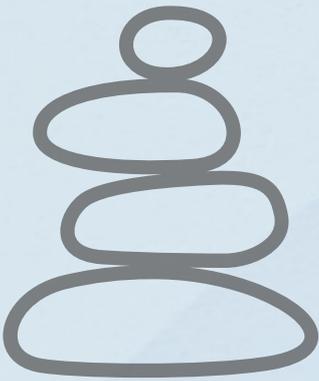


**STONES OF
REMEMBRANCE**



WEEK 1: JACOB

Day
01

Renew | Genesis 28:20-22

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

Over the course of this month, we'll look at critical moments in the lives of four people: Jacob, Joshua, Samuel, and Elijah. While these individuals have unique life experiences, they similarly face a moment when they need to recommit their lives to God and their relationship with Him.

For Jacob, this moment comes when he runs from home because of his decisions. He is alone and afraid. Yet, God takes the initiative and meets Jacob in this crisis. Jacob responds by marking the spot and making a vow to God.

As you read the stories of these four individuals, you have the opportunity to consider what it could look like for you to renew or recommit your life to God. Perhaps your relationship with God has taken a backseat. You may say, "That's me right now. I need to renew or return to God." For others, spiritual drift has been gradual, but we sense something needs to change. Wherever you find yourself, may God use this series to renew and refresh your relationship with Him.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

As we start this month-long journey, we must begin with prayer. Ask God to make it clear where you need to renew your faith. Then ask Him to help you and provide strength to grow in whatever area He reveals. Use the space below to write down what God reveals to you.

Day

02

The Blessing | Genesis 28:10-11

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

We need to back up in Jacob's story to understand why he feels lost, alone, and afraid. To see how Jacob got to this place we need to know something about Jacob's grandpa, Abraham. Abraham has a special relationship with God, and God promises to bless him. Despite Abraham's old age and his lack of children, God tells him that his descendants will be as many as the grains of sand on the earth. God blesses Abraham throughout his life, and eventually, the blessing passes down to his son, Isaac.

Isaac is on his deathbed and wants to pass the blessing on to his oldest son, Esau. But, Jacob had other plans and came up with a way to trick his father and steal his brother's blessing. Esau is so upset he wants to kill Jacob. Jacob flees. He traveled more than six hundred miles to live with extended family. This is where we find Jacob. He's on the run, alone, and afraid.

Jacob isn't the only one who made a mess. You have had seasons you wish you could erase, decisions you'd take back, or promises you should have kept. But, as Pastor Tim reminds us, sometimes it is in the times and places where we feel lost, alone, and afraid that God meets us. That may be the space where God encounters us and begins to renew us and reignite our trust in Him.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

As you think about how God may reignite or renew your faith, make a plan to grow. One great way to grow in your faith is through a small group. If you are not in a group, you can learn more and sign up by going to our website, www.gracepointtopeka.org. There is a link to Groups on our homepage. If you are unsure what the right next step is for you, pray and ask God to help you.

Day

03

The Dream | Genesis 28:12-15

He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

At this point in the story, Jacob is alone and afraid. Likely, he is full of questions: Will he make it to his destination? Will he find his relatives when he arrives? Will he ever go home again? God takes the initiative and meets Jacob in a dream in this crisis. Jacob sees a staircase with angels ascending and descending in the dream, and God Himself is at the top speaking to Jacob. God tells Jacob that He is the God of his grandpa and his father. What's more, He renews the promises given to Abraham and Isaac. Then God ends by promising to be present with Jacob.

We might not be on the run from our families and fearing for our lives, but fears have a way of creeping into our lives. Some of us may wonder how we will pay the bills, connect with that family member, or find contentment in our current situation. The same God who met Jacob thousands of years ago speaks to our fears today. He is with us, will never leave us, has given us His Holy Spirit to dwell in us and offers peace in the chaos. We are not alone either.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Spend a few minutes in quiet reflection. Find a quiet place in your house or go for a walk alone. Consider where you turn in a crisis and what it could look like for you to move toward God rather than away from Him. Is there a person you need to talk to or a practice you need to start?

Day

04

All Peoples | Genesis 28:14

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

God shows up and meets Jacob in this random place in the wilderness. He blesses Jacob and promises to be with him and that Jacob's offspring will be like the dust of the earth. It's a powerful moment, but we should have a burning question. Why would God choose to bless Jacob? He is a liar and a cheat. Jacob tricks his father and steals from his brother. He doesn't deserve this treatment by God. Why bless Jacob?

The answer?

It's not about Jacob. In verse 14, we see the reason. In Jacob's mess, God recruits him to be part of his grand design to restore all that is broken and rescue all who are lost. It's not just about Jacob; it's about all people. It's not that He cares only about Jacob, but also that God cares about everyone else too.

This is good news for you today as well. This is important to remember when you are alone and afraid or facing a particularly challenging season. Maybe when God meets you and comforts you in that space, it's not just about you. It could be that God meets you for your own sake, but also so you can comfort others. His grace and comfort could spill out of your home and your life into those you come into contact with.

God desires to move in you and to move through you to others.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Say this phrase out loud to yourself a couple of times, "It's not about me." Think back to when God met you and comforted you in a difficult season. Then consider one way you can use the grace and comfort given to you to be a blessing to others.

Day
05

The Stone | Genesis 28:15-22

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

Jacob wakes up the following morning and realizes this was more than just a dream. He believes he's stumbled upon a doorway - a sacred and special place where heaven and earth meet. So, Jacob stands a stone as a pillar to mark the spot and pours oil on it. He is running for his life and can't build an altar or temple to God but marks this spot and promises to return.

Twenty years later he does just that. He experiences a lot in those two decades, but God is with him all along the way. On this second visit, there is no question that God is not just the god of Jacob's father or grandfather. This is Jacob's God and this spot was the place where God met him when he was alone and afraid (Genesis 35:3).

God wants to meet you where you feel alone and afraid. You can invite God to meet you there. You can ask the same God, who recruited a con-man to be a part of His renewal program, to use you too. The place where you feel alone or afraid might just become the space where the God of Jacob becomes your God.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Wrap up this week where we started, with prayer. If you have a relationship with Jesus, then consider praying this simple prayer,

God meet me today. Renew my faith in you, and reignite a passion for you.

If you don't have a relationship with Jesus, we would love to have a conversation with you about that. Send us a text message - text **gppastor** to 94000. We would love to talk with you about Jesus's invitation to help you find freedom and receive forgiveness. Take the important step of beginning a relationship with Him.



WEEK 2: JOSHUA

Day
01

Competition for the Heart | Joshua 24:1

Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

God establishes a special relationship with the family of Abraham in the first book of the Bible. But then there's a plot twist. The second book of the Bible describes how the descendants of this family enslaved in Egypt. God, in turn, works through Moses. He leads them out of slavery to the edge of the Promised Land. After Moses's death, God uses Joshua to lead his people into the land God promised Abraham. Our series picks up this week as Joshua calls all the local leaders to one place. This is his farewell address. Joshua's message is that they have a choice - between a God who has proven himself to be reliable or the unreliable gods of the surrounding nations.

We find ourselves with that same choice today. You can choose to live the way God created you to live or choose to live like everyone else. You can choose to discover purpose in God's plan for you or follow your own plans. That's what this series is all about. We're focusing, at the start of 2023, on whether or not we choose God, not just when we feel like it or when we're in a tough spot, but we choose to trust and follow Him every day, always.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

In your own words, pray something like this, "God, work in my heart this week. As I think about what I build my life on, show me where I trust you and where I don't. Help me to know you are reliable and can be trusted. I'm open to what you have for me this week. In Jesus's name, amen."

Use the space below to write down what the Lord reveals to you.

Day

02

Reflect on God's Goodness | Joshua 24:2-13

So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.

Joshua's getting old. He knows he doesn't have much time left, so he calls together the leaders of God's people. God speaks through Joshua to remind the people who He is and what He's done. God is reminding the people He is good and they can trust Him. He's the same God who led their forefather Abraham, the same God who sent Moses to rescue their parents and grandparents from Egypt, the same God who protected them in the wilderness, and the God who gave them the land they are now living in. He's the God who has taken care of them time and again.

God can be trusted and is good today too. He hasn't stopped taking care of you. God sent Jesus to die on the cross for your sins so you can be in a right relationship with Him. He guides you by giving you His Holy Spirit, who lives in you. He sends the rain to grow crops and trees. He gives us plants and animals to enjoy. Every sandwich, soda, and salad are a testament to God's goodness. He uniquely provides for each of us. God is good and can be trusted; therefore, we should follow Him.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Think back through how God uniquely provides for you. Make a list in your notes app or in the space below. Consider how God cares for you and is good through your different relationships, experiences, or the ways He meets your needs. Thank God most of all for sending Jesus to restore your relationship with Him. Thank God for proving to be trustworthy and reliable.

Day

03

Recognize Your Idols | Joshua 24:14-15

Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

God's provision and protection prove that God is reliable and can be trusted. But Joshua wants them to recognize something else. He wants them to know that following the gods of the people around them won't work out well. These gods are not reliable like God.

Our culture may not worship gods carved out of wood or forged out of metal, but that doesn't mean we don't worship substitute gods. Like the people surrounding Israel, we've turned many things into gods. We chase money, sex, or power. We believe success, our kids' accomplishments, social media followers, grades, sports, or experiences, are what give us a happy and complete life. We want these things to fill us with purpose, meaning, or joy but they are false and unreliable gods that leave us wanting more.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Take a few minutes to respond to the following questions. The answers you give will likely reveal one or more of your substitute gods. Write the following questions down on a piece of paper to help you determine what substitute gods you are pursuing:

- What do I think will give me meaning?
- What do I hope will give me value?
- What am I chasing after to give me significance?
- What do I feel will make me feel secure?

Somewhere on that page, write Joshua's response, "As for me...[I] will serve the Lord."

For many of us, being in a group has been a safe space for community support in regularly choosing Jesus and turning away from our substitute gods. New groups start soon. Find a group by [clicking this link](#) or going to our website: gracepointtopeka.org.

Day

04

Renew Your Commitment | Joshua 24:15-28

"See!" he said to all the people. "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

Joshua calls the leaders together and reminds them of their history with God. This isn't just a time to reminisce before Joshua dies. It isn't a retirement party either. Joshua gathered the leaders together to present them with a choice. They can either serve this God who has taken care of them or the gods of the surrounding nations. Joshua wants them to realize it can't be both. It's one or the other. The leaders choose God and set up a stone to commemorate the decision.

Joshua calls the people to choose, and God wants us to choose to follow Him too. Today is the perfect day to invite God to reignite, restore, and renew your faith. God is trustworthy and you can follow Him. God can handle whatever circumstances you bring to Him. It's up to you to renew your faith. A renewed faith is a faith that "fear[s] the Lord and serve[s] him with all faithfulness" (Joshua 24:14). It gets rid of the things we were previously trusting in.

A renewed faith goes all-in on God.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Joshua told the Israelites, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." Make that choice today. If you'd like to have a conversation about what it means to begin or renew your faith, reach out to us at office@gptopeka.org and one of our staff will connect with you.

Day
05

Words of Life | John 6:66-69

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Joshua wasn't the only one calling the people to choose between a trustworthy God or the gods of the nations around them. There's another story in the Bible where something similar happens.

As Jesus grew in popularity, so did the crowds following Him. They were interested in what He taught, but they were also following Him around hoping to benefit from another one of His miracles. Most leave when Jesus begins to share who He is and what it means to follow Him. Jesus turns to His closest disciples and asks, "You do not want to leave too, do you?"

Peter's response is one of the most confidence-building responses in the Bible, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Peter's response is an example for us. Every time you're confronted with the choice to trust God or place your confidence somewhere else, you can come back to Peter's declaration: "Jesus, you have the words of eternal life."

We focused this week on God's reliability, the choice we have to make, and the unreliability of substitute gods. When you remind yourself that God is trustworthy and reliable, you'll discover there are no other good options. Peter was right—there's nowhere else to go. God is the only way to genuine life now and forever.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Worship along with the Vertical Worship team as they sing "All the Earth." Remind yourself that God is trustworthy and reliable, "Jesus, you have rescued us, you are good and you are just."

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

If you have a paper copy of this devotional, simply search for Vertical Worship All the Earth on YouTube.

WEEK 3: SAMUEL

Day ***Renew | 1 Samuel 7:1-2***

01

Then all the people of Israel turned back to the Lord.

The people of Israel are called to renew their relationship with God frequently in their early history. It happens when Jacob meets the Lord in a dream at Bethel (Genesis 28). Near the end of his life, Joshua calls the nation to decide which god they are going to serve (Joshua 24). Now facing the threat of invasion by a hostile enemy, they again are asked to choose. This time the prophet, Samuel, calls them to renew their commitment to God. The Israelites need to hear this message over and over.

It can be easy to look down on the Israelites and judge them as they struggle to follow God. God delivers or provides for them time after time in incredible ways. When He does, the people commit to following Him and throw away their idols. But, old habits die hard, and the nation forgets the God who has rescued them. Again and again and again they go through this cycle. We read their history and are amazed at their stubbornness and forgetfulness.

But we also need to hear this call to renew again and again and again. Like a garden, your life continually needs to be “weeded.” A garden isn’t weeded once in the spring and then left alone. Weeds pop up year-round. Weeding needs to happen again and again and again. We continually need to “uproot” bad habits, intentions, and decisions that point us to other gods. We need to be constantly reminded and renewed by the Holy Spirit who is aligned with the truth of God’s Word. Change that honors God is a life-long process.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Scripture memory is a great way to continually “weed” and “feed” our spiritual garden. God’s Word captures destructive thoughts and replaces them with God’s thoughts. Commit 1 Samuel 7:3 to memory this week,

So Samuel said to all the Israelites, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods...”

Day

02

Wake Up Call | 1 Samuel 7:1-4

So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

Samuel's gathering of Israel's leaders catches the attention of the Philistines. A continual enemy of Israel, the Philistines are a warlike people known for advanced weapons and their practice of holding on to conquered lands. Once, following a military victory, the Philistines had even captured Israel's symbol of God's presence, the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4). The Philistines again gather to attack—and knowing the probable result—the Israelites are overwhelmed and undone. As war approaches a desperate nation, God issues a "wake-up call." It's time for the Israelites to pay attention.

Sometimes "wake-up" calls cause Israel to turn to God. Or they cause them to turn further away. Our wake-up calls are often significant challenges filled with pain like a cancer diagnosis, ending a relationship, or a child's poor decisions. But they can also be times of accomplishment and joy like the birth of a child, job promotion, or college graduation. God is trying to get our attention to call us back to Himself. God calls us to throw away our counterfeit gods and renew our relationship with Him in all of these situations.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Pray for a submissive heart in response to the "wake-up calls" in your life. Consider this prayer by Frank Laubach your prayer to start the new year.

God, I want to give You every minute of this year, I shall try to keep You in mind every moment of my waking hours...I shall try to let You be the speaker and direct every word. I shall try to let You direct my acts. I shall try to learn Your language. Amen.

Day

03

The Turn | 1 Samuel 7:2-4

The ark remained at Kiriath Jearim a long time—twenty years in all. Then all the people of Israel turned back to the Lord. So Samuel said to all the Israelites, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts...”

Twenty years have passed since the return of the Ark from the Philistines. At that time God moved in the hearts of His people. As He does, the nation again “turns back” to the God who rescued them. But this is not the only “turn” that is needed. While the Israelites indeed turn to God, Samuel calls them to turn away from “the foreign gods” they continue to worship and serve. He knows it’s not enough just to return to God (which they do), but their complete obedience is also required.

This turning is what Jesus means when he first appears on the scene and says, “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). Jesus tells his listeners to “repent,” to turn away from whatever it is they are trusting. He also tells them to “believe” in the good news that he is the Messiah. Repentance is both a turn away and a turn towards. Only by doing both can we live in the Kingdom of God.

Repentance is more than just a one-time decision to turn away from sin and to Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life. It’s also **a lifestyle** (a way of life) where you daily turn away from everything that can become an idol and instead put your full faith and confidence in the Lord. It involves everything from your thoughts to your desires and your goals. True repentance is a daily attitude of the heart to live surrendered and obedient to Christ.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Write this prayer down: *Heavenly Father, beginning today I want to live the life of repentance Jesus calls me to live. I am turning AWAY from ----- . I am turning TO YOU today to meet my every need. Remind me of your goodness when I am tempted to return to my idols, and to remember that you are ALWAYS with me...that you are ALWAYS at the ready to meet my needs...that you are ALWAYS working in my circumstances for my good and your glory. Amen.*

Day

04

Pouring Out | 1 Samuel 7:5-6

When they [the Israelites] had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the Lord."

Following their decision to repent and return to the Lord, the Israelites do three things under Samuel's direction. They (1) pour out water before the Lord, (2) fast, and (3) confess their sin. All of these are acts of worship as Israel confesses their sins and seeks the forgiveness of God.

Pouring out water suggested repentance and symbolized pouring themselves out to God. It reminds us of when Samuel's mother, Hannah, prays fervently to God for a child. She describes it as "pouring out my soul to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:15).

Part of Israel's serious business with God on this day involved confession. As a nation, they recognized that not only was their conduct wrong, but their hearts were set against God. They do as a nation what we are to do as Jesus-followers. We are called to recognize the existence and reality of the sins we've committed. The Apostle John writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). When we acknowledge we have done wrong, God provides complete and perfect cleansing to us. Confession opens the door to experience the forgiveness Jesus offers to all who trust in Him.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Pour yourself out to God. Confess the sins you remember to the Lord. Simply admit that you've fallen short of what God desires for you. After you've confessed, receive His forgiveness and blessing into your life. Be sure to thank Him for His forgiveness and the "clean slate" He offers you. Thank Him for Jesus, who joyfully provides the only way of receive forgiveness, and sincerely ask the Holy Spirit to give you the desire to know God's Word - His commands and to joyfully walk in obedience to Christ.

Day
05

Stone of Remembrance | 1 Samuel 7:7-12

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us."

God again rescues His chosen people with a mighty thunderstorm that causes complete turmoil in the Philistine army. The Lord defeats the army that moments earlier had appeared unbeatable. Samuel sets up a stone of remembrance in response and names it Ebenezer, meaning "Stone of Help." In doing so, Samuel recognizes God's decisive role in the victory. God helps them defeat this enemy in battle and again shows His faithfulness. "Thus far," He is trustworthy.

There is great benefit in taking time to recognize the goodness and faithfulness of God. As we do, we learn that we can trust God for whatever lies ahead. Looking back, we see God's faithfulness to us during the cancer struggle of a loved one. We also come to see His presence when we ultimately lose them to the disease. We remember God's faithfulness through months of unemployment and rejoice in His provision of a new job. We look back at His protection over a family member gone astray and forward to our hope for better days ahead. We can honestly say with Samuel, "Thus far, the Lord has helped us."

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Worship along with Elevation Worship as they sing, "Resurrecting." Remind yourself that God is good and reliable, a theme we see in the lyrics, "The fear that held us now gives way to Him who is our peace. His final breath upon the cross is now alive in me."

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

If you have a paper copy of this devotional, simply search for Elevation Worship Resurrecting on YouTube.



WEEK 4: DAVID

Day

01

Drought | 1 Kings 18:20-46

Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.

Dry earth cracks beneath the Israelites' feet. The valley, usually rich with crops, lies barren due to a three-year drought and famine. Tension swirls like dust in the air as people line up to take sides. The prophet, Elijah, calls for a showdown between the true God and Baal, the regional god of crops and prosperity. Long ago, God clearly warns Israel His blessing is not unconditional, and He would withhold rain and crops if they turn to worship other gods (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). Their spiritual arrogance led them to believe God would bless them despite their disobedience.

God provides many blessings. He blesses us with birth and the beauty and joy of His created world. He blesses belief and welcomes us into his family when we accept His gift of salvation through Jesus. God also blesses behavior. He grows us to become more like Jesus as we obey God's Word and allow His Spirit to work in us. We experience fruits such as love, joy, peace, patience, and self-control even when situations aren't ideal.

While God's love is unconditional—His blessing is not. God may use "droughts" to call us back to Him if we walk away. We cannot expect God's blessing if we disregard His Word. We may expect God is obligated to get us out of tough times. But God may desire to use that season to move us from spiritually STUCK to STARTED with Him. Not all droughts are the result of our behaviors or decisions. Spiritually STARTED means we draw close to God deeply trusting Him and understanding He alone can meet our needs.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Consider your assumptions about God and ask Him to reveal any false ideas. "Father, you are a good God who generously blesses us. Forgive me for where I have assumed you should do something and deal with my inaccurate views of who you are. Help me know who you really are as revealed in your Word because I want to know you more deeply and follow you more intimately and obediently. In Jesus' name, amen."

Day
02

Confidence | Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Last week you were encouraged to use scripture memorization to continually “weed” your spiritual garden. We recognize we cannot follow God’s word on our own. The Holy Spirit empowers us to grow in obedience and reflect more of Jesus’ character and memorizing Scripture is a way we can do that.

Today’s verse reminds us that God is the one who does the good work in us. Paul expresses profound thanks to God for how believers in Philippi accepted the gospel of Jesus and partnered with him in sharing that good news with others. Paul is confident in God’s work of forgiveness through their faith in Jesus and in what God will continue to do in them. He reminds them that God will mature them and help them grow “in the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:11). God is faithful to keep doing this work until their lives here on earth end, or Jesus returns.

As we memorize this verse, we can be confident of this same work. If we’ve put our faith and trust in Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, God is doing the good work of salvation in us. He will continue to help us grow more like Jesus through the power of His Holy Spirit living in us until Jesus returns or He takes us home to heaven.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Commit to memorizing Philippians 1:6. Music offers a creative and fun way to commit Scripture to memory. A simple internet search using a Bible verse reference often provides a variety of songs based on that Scripture. Here is just one song based on this verse you can use as a memory tool:

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

If you have a paper copy of this devotional, simply search for Seeds Family Worship Carry It On on YouTube.

Day

03

Decision | 1 Kings 18:20-25

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

The Israelites attempted to live in two camps. They haven't entirely walked away from the one true God, but they also weren't fully worshiping Him. They adopted the practices of the cultures surrounding them by worshiping a host of regional gods who "specialized" in various areas.

Baal is the god who supposedly ensures rain and good crops. Israel's leaders push this god on the Israelites, and they comply. They kept worshiping God, but added Baal to their worship mix. The problem, of course, is that the Lord would have none of this. He is the only one who will meet their every need, and He expects their complete devotion.

Our culture might not tell us to get rid of Jesus, but it does push us to add things to him thus reinforcing the idea that Jesus couldn't possibly care for your every need.

For example, you might be tempted to trust in Jesus and a specific political leader for your safety. You may believe in Jesus and depend on popularity for your value. It could be you add a career and financial stability to your worship mix for security. Maybe you've put our faith in Jesus plus influence to find meaning and purpose. These things may not be wrong, but they are not meant to provide what only God can. He deserves to be our everything. He is the only one who will fulfill your every need. God desires we place Him in the center of our lives—and love and serve Him with all every fiber of our being (Matthew 22:26-28). This is what it means to live a Christ-centered life.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Ask God to reveal any "Jesus +" things in your life. Take time to pray and ask God to help you rely on Him alone.

Day

04

Exposure | 1 Kings 18:26-39

When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!"

The epic showdown reaches a fever pitch. Four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal dance and shout around their altar for an entire day. Baal will prove to be a true god if he sends fire to consume their sacrifice. In desperation, the prophets resort to cutting themselves to show their deep devotion. Yet Baal remains silent. Elijah calls the people forth and builds an altar to the one true God. He drenches the altar in water and then calls on God to reveal himself so that the people know He is God alone. Fire from heaven consumes the sacrifice and altar. The people fall down and confess the Lord is God.

Counterfeit gods eventually fail us and cannot meet our bottomless pit of desire and need. While the things we turn to might be good, they are unreliable. You know how it goes. Beauty fades and shifts with society's perception. Careers eventually end, whether by retirement or downsizing. Children grow up, move out, and make their own decisions. Technology continually changes, outdating the most popular social media platforms and the best phones. Popularity has to be maintained and can be lost in an instant. Experiences end and leave us scheming for the next thrill or getaway.

We can easily take something good and turn it into God. God is the only one who is good and can fill the hole in our hearts. When He reveals something good we've elevated above Him, our response should be to express gratitude to Him for that good gift and then confess that we've made it something He never intended for us. God exposes counterfeit gods to draw us back to himself and renew our faith and trust in Him alone.

FOCUS FOR TODAY

Confess any good thing you rely on instead of God. Offer gratitude for that good gift and ask God to help you keep it in its proper place. "God, I confess that I have often relied on _____ instead of turning to you. Thank you for this good gift in my life. Help me recognize it as a gift from you, but not something that can fulfill my deepest needs. Only you can do that."

Day
05

Blessing | 1 Kings 18:41-46

Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

God loves the Israelites so much he sends a severe drought to get their attention, reveals their counterfeit gods, and calls them back to himself. They recognize they've walked away from God and cry out to confess He is the one true God. God hears their cries and sends rain. He doesn't leave them in a drought but restores their relationship with Him and their land to fertility.

We may think we've run too far or too long from God. We may wonder if He wants us back or can ever restore us.

Jesus shows the heart of God through the parable of the Prodigal Son. Even though the son squanders his inheritance and runs from home, the father welcomes him back with open arms and restores his position in the family when the son seeks forgiveness (see Luke 15:11-24).

Our Heavenly Father desires to restore us. He provides a way back to the blessing of relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. The Father welcomes us into His family when we turn to Jesus, confess that we have sinned, and accept His forgiveness through His death on the cross and resurrection. Any time we wander, we can confess as the Israelites did, and God extends His forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9).

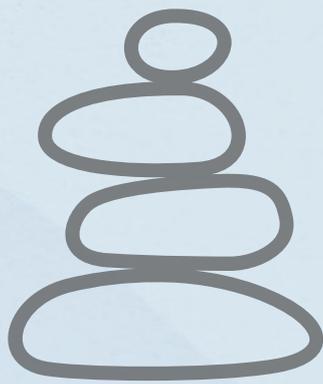
FOCUS FOR TODAY

Spend time in worship crying out to God that He is your one, true God worthy of all your worship. Join Red Rocks Worship as they sing "Echo Holy."

Declare to God that "all glory and honor, dominion and power" belong to Him. Praise Him that "all wisdom and wonder belong to no other but you."

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

If you have a paper copy of this devotional, simply search for Red Rocks Worship Echo Holy on YouTube.



GRACEPOINT