need to be better about speaking intentionally with the people around us and seeing their true need for Jesus, rather than overlooking it.

**Who are some people in your own life who have chosen to be intentional with you and your walk with Christ?**

**How can you be more intentional with people—family, friends, the lost—as Jesus was?**

# Ephesians

## 4:11–12

In Ephesians, we see how God has equipped believers to do ministry and build each other up. God gave certain gifts and talents to each believer so that we can carry out the work that He has prepared for us to do. We are His Church, and the purpose of the Church is to reflect Christ to the world, to show His love, and share His Gospel. As members of the Church—called “saints” in this passage—we are also meant to encourage one another and strengthen one another as we use the gifts that God specifically gave to us. We are the body of Christ, and we are meant to work together to fulfill God’s calling on our lives.

**Where has God specifically called you? (List your spheres of influence.)**

**On a scale of 1–10, how well equipped do you feel to answer God’s call? Why?**

# Ephesians

## 3:20–21

God can do far more than we can even think to ask Him to do. Sometimes our prayers don’t reflect the kind of God to whom we are praying. We just pray and ask God to help us have a good day, but this is the God who parted the Red Sea, rose again from the dead, and spoke the stars into existence. Don’t you think we could pray for more? We could pray “dangerous prayers”—asking God for God-sized things such as salvation for all our lost friends at school, for healing, for God to turn our lives upside-down and send us across the world to do missions. We should try praying for things that require courage!

God doesn’t just leave us to figure out how to pray and how to find His will on our own. The “power at work within us” is the Holy Spirit (3:20). When we pray, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us know what to pray for and to give us the strength to do what God has called us to do. Finally, we need to remember that all the glory goes to God.

**What have you been afraid to pray for? How can you challenge yourself to pray dangerously this week?**

# Daily Devotions



Week of July 5th  
Day 1

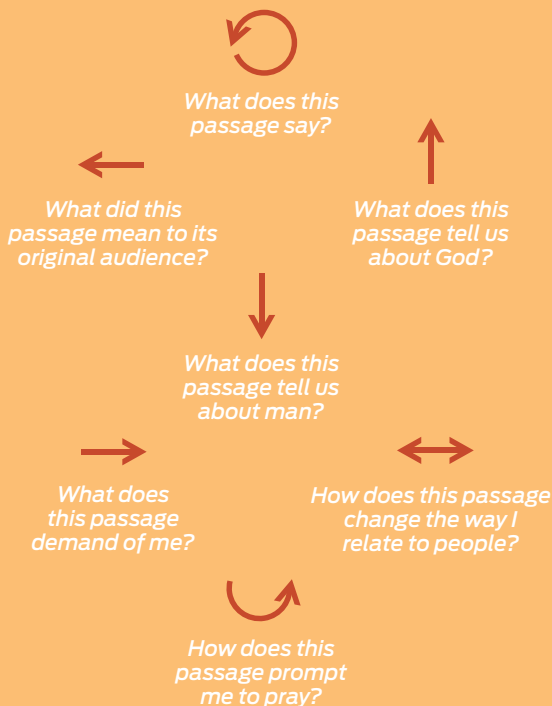
## 1 Samuel 16:1-13

It's hard to blame Samuel. After all, he only fell into the same trap as Israel had before. We aren't told what Eliab looked like, but he must have looked like a king straight out of Hollywood's Central Casting. So when the prophet saw him, he thought surely he was God's chosen one to replace Saul. But in that moment, Samuel made the same critical mistake Israel had made with Saul and that Saul had made with himself: relying on worldly appearances and abilities. Saul, too, had looked the part of the ideal king—tall and handsome. But his rule was unraveling rapidly because he took matters into his own hands instead of relying on God.

But God quickly corrected His messenger, Samuel; He does not look at the externals like His people were doing but at the heart (v. 7). In this we see an important axiom for how God worked throughout Scripture and how He still works today. God delights in taking the outwardly unspectacular but the inwardly humble and reliant on Him, and doing amazing things through them for His glory.

**What internal qualities do you believe God looks for? How can you grow in each of these areas?**

## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



# 1 Samuel

## 16:14-23

Verse 14 is straightforward enough to understand, but it is much more challenging to truly grasp. The Lord's Spirit left Saul, and in its place God sent an evil spirit to plague the rejected king. The transaction is clear, but God's purposes behind it are cloudy. Why did God send an evil spirit? Why not just remove His Spirit from Saul? We have two options:

First, God may have sent this evil spirit to bring Saul to repentance. Perhaps this was God's tool to break Saul of his pride and force him to depend on His God instead. Second, God may have sent the spirit as an act of judgment against Saul, much like He had hardened Pharaoh's heart in the Exodus account.

While we cannot know what God's specific purpose in sending this evil spirit was, we can know God's ultimate purpose: God's desire was, and always is, to bring glory to Himself and work all things together for the good of His people. God will never fail to go to any end He desires to bring this to pass, even if that end might be hard for us to understand.

**What are some ways that God was glorified through sending this evil spirit to Saul? How has God been glorified through adversity in your life?**

# 1 Samuel

## 17:1-19

So there they were: the Israelite army on one hill and the Philistine forces on another with a valley between them. The only action either army saw was a Philistine giant named Goliath walking out into no man's land day after day to taunt the Israelites.

But we see the response of Saul and his army in verse 11. Every single man—from Saul all the way to the lowliest of foot soldiers—was drained of courage and sat in stunned terror of Goliath. Not a single man believed in himself enough to face the giant, which is understandable. But the real problem was that not a single man believed in His God to face the giant.

We have to let this picture of the Israelites cowering in fear crystallize in our minds and hearts as we continue reading because in the Israelite soldiers, we should see ourselves. Yes, we would have been afraid of Goliath, too, but more importantly, we have been rendered powerless before another giant—a greater enemy—that of sin and death. And just like the Israelites, we were out of the fight, sitting by helplessly, waiting for our champion to enter the fray, which He did in a manger in Bethlehem.

**Why is it important to identify more with the Israelite soldiers in this passage than David?**

# 1 Samuel

## 17:20-37

While none of Israel's soldiers could muster the courage to face Goliath even after hearing his taunts day after day, it only took David hearing him once before he was ready to face the giant. It didn't matter that Goliath was enormous and David was just a young boy—perhaps a teenager at this point. It didn't matter that Goliath was a warrior and David was a shepherd. This Philistine was mocking God, and that could not continue.

So an unlikely hero stepped forward to face the enemy of God's people. If we read ourselves into this story as David, we would be prone to reaffirm our call to live with courage, dependent on God. And there is nothing wrong with that; but if we do, we miss the greater lesson here for us. If, instead, we see ourselves as the Israelites and David as a hero outside of ourselves, we see the beauty of the gospel. Jesus is the greater David. Jesus was the unlikely hero who stepped forward to face off against the enemy of sin and death and defeated them in the power of God. All while we looked on as He fought in our place.

**How might you attempt to fight in your own power instead of resting in God to fight for you? Why?**

# 1 Samuel

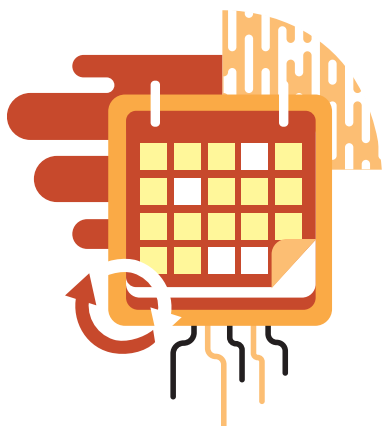
## 17:38-58

The battle had been won. Goliath, the feared adversary, lay dead on the ground, his head severed from his body. The Philistines had looked on in horror and then turned and fled for their lives. Then, and only then, did the Israelites shout a battle cry and charge. They chased after the Philistines and slaughtered them not to win the victory, but already victorious.

We cannot miss that point. If God is providing a picture of how Jesus defeated sin and death in this true account of David and Goliath, and if we are meant to relate with the Israelite army, we see how we are supposed to live today. We don't strap on our spiritual armor and pick up our spiritual weapons to win the victory—Christ has gone before us and already secured it. Instead, like the Israelite army, we charge forward *in* victory, not *for* it. That is liberating, isn't it? We are already victorious—more than conquerors in Christ. The battle is won, the victory is secure, the foe defeated. That is our battle cry.

**What battles are you facing for which you need to remember Christ has gone before you and already won the victory?**

# Daily Devotions



Week of July 12th

Day 1

## 1 Samuel 18:1-30

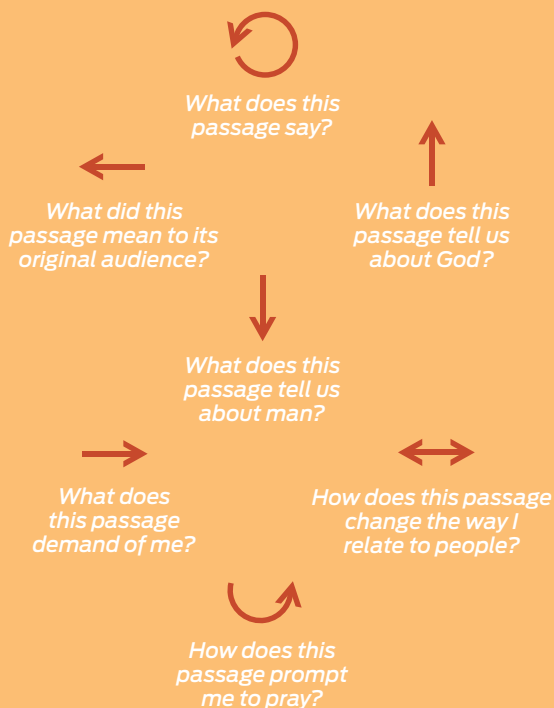
Saul kept David with him from that day forward, and his son Jonathan and David became close friends. Word spread quickly of what had happened, of David's victory over Goliath. And then, as Saul returned in victory, the women of the land came out to greet him with singing and dancing. Only they sang a song Saul did not like: Saul had killed thousands, but David had killed tens of thousands.

And in that moment, Saul began to unravel. He became furious, and from this point forward he looked upon David not with gratitude, but with jealousy.

David had bailed Saul out, but that was put aside. More importantly, David had defended the honor of God and brought Him glory, but that, too, was forgotten. Saul should have joined in the singing of the women's song. He should have been grateful for God's provision in his life. But his selfishness and pride wouldn't let him. And his downfall would continue.

**How inclined are you to celebrate and be thankful for someone else, even if it comes at your expense in some way?**

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



# 1 Samuel

## 23:1-29

We see an interesting contrast between Saul and David in this chapter. Saul was growing increasingly paranoid (see 1 Sam. 22) and continued to pursue David, the hero turned fugitive. Meanwhile, we also see David in pursuit, but not of Saul in retaliation, or even of safety primarily. David is in pursuit of God. When David heard the Philistines were fighting against Keilah, he went to the Lord and asked if he should go to their defense. This was not the posture of a man running for his life; this was the posture of a man who was running after God, the One in whose hands he had placed his life.

In fear, Saul had turned away from God in disobedience which had brought about his downfall. Now, here, we see that he was driven by his jealousy and anger. David no doubt feared Saul, but he feared God in a greater way. And that fear of God led David to continually seek to obey God at all costs. Even if that cost placed himself in harm's way, like what David's descendants did when He stepped into the world, in full obedience to God, and not only risked His life, but laid it down on behalf of the very world that had rejected Him.

**Do you tend to pursue God in times of fear or do you tend to turn inward instead? Why?**

# 1 Samuel

## 24:1-7

It was hard to miss. David's men saw it. Even David saw it. Saul had been delivered over to David and his men in what was obviously a work of God. Surely God had led Saul into that specific cave for a specific purpose: for David to vanquish his opponent. But had He? As David crept up on Saul, Israel's king, he remembered something important: Saul was God's anointed one. How could he raise a hand against the person God had chosen, even if that man was pursuing him, desiring to kill him?

There are times when an opportunity or situation looks to be from God, and we respond like David and his men in the cave. Surely this is of the Lord! But we need to be careful because the situation may not be what it seems. Sometimes a situation seems too good to be true because it is. Sometimes what appears to be a gift before us is actually a potential curse; sometimes what appears to be a curse before us is actually a potential gift. How will we know the difference? Only by seeking the face of the Lord and trusting in His guidance and not our own perceptions.

**When have you experienced something you thought was good only to discover it was not? How about the opposite? What was God doing in those situations?**



# 1 Samuel

## 24:8-15

Saul and his army were chasing David and his band of men so that the rejected king of Israel could rid himself of who he considered his arch nemesis. But then, in a moment when the tables were turned and the two ended up in the same cave, David could have been the only one to walk out alive. But he refused to lift his hand against Saul. No matter how Saul was treating him, he was God's chosen man. For David to turn on Saul would require David to turn on God. And that, he would not do. No matter the risk.

Saul had done nothing to deserve David's mercy and respect. He was a failed leader. He was rejected by God. He was plagued by an evil spirit and progressively growing paranoid. And yet, David understood that it was not a matter of who Saul was or what he had or had not done; it was a matter of what God had declared about Saul. We would be wise to remember this. There will be times when we disagree with others—even leaders over us—and many of those times, our points of disagreement will be valid. But we can never forget our need to extend grace and mercy to others in the same way God has extended it to us.

**How can you support and encourage those in leadership positions over you?**

# 1 Samuel

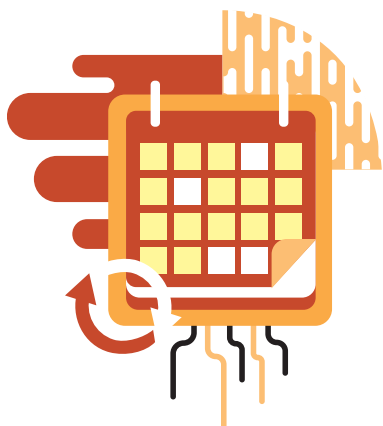
## 24:16-27

David's actions—or more precisely, his lack of action due to his great restraint—must have been shocking to Saul. The evidence of David's mercy, the missing corner of Saul's robe, was undeniable. Why had David spared him? What would he have done had the situation been reversed? In that moment of confrontation by David's act of mercy, Saul experienced a moment of clarity. He recognized that God's hand was surely on David and he left him in peace. It would not last; the fog of bitterness and jealousy would sweep over Saul once more. But at least for this moment, Saul was able to see the reality of what God was doing.

This is the power of God working in and through His people. God has called us to live counter-culturally, to live differently and express the fragrance of Christ in a world permeated by the stench of sin and death. What we say matters—greatly. We are called to verbalize the gospel and we must. But what we do—or rather, what God does through us—provides additional power to the gospel message we share. Does the gospel need our actions for it to be effective? By no means! But when we live in such a way that shows that the gospel is not merely academic—that it transforms us to live like Christ—we display the beauty of the message we proclaim.

**In what ways is God changing you?  
In what ways do you see the need for Him to continue to change you?**

# Daily Devotions



Week of July 19th

Day 1

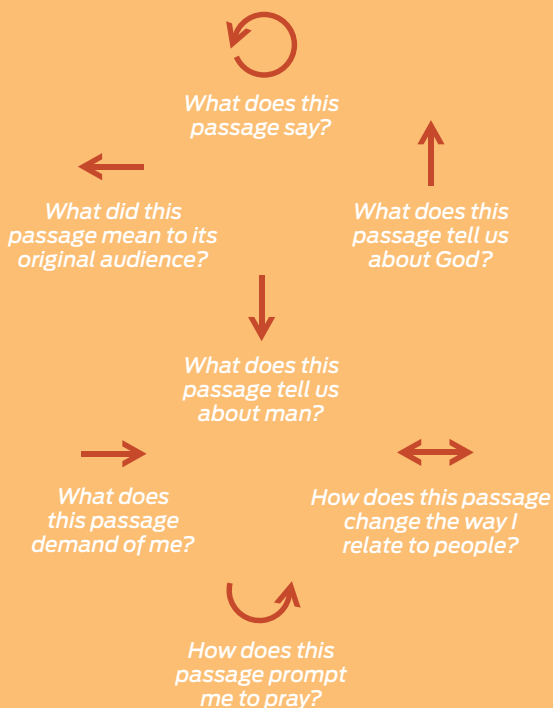
## 2 Samuel 6:1-23

If you read this and are at least uncomfortable, you're not alone. Look at how David responded—he was angry (v. 8). Now, we are not sure if David's anger was toward God for doing something that seemed unfair, or if it was against Uzzah for doing what was irreverent to God, but either way, we see that David struggled with this encounter.

So what do we do with this passage? How do we begin to understand it at least? The key is to consider what God found to be irreverent. It was not Uzzah's desire to keep the ark from falling. Uzzah did that because of an act of reverence. But Uzzah was reverent toward the wrong thing: the ark instead of God. Would it have looked disgraceful for the ark of God to fall onto the ground? Yes, without a doubt. But how much more disgraceful was it for Uzzah to reach out and touch the ark after God had expressly forbidden it (Num. 4:15)? Uzzah's act of reverence toward the ark was simultaneously an act of irreverence toward a holy God. Like Uzzah, there are times when we act with what seems to be the right intentions, but we must always consider the greater question: What will bring the most glory to God?

**In what ways might your good intentions clash with God's glory and His revealed will for you?**

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



# 2 Samuel

## 7:1-7

Uzzah acted with good intentions, but he failed to heed what God had commanded about the ark. Here we see David with similarly good intentions desiring to act without first seeking God. David saw that it was not good for him to live in a palace while the ark of God sat in a tent—the tabernacle. His heart was in the right place, but notice what he did. He consulted Nathan, who seemingly without asking God, gave his blessing for David to launch a building program. Now, we would be right to criticize Nathan for failing to ask God about what David should do. Nathan was a prophet—his role was to speak for God, not in place of God—yet we cannot let David off the hook as merely the recipient of poor advice. We have seen David consult God directly before this; he could have done the same here too.

In this we are reminded of our need never to take our actions for granted. We must always bring our decisions before God, earnestly seeking His guidance. We must live each day with such great dependence on God that it seems absurd for us even to attempt to make a decision apart from God. But let's not learn this lesson from David alone, let us consider Christ Jesus, who expressed such dependence on the Father throughout the Gospels.

**What decisions are you weighing that you need to take to God for direction?**

# 2 Samuel

## 7:8-11a

The covenant God made with David contains a mixture of what could be called “near” and “far,” or “short-term” and “long-term,” prophecies. Some of the promises God made to David would be experienced by his son, Solomon, but other promises spoke of the greater descendant who was to come, Jesus.

We see this duality especially in verse 11 where God promises rest. This promise has to be read in light of verse 1 where we are told that David had rest from his enemies. What then did God have in mind in verse 11? How would He give David, who had rest, rest? While God could have been speaking of continued rest from the pagan nations around them, it seems better to see a deeper promise in mind here. And of course, that promise means the rest provided through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—the rest that comes from trusting in His victory over our greatest enemies of sin and death.

Jesus would be the Prince of peace, bringing peace in three ways: peace with God, peace with others, and peace within.

**Do you tend to see yourself at rest with God or still in struggle? Why?**

## 2 Samuel 7:11b-14

When you think of the heroes of the faith in Scripture—the giants who came before us—it doesn't take long before you think of David. Many would place him up there with Abraham and Moses as perhaps the most important people in Scripture, apart from Jesus of course. And while it is right and fitting for us to recognize David in this way—after all God did give us the “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11—we cannot stop there. We need to look at David so we can look through him.

David did some incredible things, but he was by no means without sin. His affair with Bathsheba and consequent murder of Uriah prove this. But God still used David in a mighty way as we see in this passage. David was a great king, a man after the Lord's heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), but God did something far greater through him than his contemporaries ever saw. Through David, God sent the Messiah. So we don't fix our gaze on David as we recognize his life of faithfulness; instead, we turn our eyes and fix them on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, the one true hero (Heb. 12:2).

**What is the danger of fixing your gaze on the people of the Bible? What might you miss if you fail to consider them at all? What encouragement might others be seeing in your life?**

## 2 Samuel 7:15-29

God had made spectacular promises to David. The king had desired to build a temple for God, but in God's rejection of his plans, He had showered him with a blessing he could never fathom in this covenant. We should pay careful attention to David's response.

“Who am I?”

It is a fitting question, a proper response to God's good news. We need to be careful not to read this in the same way as we read Moses' question from before. Moses' question was one of doubt—“you have the wrong man.” David's question is one of awe—“what did I ever do to deserve this.” And that is why it is the proper response—the only reasonable response—to God's grace. Because the question begs the proper answer: You are no one. You have done nothing. This is entirely out of the kindness and grace of the Lord.

How about us? How do we tend to receive the Lord's blessings? Is there any part of us—even the smallest fraction—that receives God's gift in a posture of expectation? We can have none of that because even the slightest amount obliterates grace.

**In what ways do you feel at times that you deserve blessings from God?**

# Daily Devotions

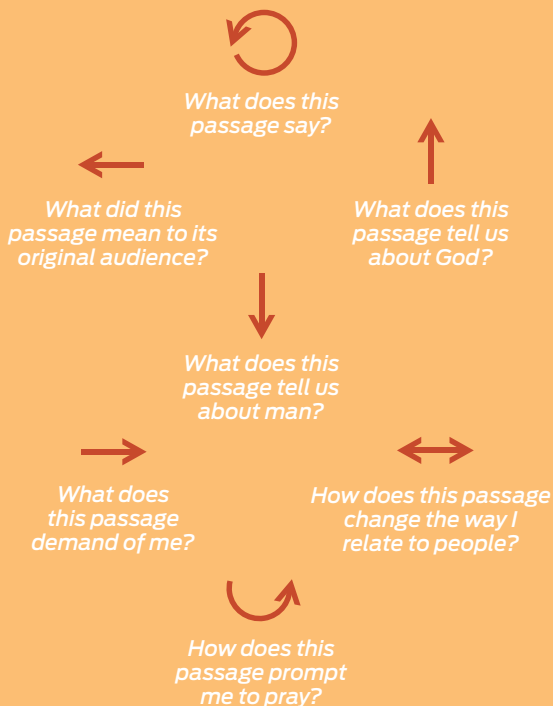


Week of July 26th

Day 1

## 1 Samuel 20:1-42

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



As Saul's son, Jonathan was the rightful successor to the throne. From a worldly perspective, he was the next in line to become king of Israel, and with that role would come great wealth and power. But God does not operate according to humanity's expectations or customs. He had chosen David, not Jonathan, to succeed Saul. Jonathan knew that and Jonathan accepted it.

As Jonathan and David prepared to part ways, Jonathan asked David a question that assumed something important: that David would be king, not him. Jonathan recognized that he, and his family, would stand or fall at the whim of his friend David.

There are times in our lives when God does the unexpected, the unorthodox. There are times when what we think we earned, what we think we deserve, goes to another. Perhaps we feel passed over. Or it might be that a good friend becomes better friends with someone else. Whatever it is, we will find ourselves in the same position as Jonathan. Will we resist God, will we fight and push back, digging in our heels over what we feel we deserve? Or will we trust God, yield to Him, and acknowledge that His ways are higher than ours?

**How should Christ's humility in dying a death He did not deserve shape the way you see what you have earned or deserve in life?**

## 2 Samuel 9:1-5

No one may have known of David's promise to Jonathan to be kind to his family. It had been made many years before, most likely in privacy. And even if someone knew about it, who would dare challenge the king to make good on such a promise? It was a promise most people would have understood David for breaking, or at least forgetting about. But that wasn't what David did. In a time when he could finally turn his attention to the internal affairs of the kingdom rather than focus on defending Israel from external threats, David proactively sought out someone from Jonathan's family to show kindness to.

We should take note of David's integrity in the moment, but we should only pause there, not stop there. As we read this account, we need to read it through a gospel lens, one that forces us to relate with Mephibosheth, not King David. We were like Mephibosheth, spiritually lame and in desperate need of the King's mercy and kindness. And the beautiful thing is, we didn't have to go to Him to receive such kindness. We couldn't. Instead like David, God proactively came looking for us. And when He found us, He heaped such kindness upon us that we never could have hoped for.

**What is your emotional response to considering how God came looking for you?**

## 2 Samuel 9:6-10

We see Mephibosheth act twice and speak twice. Twice, Mephibosheth paid homage to David (v. 6,8), including falling facedown at least the first time. And his words matched his posture. He is David's servant (v. 6), who is but a dead dog (v. 8). If we had to summarize Mephibosheth in this account, we would probably describe him as being humble and in fear. That makes sense since he has been called before the king, the one who has the authority and the power to take his life if he chose.

Again, as we read this account through Mephibosheth's lens, most of us would readily admit that we would have assumed a similar posture. We, too, would have recognized the precarious position we were in. We, too, would have entered in fearful humility, hoping that we would be able to express to the king that we were no threat.

Now, we need to keep that picture in our minds as we think about coming before God, the King of kings. How do we enter His presence? Not with fear but with bold confidence (Heb. 10:19). Not because we aren't dead dogs—we are—but because of what Christ has done in our place. Because Christ has taken our sin and given us His righteousness, we approach God not merely as His servants but as His loved children.

**Why is it important we approach God in humility?**

## 2 Samuel 9:11-13

David's act of kindness was extravagant. With one spoken edict, Mephibosheth became a wealthy man. But most surprising of all, Mephibosheth would not need to eat any of the produce of the lands restored to him; he would eat at the king's table, as one of his sons. It is the high point of the narrative, the perfect place to put one's pen down or move to the next chapter. But that is not how the account ends. Instead we read the anticlimactic "His feet had been injured."

Why return to this seemingly insignificant detail? Why not end on the high note of Mephibosheth eating with David as a son? Perhaps this concluding sentence is there merely to remind us of how unlikely an event this was. To remind us of the fall and rise of Mephibosheth. That could be. But there may be another reason. Perhaps this is to remind us of who we are supposed to relate to in the story—not David, but Mephibosheth. Perhaps we need to remember how great of a fall and rise we have experienced in Christ Jesus—how He extended kindness and grace to us when we were spiritually hopeless and helpless. Perhaps the story ends where our application is supposed to begin.

**How do you tend to read the stories in Scripture—through the lens of the hero or through the lens of the ones in need of a hero? How should our understanding of the gospel shape how we read?**

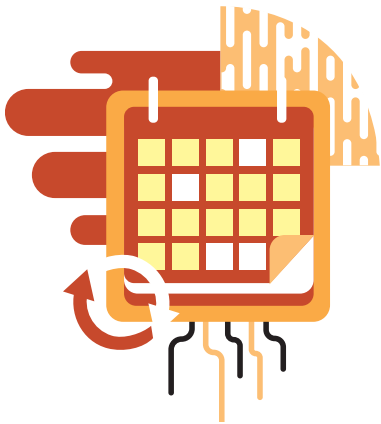
## Ephesians 2:1-10

This passage from Ephesians can be seen as a compact, yet beautiful and rich, summary of the core message of the gospel. We are confronted with our sin problem in verses 1-3, then verse 4 begins with two of the most powerful words in Scripture: "But God." What follows is a moving summary of the work of Christ and how we are saved by grace through faith in Him.

Did you see it in verse 7? Did you see how the display of God's immeasurable riches of His grace is described? That's right, His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. It is often easy to see how the Old Testament helps us read the New Testament, but there are times, like this one, where the New Testament helps us read and see the beauty of the Old.

**In what ways has God showed you His kindness beyond salvation this week?**

# Daily Devotions



Week of August 2nd  
Day 1

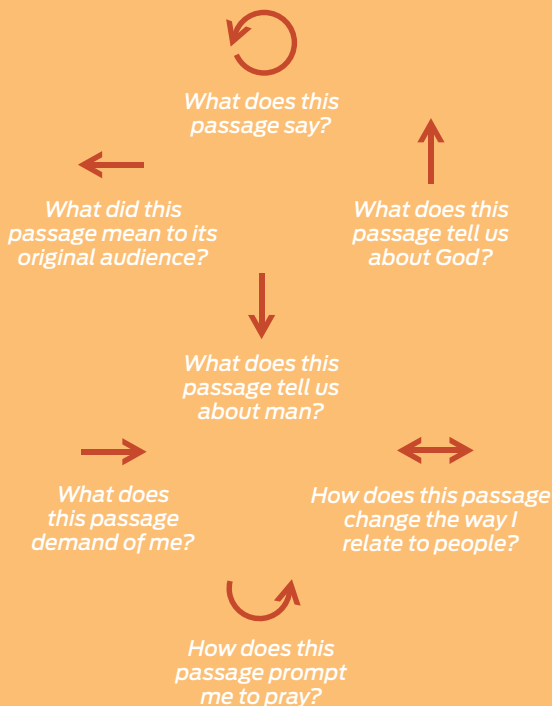
## 2 Samuel 11:1-5

David's initial mistake was that he didn't turn away from temptation but entertained it instead (v. 3). Then he made it possible to act on his temptation by calling for Bathsheba to be brought to him (v. 4). Finally, at least in this initial part of David's sin, he gave in to temptation and slept with her (v. 4). In this account, we see the truth of what James later wrote in James 1:14-15. David was enticed by his evil desire, allowed it to conceive, and it gave birth to sin, and, as we will see later, death.

Many of us see David as a hero of Goliath proportions, which is why this account is so important. We need to remember that every person in Scripture—save Jesus—was a sinner in need of salvation. Even David, the giant-slayer. And thanks to God's kindness, mercy, and grace, that salvation has been provided for people in Christ Jesus.

**What steps can you take to fight against temptation before it even begins?**

## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading





## 2 Samuel 11:6-27

It didn't take long for things to go from bad to worse. Any hope David had of hiding his sin with Bathsheba evaporated when she sent word to him that she was pregnant.

Once again, David had a choice to make: he could confess or seek a way to cover up his sin. Sadly, David chose the latter. His first attempt to cover his sin was to recall Uriah from the battlefield and encourage him to sleep with his wife. But that didn't work because Uriah's loyalty to his fellow troops, and by extension his king, prevented him from enjoying an evening with his wife while the battle waged on.

After one failed cover-up attempt, David then took a more drastic approach. He ordered Joab to send Uriah into battle and then withdraw from him, leaving him to die and leaving David free to take Bathsheba as his wife. We need to be clear about this: David's order led directly to Uriah's death. David was a murderer. What began as perhaps a lingering look ended in murder. And in this, we see that there is truly no such thing as a "harmless little sin."

**How have you experienced your attempts to cover-up instead of confessing sin lead to further sin or harm of yourself and others? What sins might you need to confess to God today?**

## 2 Samuel 12:1-15

By the time Nathan confronted David for his sins, a baby had been born, so it was at least nine months later. By this time David was surely confident his cover-up had worked, but Nathan would reveal it had not. As believers, we have been called on by God to confront the sins of one another (Luke 17:3; Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:20; Jas. 5:19-20), and Nathan offers a great model for doing so. It is one of great wisdom and courage.

Nathan began not by directly confronting David of his sin, but by helping him see the gravity of what he had done through a story of a wealthy man who had taken from a poor man. Having lured David in, Nathan sprung the trap by boldly declaring David was the cruel man in the story. Finally, after months of compounding and covering up sin, David confessed and repented. The desired outcome of Nathan's confrontation had worked. In the same way, we should seek a balance of wisdom and courage in how we confront others, all while praying and hoping for confession, repentance, and reconciliation.

**Who might God be calling on you to confront in love?**

## 2 Samuel 12:16-25

Nathan had told David that the son born through his sin with Bathsheba would die (v. 14). But that did not stop David from pleading with God for the child's life. When David's son became ill, David fasted and prayed to God for days. But when the child died, David got up, washed, anointed himself, changed clothes, and worshiped God. Afterwards he returned home and ate.

When his servants saw this, they asked David about his behavior; they expected David to fast after the child had died, not before it. We need to notice something quite important about David's response in verse 22. David did not plead with God that His actions were unfair. Neither did David attempt to barter with God for the life of his son. Instead, he threw himself on the mercy of God, recognizing that the Lord might be gracious to him.

And in this we see an example of the proper posture for pleading with God. We don't plead with God as some form of manipulation; we plead in humility, trusting in the character of God and ready to worship Him no matter the outcome.

**What are you pleading with God for today? What is your posture?**

## Psalm 51:1-19

Sin and forgiveness form a direct relationship. The higher one goes, the higher the other must go. The lower one goes, the lower the other must go. If we fail to see the weight of our sin, we will never see the beauty of God's forgiveness. Conversely, the more we understand the gravity of our sin, the more we will grasp the depth of God's forgiveness to us in Christ. This was the point of Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35.

David penned Psalm 51 after Nathan's confrontation of his sin. We see in the psalm that while David may have believed he had gotten away with his sins, they plagued him and destroyed his joy (v. 8,12,14). Nathan's confrontation was surely difficult for David, and the resulting death of his son was painful, but through all of the anguish of sin and its consequences, God reminded His servant of the delight of grace.

For those of us who have trusted in Christ, we too can experience the same. While we continue to sin and often face its consequences, we can always rest in the grace of God made known to us in Christ. As we grow in our understanding of the depth of our sin, we also grow in our understanding of the marvelous beauty of God's grace.

**How have you experienced the depth of God's forgiveness and grace recently?**

# Daily Devotions



Week of August 9th

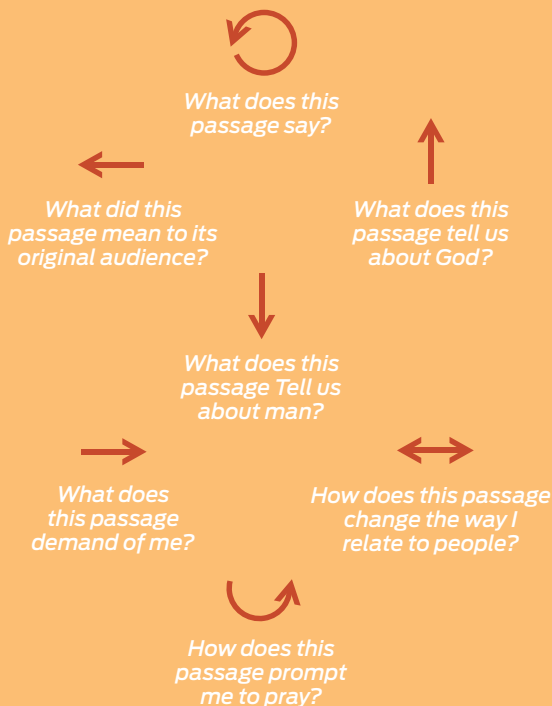
Day 1

## Psalm 23:1-2

In this psalm, David writes that he has all he needs (v. 1). It is a startling statement when we think of the likely context of the writing of this psalm. David was on the run from his son, Absalom. One of the last things we would expect to hear him say was that all of his needs were met. Instead we would expect a psalm seeking to understand where God was during this time and when he would step in and provide David with a need that he lacked: peace with his own family.

But in this, we see the importance of distinguishing our needs from our desires. God has promised to supply all our needs (Phil. 4:19), but not all our desires. Peace with family was one of David's desires—a noble one even—but it was not a need. And sometimes God will not give us our desires even if they seem to be good desires and even if we have the best intentions for wanting them. The reason is simple: because our desires don't always align with God's will. Our desires, as good as they may seem, will not always bring God glory, and they will not always bring us good. And so God, our loving Father, supplies what He knows we need.

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



**What are some of the desires of your heart? Are they in line with seeking God's will and bringing Him glory?**

# Psalm 23:3-4

Sometimes we tend to look past the smaller words when we read. Our attention focuses on the larger words, the words that seem more significant such as nouns and the stars of sentences, verbs. But this is a mistake because often those small words have quite a bit to say. Such as verse 4. Notice that David wrote “when” he goes through the darkest valley, not “if” he would. That’s not an unimportant difference. “When” implies that he will indeed go through this valley. “If” leaves that wide open. Perhaps he will; perhaps he won’t.

David, or more precisely God through him, is teaching us something quite important in this seemingly insignificant four-letter word. Trusting in Christ does not shield us from danger, pain, and adversity. In fact, the Bible says these things will increase, not decrease, because of our faith. We need to understand this. We need to accept this. We need to embrace this. God uses our difficulties for His glory and our good because in these dark times we can find ourselves more desperate for God and more aware of His presence. Yes, the valleys are dark. Yes, there is danger. But God is with us, carrying His rod and staff. And in His presence and power, we find peace.

**What has God taught you through your experience in adversity?**

# Psalm 23:5-6

Our God is a pursuant God. We run; He chases. Over and over again. Perhaps we see this most clearly in the Book of Jonah. The account opens with God commanding His prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh to share a message of repentance. Jonah, however, has other plans—he ran the opposite direction God had ordered him to go. So what did God do? He chased Jonah down and brought him to repentance so that he might be used in God’s plan to bring others to repentance as well.

What was it that led God to chase Jonah down? What is it that leads Him to chase us too? David answers that here in Psalm 23. It is God’s goodness and faithful love, often translated as “mercy.” It was love that chased him down. So the storm God threw at the boat was good. And the fish he sent to swallow Jonah was good. Because they were each used by God to bring Jonah back to where he needed to be.

That is what God does for us too. He chases us when we run. He throws storms our way. And He delivers us in ways that might seem like anything but kind acts of His love. But whether we see it or not, God’s goodness and faithful love always run beside us.

**How have you experienced God chasing after you?**

# Isaiah

## 40:1-11

There are times when we are keenly aware of our need for the almighty strength of God's arms. We need His power to sustain us. Perhaps we are facing a situation that overwhelms us. Perhaps we are facing down an adversary that we know we cannot beat. In these times, we scan the horizon for our Rescuer to step in and bring His full strength to bear. This is what verse 10 calls to mind.

But there are also times when we need God's strong arms not for their strength, but for their comfort. We need His love to uplift us. Perhaps we feel alone. Perhaps we have failed—yet again. In these times, we fall to our knees and long to feel the embrace of our loving Father. This is what verse 11 calls to mind.

In this coupling, we are reminded of the great character of our God. Our powerful Creator is also our gentle Father. He is always there for us, always aware of what we need, and always ready to provide for that moment.

**How have you experienced God's power and love when you needed each?**

# John

## 10:1-21

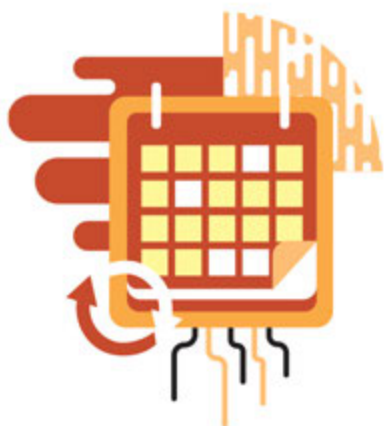
In describing Himself as the Good Shepherd, Jesus made an interesting contrast between Himself and a hired hand (v. 12-13). A hired hand, Jesus contended, was not reliable because he didn't care about the sheep. And why should he? They wouldn't be his sheep. So, if a wolf comes along to snatch a sheep, the hired hand will not risk his own life to save that sheep. Instead, he will run off and likely later plead his case of how much danger he had been in to the owner of the sheep.

But Jesus is no hired hand. He is the Good Shepherd because the sheep are His. He owns them. He loves them. And that is why He sacrificed His life for them.

We need to see Jesus for who He truly is, but it cannot stop there. We also need to see ourselves for who we truly are. Do you see yourself as the beloved sheep you are? Do you understand that Christ's love for you is fixed because you are His and He is yours? Jesus is no hired hand who will run off and abandon you. And neither are you a random sheep.

**How can you tend to see yourself incorrectly at times? Why?**

# Daily Devotions



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of August 16th

Day 1

## Philippians 3:1-6

The end of the school year provides the perfect time to ask, “Did I grow closer to Jesus or move further away from Him this year?” Regardless of your answer, we all have room to grow in this relationship, because Christ is always worth knowing better. Despite the goals many of us have set to grow in this relationship, many of us never meet them because we start with the wrong foundation. In Philippians, Paul provides the accurate foundation for true and genuine spiritual growth that doesn't just last for a season but builds on itself for a lifetime. In Philippians 3:3, Paul tells us to “put no confidence in the flesh.” Far too many of us have failed at our spiritual goals because we have only focused on how we can grow ourselves, in our own effort.

**How has your own effort to grow in your relationship with Christ failed?**

**Spend time in prayer, asking God to change you and give you a heart for His ways. Ask Him to convict you of your own effort to change yourself rather than allowing yourself to rest in Him and first be changed by Him.**

## Day 2

# Philippians 3:7–11

Yesterday, Paul established the right foundation for growth in Christ, and today in Philippians 3:7–11, Paul begins to unpack for us what our first goal should be as Christ-followers. Paul admits, however, what he has had to endure in order to come to know what this goal truly is. Paul says he counts “everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.” Paul, who had everything according to the world’s standards, found out the only worthwhile and lasting gain is Christ Himself, and not just what He can provide for us.

**What is something you hoped for and received, but only left you longing for more once you had it?**

If the goals we set for ourselves aren’t rooted in knowing who Christ is and that only He is enough, even our goals in our own spiritual life will leave us longing for more because they will seek to satisfy something that can be satisfied by no one but Christ.

**In Philippians 3:9–11, what are some of the goals Paul provides for his own spiritual walk?**

## Day 3

# Philippians 3:12–16; Lamentations 2:22–23

Our past can either be a hindrance or a catapult in our walk with the Lord. When we rightly see our past, we can recognize we have not yet reached fullness in Christ and therefore have all the more reason to dive headfirst into our relationship with Him. However, when we focus only on our past, we allow shame to keep us from moving forward in our relationship with Christ. Not only that, but when we allow our past to hinder us, we are believing the lie from the Enemy that God’s power is not great enough to overcome our past, allowing us to step into obedience in our relationship with Him. The Enemy doesn’t want you to be obedient and move forward in your relationship with Christ, so he will do everything he can to convince you to stay just as you are.

**Why do you believe we are able to forget what is behind us?**

**What parts of your past most often prevent you from setting new goals and moving forward in God’s grace?**

# Philippians 3:17–21

Nothing grows in isolation. We believe a lie when we believe we can grow in Christ and accomplish the goals before us in our Christian walk on our own. Having other believers speaking into our lives gives us insight into our blind spots and then provides us the courage to move forward in our faith without having to do it on our own. Paul knew this and therefore called these believers to imitate him and others who are mature in their faith. Just as the believers had Paul, whom do you have to look to? Who is someone in your life who influences the goals you have in your spiritual life? Not only do we need someone to look to, but we need someone to hold us accountable to those goals we have made.

**Who is one person who has influenced your walk with Christ personally?**

**Why does it matter to include other people in your spiritual growth? Why can't you do it on your own?**

# 2 Peter 1:5–8

Throughout Philippians 3, Paul has shown us why growth in Christ is necessary, what the goal of growth in Christ is, and how to achieve it. Now that we have established a firm foundation together, take time to pray about and commit to the goals the Lord lays on your heart. Specifically, when it comes to your time with the Lord, how do you need to grow?

There's a tendency to only make goals that feel easy to measure and give quick results. In the midst of this, let's not neglect the equally weighty matters of the year that are just as important in our growth in Christ. Just because you can't "measure" it, doesn't mean it isn't of value to your faith. Read 2 Peter 1:5–8. Here, Peter gives us several examples of internal characteristics that should mark a believer.

**What are two specific areas within your walk with Christ where you need to grow?**

**Text your goals to a friend or mentor and ask that person to hold you accountable by following up with you once a week for the next four weeks about these goals.**



# Daily Devotions



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Week of August 23rd

Day 1

## Acts 1:8

Perhaps your routine seems at times to be bland and monotonous or you feel as though you have too many things to juggle and not enough time. But what if your life could be more than just a routine? Scripture says God has uniquely placed you where you are for a purpose and that purpose is to experience the immense joy of playing your part in the Great Commission. Rather than simply moving from one thing to another, God invites us to divinely encounter Him in this way.

However, the first step is to understand that your mission field is exactly where the Lord has you. Statistics show that 9,000 hours are spent on school campuses during middle and high school. Also, 85 percent of believers accept Christ before they graduate. All it takes is boldness in the first step.

**On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the least), how broken are you for your campus? Why?**

## Day 2

# Acts 4:13-22; Matthew 9:35-38

How many forms of social media do you have? Although most of us use social media passively, some use it as their main source of income. It has been reported that “social media influencers” have been paid up to \$10,000 per post because they are identified as being persuasive to the culture. However, we read in Scripture that we do not have to have millions of followers in order to influence others for Christ. You have influence not because you are great, but because God is great within you.

Although at times we might be hesitant to share our faith out of fear, be reminded today that the same Holy Spirit who empowered the apostles to share the Gospel in Acts 4 lives in you as well!

**How can this reminder of the power of the Holy Spirit give you confidence to share your faith?**

## Day 3

# 1 John 5:13-15; Jeremiah 29:12-13

Whenever you pray, what do you consistently ask for? Health in a game? Knowledge for a test?

Craig Groeschel, in his book *Dangerous Prayers*, reflects on his similar experience when he says, “I had access to the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The Great I Am. The Alpha and the Omega. The Beginning and the End. The all-powerful, ever-present, all-knowing God who can send fire from heaven, shut the mouths of hungry lions, or calm a raging storm. And all I asked Him to do was keep me safe and help me have a good day.”

**How can you pray for your campus today in light of this Scripture?**

# Philippians 3:17-21

How often do we stop to pray, but are lost as to how to pray? This week we have discussed not only that we should be broken for the lost on our campus, but we should be praying for the Lord to move mightily. The Claim Your Campus app makes this easy as it breaks down each day of the week with prayer topics. Here's the breakdown:

- **Day 1: Grace** – praying for change among Christ-followers on campus
- **Day 2: Peace** – praying for change relationships between students on campus
- **Day 3: Justice** – praying for change in the environment of your school
- **Day 4: Mercy** – praying for freedom from sin within the students on campus

After this sequence, the days repeat! Never underestimate the power prayer can have on your campus.

**What can you be doing now to prepare a campus prayer group at your school?**

# 1 Peter 3:15

Penn & Teller have become one of the world's most recognizable magician teams. Selling out venues all over the world, they have had much success over the years. However, in 2009, Penn Jillette caught the eyes of the public for something other than magic—he asked a question. Jillette, an atheist, posted a video addressing his fellow atheists about how they ought to react to Christians sharing their faith. “I understand their tenacity in talking about it because how much do you have to hate someone to know about heaven and salvation, and not tell them about it?”

Sharing our faith is an act of love to all those we encounter and to withhold the saving knowledge of Jesus leaves those far from the Lord still in search of it.

**Begin praying that God will give you opportunities to share your faith this weekend.**





**James | 1 Week**  
*the book of James*

**Missions | 2 Weeks**  
*God's heart for the nations*

**The Great King | 6 Weeks**  
*the life of David*

**Goal Setting | 1 Week**  
*accomplishing God's best*

**Claim Your Campus | 1 Week**  
*own and prayer over your school*

