

A STUDY FROM JERSEY CHURCH

SEEK
✦
SERVE
✦
LISTEN

LIVING OUT
OUR VALUES



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DEVOTIONALS

SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD

DAY 1

Psalm 27:4

I have asked one thing from the Lord; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the Lord and seeking him in his temple.

As king, David had many responsibilities from leading military campaigns, to managing his family, to governing a nation. Though each of his roles were important, David prioritized being near God. David knew that longing for the presence of the Lord was key to the rest of his life going the right direction.

Seeking God doesn't mean neglecting your family or job but means letting your relationship with Him take precedence and give the guidance you need for all other things. Prioritizing the Lord will positively influence how you live, lead, and love in all other areas of your life. Using a "one thing" mentality enables you to clear out the clutter and stay focused on what matters most.

In a world of multitasking and seeking after multiple goals simultaneously, God calls us to a singular focus. The kind of focus this verse describes requires intentional focus and godly choices. It means carving out time for the Lord through prayer and Scripture as we daily align our commitments with God. This often requires a no to something else so we may say yes to Him.

- **What would a close observer say is the "one thing" your life is focused on currently? What needs to change to make God the one thing?**
- **Ask for wisdom to see your life like God. Pray that the Lord would teach you to make Him your "one thing."**

DAY 2

Colossians 3:1-2

So, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

The command in these verses is clear and direct. We are to focus on things of God. This isn't a suggestion but a command that takes daily intentionality and effort. Focusing on things of the Lord doesn't mean we neglect our earthly responsibilities but that we see everything through the lens of Scripture and the kingdom of God.

When we allow our hearts and minds to drift away from God onto earthly temporal things, our lives will suffer negatively. Setting the compass of our lives to the Lord is the key to staying on track and honoring God. This also changes how we measure success. Instead of bowing to the ways of the world, we ask whether a choice will honor and bring God glory. Our decisions aren't based on comfort or ease but on eternal impact. That makes all the difference.

There are still real-life issues like jobs, bills, kids, school, and health challenges that demand attention. When we keep God first, all other things will fall into proper place. Setting your mind takes practice. Start your day by aligning your heart and mind with Scripture as you ask the Lord to give you guidance and wisdom to make choices that honor Him and have eternal impact.

- **What earthly things has drawn your focus away from God? What needs to happen to reset your focus on Him?**
- **Confess the ways that you have allowed earthly things to steal your focus. Ask the Lord to help you fix your mind on Him and matters of eternal significance.**

DAY 3

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.

Many times, we act first and ask questions later. Life can feel urgent, and we can be tempted to move forward with our own agendas and plans, asking God to bless them afterward. But this is backward according to Scripture. Proverbs 3 gives a different order to follow. We are to trust, pray, and seek first, then act.

Consider what it means to trust the Lord. Trusting means that you believe God knows better than you. Even when His way takes longer or seems harder. Leaning on our own understanding is setting priorities based on what we can see and control. When we lean on God, we let Him set the direction and trust Him enough to follow His plans.

We are instructed to do so in “all your ways”. This challenges the mindset that we can give God control over some parts of our lives while still retaining control over others. We aren’t called to invite God into parts of our lives. We are to acknowledge His sovereignty and leadership in everything. When we do, God promises to make our paths straight.

- **Where have you been leaning on your own understanding instead of trusting God?**
- **Repent of the ways that you have kept back pieces of your life for your own control. Surrender to the Lord, asking Him to lead you and align your priorities with Him in all things.**

DAY 4

Philippians 3:7-8

But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ.

Paul had all the worldly resume a person could want. Status, influence, education, and accomplishments were all part of his past. But he claimed all of this as loss compared to knowing Christ. This wasn't false humility, but a reordering of his values. He had experienced things the world considered important but knew none of that could compare with the treasure of Jesus.

Paul's mindset challenges us to consider what competes with Jesus for first place in our hearts. Kingdom living means loosening our grip on comfort, security, recognition, or a need to control so that we can cling tightly to Jesus. Knowing Christ is not a one-time event but a daily pursuit. As you grow in Him, your life will align with His priorities and will for you. The more you seek Him, the more you will find Him and know Him.

- **What do you need to give up that is in competition with knowing Christ further?**
- **Ask God to help you value Jesus above anything or anyone else. Commit to refusing anything that competes with devotion to Him going forward.**

DAY 5

Luke 12:31-32

“But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom.”

Jesus’s call to prioritize the kingdom of God comes with a promise. When we seek His kingdom, He will provide what we need. When we live in God’s way, there are costs, but the benefits far outweigh the difficulties.

Of course, this is easier said than done. We may fear that putting God first may cause our work to suffer, or we might lose opportunities to succeed financially. We may worry that certain relationships we value may diminish, or we won’t achieve worldly significance. Jesus addresses our fear directly with the reminder that God delights to give us His kingdom, which is greater than anything of earth.

Seeking God’s kingdom looks like putting God’s reign, values, and mission above our personal ambitions. We can trust that when we follow His priorities, He will take care of us. The pressure to handle everything falls off our shoulders and into the very capable hands of our Lord. Trusting Him loosens fear’s grip on your life and positions you to live with open hands - ready to receive His kingdom.

- **How would your decisions change if you fully trusted God to provide everything you need as you seek His kingdom?**
- **Confess ways you’ve sought control in your life out of fear. Ask God for wisdom and courage to seek His kingdom first and to trust Him more fully.**

SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD

MATTHEW 6:33-34

NOVEMBER 2, 2025

MAIN POINT

When we seek the kingdom of God above all, everything else falls into place.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Consider your day as an empty jar. If you put small pebbles (representing all the small details and decisions you make daily) in first, you will quickly run out of room for big rocks (representing your relationships, health, spiritual growth). On the flip side, when you put the big rocks in first, then you can pour the smaller pebbles around them and they all fit. The way we order our lives and priorities is the central point of Jesus's teaching in today's passage.

- **Which do you tend to focus on first in life, the smaller details or the big rocks?**
- **What small rocks tend to crowd out your big rocks like your faith and relationships?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read Matthew 6:33-34

These verses summarize the teaching of Jesus in this large passage. He gave simple guidance regarding our priorities and the order they should take. Many people struggle with getting and keeping priorities in the right order. We often allow seemingly urgent things to push aside things we know are more important. Kingdom things should not be added to a list but should be the main priority, taking precedence over all the other things that press in on us. Seeking God's kingdom is to always come first. When it does, everything else will be in the right order.

- **What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God first?**
- **What does this look like in daily life? What makes it challenging?**

Think about the difference it makes to live this way. As you go to work, seek God first. In your parenting, seek God first. Seeking the kingdom doesn't mean ignoring everything else in our lives. It means seeing it all through a kingdom lens. Further, it means seeking His righteousness, seeking to live as His holy people, set apart in the world for His purposes.

When we seek Him and His righteousness first, Jesus gave a promise: God will take care of everything else and give us what we need.

- **How have you seen the impact of seeing all of life through the lens of the kingdom of God?**
- **How have you seen the impact of viewing life only through a worldly lens?**

In verse 34, Jesus gave a reminder not to worry. This is tied to Jesus's teaching a few verses earlier on worry. Worry has no benefit, as it takes us out of the current moment and has no power to control the future. Worry takes our eyes off God and His grace in our lives.

- **Where are you most prone to worry? How have you seen the reality that worry is fruitless?**

Jesus's words point us to living in the present. We are not to be caught up worrying over the past and what has already happened or what might happen in the future. God calls us to live for Him today. We cannot pursue this aim if our attention is set on the past or future, both of which we cannot influence today.

- **What about our modern world makes it particularly difficult to focus on the present moment with God and others around us?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Where are you struggling with worry or misplaced priorities now? How can you submit this before God?**
- **How can we support one another in keeping our focus on God and His kingdom above all else?**
- **How might living in the way Jesus described in this passage give us opportunity to share the gospel with others?**

PRAY

Ask the Lord to help you seek Him first in every area of life. Seek to trust His provision for your life and resist allowing worry to take root. Pray for wisdom to identify what needs to change for you to walk in righteousness daily.

MATTHEW 6:33-34

6:33. If our life is not to be preoccupied with fretting over basic needs, what is our concern to be? The answer is, his kingdom and his righteousness. Those two terms are almost synonymous. God's kingdom means his sovereign rule in heaven and on earth, most particularly in and through the life of the individual believer. To seek his kingdom is to seek to ensure that his righteousness is done in heaven, on earth, and, most particularly, in and through our lives.

We are to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness. Everything starts here. This is to be our consuming priority. So it is important to remind ourselves of some basic kingdom realities. How does a person find God's righteousness that characterizes his kingdom? Jesus started his sermon by pointing out our utter spiritual bankruptcy. We have no righteousness of our own. Even our best attitudes and actions do not procure it. Righteousness comes as a merciful gift, grace through faith (Eph. 2:4–10).

The first reference to righteousness that we find in Scripture is Genesis 15:6. Abraham knew how a person received grace, and the apostle Paul confirmed it (Rom. 4:2–25). The New Testament makes it clear that the righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22–24). That is the only way we may enter into God's kingdom. Jesus clarified this issue for Nicodemus (John 3:3). We cannot see the kingdom of God unless we are "born again."

So everything begins with our seeking his kingdom and righteousness. In fact, we are to keep on seeking God's kingdom and righteousness. But we are not to seek in the sense of looking for something hidden. Rather, we are to look for every opportunity to expand more fully his already established rule in our lives and in our world, in anticipation

of the day when believers will reign with him (Matt. 19:27–29; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26–27; 3:21) when he establishes his kingdom fully on this earth.

Notice how this passage (6:25–34), which seemed to be taking us in a new direction, actually returns us to the theme of 6:19–24—that we are not to allow anything to distract us from total devotion to God and his kingdom. This is the one priority we must embrace. Money and other concerns can distract us.

Three times in verses 32 and 33, we find the phrase all these things. We might imagine Jesus using it somewhat disparagingly. This was not to belittle the importance of basic necessities, but to place them at the back of the mind of his disciples, far behind his kingdom and righteousness in importance. “All these things” are what pagans (and the Pharisees) scrambled after. “All these things” are thoroughly known by the Father. “All these things” will fall into place when we put God’s kingdom and righteousness in its proper place and serve the kingdom’s interests.

6:34. Jesus restated for the third time his command, Do not worry! This time he broadened it to include any possible anxieties we may have for tomorrow. As an expression of trust in his heavenly Father, the kingdom servant is to live in the present, trusting the Father for the grace to cover the needs of the present. “When tomorrow comes, the Father will provide the grace to cover its needs also,” is the implied assurance.

DEVOTIONALS

SERVE WITH THE HUMILITY OF JESUS

DAY 1

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.

Paul gave a direct challenge to put others first in humility. It has been said that humility isn't about thinking less of yourself but rather thinking of yourself less. This instruction is counter cultural to our world that rewards self-promotion but reflects Jesus's heart. When we serve out of love instead of seeking applause, then we are living like our Savior and seeing people the way He did.

Jesus demonstrated what it means to serve others as a way of life. True humility changes how we see people and treat them. This doesn't mean you neglect your own needs but you shift your priorities to recognize every person is made in the image of God and worthy of love and service. Prioritizing others can be as simple as listening to someone, sharing resources, helping meet a need, or even offering encouragement. Often this means simple daily choices to put others before ourselves.

Jesus lived in perfect humility and gave numerous examples of true humility. As Jesus served others, He knew exactly who He was and was confident in His identity. He still chose to serve in love. As we are secure in our identity in Him, we will also live this way.

- **Who is God calling you to put before yourself in some way this week?**
- **Ask the Lord to help you see and value others as He does. Ask for a heart to serve out of love and humility.**

DAY 2

Mark 10:43-45

“But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus repeatedly turned the idea of greatness upside down. Greatness in the kingdom of God is measured quite differently. While the world uses power, prestige, position, or recognition as a marker, Jesus said service is the true measure of greatness. This way of operating is foreign to our natural thinking.

Jesus offered Himself as the example. The Son of Man who has every right to be served, chose instead to serve. His entire life was marked by selfless love culminating with His death on the cross as the ultimate act of service. We are called to follow Him and live like He lived. Serving others reflects Jesus to the world.

True greatness is not about lifting yourself up or calling attention to your own efforts. It is about stooping low and being willing to meet the needs of others even when it is inconvenient or unnoticed. All of this is to exalt our Savior who has served us perfectly.

- **How do you need to redefine your definition of greatness?
What do you need to live differently?**
- **Pray for a heart more like Jesus’s so you are willing to serve others as He did. Commit to taking advantage of opportunities to serve those around you.**

DAY 3

Galatians 5:13

For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but serve one another through love.

We love to read, talk about, and celebrate freedom in Christ. But we also need the reminder that we are not to use our freedom selfishly. Freedom in Christ is not a license to do whatever we want but an opportunity to serve others. Christian freedom is not about fulfilling our selfish desires but willingly giving ourselves in loving service.

Christian service is rooted in love and not duty. Without love, service becomes a heavy and burdensome obligation. With love, our service becomes joyful and Christlike. These acts can be as simple as making a meal, sharing a coffee and listening ear, or lending a hand without expecting anything in return.

As you are intentional about obeying the call to serve, check the state of your heart. Our service is intended to bless another, to show love in some way, or to uplift and honor others in humility and love. Ultimately, our service is always meant to exalt Jesus.

- **How can you use your freedom in Christ to serve someone else in love this week?**
- **Thank the Lord for the freedom you have through Jesus. Confess the ways you have used your freedom selfishly and seek to reflect Jesus through love and humility.**

DAY 4

John 15:12-13

“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.”

Jesus didn't just command us to love but then leave us to try and figure out how. He lived the example we need to follow. His love was costly, sacrificial and unconditional. He washed the disciples' feet, bore their failures, and ultimately gave His life for them. He does the same for each of us. The kind of love Jesus taught is different than what we often settle for. His love is a call to action - to give, serve, and sometimes sacrifice for the good of others. This kind of love is often not easy. It requires patience, longsuffering, persistence, humility, and surrender.

Serving with humility often requires laying down your pride, preferences, or convenience. It may mean leaving your own personal comfort zone and stepping into a whole new situation. Every act of humble service is a glimpse of Jesus to others and is central to living faithfully for Him. Love is not optional - it is who we are because of who Jesus is in us. When we resist stretching to obey out of fear or a refusal to be uncomfortable, we miss out in the blessing of serving others like Jesus.

- **What is one practical way you can demonstrate Christ's sacrificial love to someone this week?**
- **Ask Jesus to help you love others as He loves them. Confess the times you have missed opportunities to obey Him out of fear or refusal to be uncomfortable. Commit to laying down your pride and stepping out in faith to serve.**

DAY 5

1 Peter 4:10

Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

Serving is a means by which we steward God's grace in our lives. Every gift, skill, or resource we have is from God and meant for the benefit of others. Recognizing that all we have is from God motivates us to serve with humility. When you don't take credit for your resources and understand that they have been given to you from the Lord, you will be more likely to offer them in service to Him.

The same is true with your time and talents. God is the one who bestows all you have. God has given you what you have, and He can multiply your gifts as He sees fit. Using gifts of hospitality, generosity, encouragement, teaching, and others, is a way to extend God's love to those who desperately need it. Humble service makes God's invisible grace visible to a watching world and helps others connect with the God who loves them unconditionally.

- **What gifts or resources has God given you that you can use for His glory this week?**
- **Ask the Lord to help you be a faithful steward of all He has given and to show you how to use His gifts to serve others with humility.**

SERVE WITH THE HUMILITY OF JESUS

JOHN 13:1-20

NOVEMBER 9, 2025

MAIN POINT

Jesus washed the disciples' feet, demonstrating and teaching them that the greatest in His kingdom will make themselves the least.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

When someone knows he or she is at the end of their life, they are often intentional about who they spend time with and how that time is spent. Many people will choose to gather their loved ones and share parting words of love or encouragement. Think about who you would want to spend your last days with and what you would want to say or do if you knew it was the final time you would get to be with them. Knowing His time was short, Jesus spent time teaching His disciples. Among other things, He taught them the importance of serving with humility.

- **How would you approach your final days if you knew there wasn't much time left for you?**
- **What experience have you had spending time with a loved one at the end of their life?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read John 13:1-13.

Jesus and His disciples were at their last supper together before the crucifixion. During this time, Jesus stressed His love for those in the room and those who would follow in their footsteps. After acknowledging the authority of the Father, Jesus proceeded to wash the disciples' feet. This act was typically performed by a servant of low rank. Jesus demonstrated His servant heart in His words and actions.

- **In these verses, how did Jesus not just speak of His love but demonstrate it also?**
- **Why is it important that His followers do the same?**
- **What is challenging about serving others from a pure motivation?**

Peter initially refused to let Jesus serve him in that way, declaring himself to be unworthy to be in that position. Jesus said unless we are willing to accept His humble service that cleanses us, we can have no part or share with Him. Jesus spoke beyond the literal act of feet washing to the spiritual cleansing of our sins that occurs when we receive what He was going to do for us on the cross.

After finishing, Jesus affirmed the disciples' relationship with Him as teacher and Lord. It is vital for Christ followers to acknowledge and surrender their lives to Jesus as Lord and continually seeking to learn from Him.

- **How do you relate to Jesus as both Lord and teacher?**
- **What impact do each of these have on various aspects of your life?**

> *Have a volunteer read John 13:14-20.*

Jesus told the disciples to do for others as He had done for them. Jesus's life is much more than an example for us, but He did live as an example for us also. Too many people claim to be Christians yet refuse to follow the example of Christ in the way they live and the attitudes they display.

- **Where might your life be out of alignment with the things you claim to believe about Jesus?**

Contrary to what the world preaches, no one is too great, important, successful, or influential to be exempt from living like Christ.

- **What does the world teach about serving others in comparison to what Jesus teaches?**

Serving others in humility is pleasing to the Lord. It fulfills the calling on our lives and brings blessing. We are still to learn from the example of Jesus, seeking to live and love as He does. Men and women who want to live out their calling should make it their priority to humbly serve in the name of Jesus, seeking an impact on the world.

- **What needs to change so you are following the example of Jesus?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **Where do you need to humble yourself and serve?**
- **How can we live as servants among one another? What would this look like?**
- **How might living in humble service of others give us opportunity for gospel conversations?**

PRAY

Thank Jesus for giving you such an example of how to live. Ask for desire to serve with humility as Jesus did.

JOHN 13:1-20

The love of Jesus for His disciples, and those who would come to be His disciples, is shown in the washing of the disciples' feet. The servant motif, so prevalent in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 10:45), is here revealed as well in the Gospel of John. Servanthood is a direct extension and representation of love (13:1). What enabled Jesus to perform this act of utter humility was a keen understanding of who He was, where He had come from, and where He was going (13:3). This is a key to humility in all persons—a healthy and balanced understanding of who they are.

If Jesus, Lord and Teacher, washes our feet, how much more should we wash one another's feet (13:14). What is at hand is not the institution of an ordinance of foot-washing, as this passage has sometimes been interpreted, but the lifestyle of humble servanthood.

DEVOTIONALS

LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

DAY 1

Psalm 46:10

“Stop fighting, and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.”

Have you ever been at a loud event like a concert or sold-out ball game while trying to carry on a deep conversation with someone? This can be super frustrating because the noise level around you isn't conducive to talking, even if the person is right next to you. While we aren't always at a crowded, loud event, there is a lot of noise around us. We all have different voices that compete for our attention, so it's no wonder we struggle to hear from the Lord in the noise.

Sometimes the noise is external and sometimes it is internal. Both have the same impact, making it difficult to focus on the One we need to hear the most. With packed schedules and constant notifications, our minds never stop racing. Today's verse is a reminder that God tells us to stop - some translations say, “Be still.” Silence and stillness are not wasted time; they are helpful conditions that enable us to hear God's voice. Stillness is a form of trust, showing that we don't feel we have to hurry and cram more into every moment. The more we are still and wait on the Lord, the more we acknowledge He is in control.

We can learn to create moments of quiet, even in the noise of life, to hear from the Lord. The world will continue to demand our attention so we must be intentional in finding time to pause, reflect, pray, and listen.

- **What are the main “noises or voices” that compete with God's voice in your life?**
- **Ask the Lord to help you slow down and be quiet before Him so you can hear Him speak. Invite Him to teach you how to be still, wait, and trust Him as Lord.**

DAY 2

John 10:27

“My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.”

With these words, Jesus clarified the relationship He has with His followers - one of recognition, familiarity, and trust. Sheep know their shepherd's voice because they hear it frequently. They trust it because they've learned to do so through time, repetition, and experience. Hearing God's voice is much the same way. We don't just hear it once. The relationship is developed daily in our relationship with Him. The more time we spend in prayer and the Word, the more we recognize and distinguish God's voice over other noise in the world. As this happens, we become more attuned to His leading.

Sheep have been described as helpless and vulnerable. We might say they are needy. The world encourages us to be the opposite of sheep. Yet that is exactly the spiritual mindset that we need with Christ. We are the sheep. He is the shepherd. Our job is to develop our relationship with Him so that when He speaks, we immediately identify His voice, and we follow in obedience.

- **How can you seek to grow in sensitivity to the Spirit this week?**
- **Confess the ways that you have neglected to listen to God's voice. Ask for discernment to hear and recognize when He is speaking.**

DAY 3

James 1:22-25

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works - this person will be blessed in what he does.

Many people have a complicated relationship with the mirror. Some love to look at themselves, while others dread seeing the reality a reflection gives. One thing we all have in common is we need that accurate reflection at times. None of us will look in the mirror, see a big streak of dirt on our face, ignore it, and go to work. That would be ridiculous and odd, yet Scripture tells us that is the same as when we know what God's Word says to do but fail to do it.

James emphasized the importance of not just glancing at the Word but looking intently into it. That means God's Word shouldn't just be words on a page that you read so you can check a task off your list for the day. We should approach His Word with the intention to learn from it, be convicted of sin, and be changed by it. Intentional reading and listening to the Word of God produces lasting fruit in us. God delights to pour out His favor on those who not only hear the Word but who act on it in faith.

- **Where is God calling you to move from hearing His Word to acting on it?**
- **Confess how you have been hearing but not doing what God's Word says. Ask the Lord to teach you what it means to look intently into Scripture and for courage to act on what you hear Him say immediately.**

DAY 4

Galatians 5:16-18

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Paul painted a picture of a battleground. On one side is our flesh nature with its selfish desires. On the other side is the Holy Spirit of God who lives within every Christ follower. These each pull us in different directions. This explains why we often feel an inner tension. We love Jesus and want to live for Him, yet we also feel the pull of our flesh.

But this is not a fair fight. The Holy Spirit can overcome any desire of the flesh and pull from the world. It isn't that the temptation disappears but rather that the Spirit empowers us to resist. It is the Spirit who enables us to live differently in the relationships, decisions, and circumstances of our everyday lives.

We are empowered to live holy lives because God is with us. Walking suggests steady progress over time. Walking in the Spirit is a spiritual habit developed daily through seeking Him, listening to Him, and obeying Him.

- **Where do you feel the tension between the Spirit and your flesh most right now?**
- **Thank the Holy Spirit for living within you and guiding you daily. Ask Him to strengthen you for victory over the desires of your flesh.**

DAY 5

Hebrews 3:13-15

But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. For we have become companions of the Messiah if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start. As it is said:

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

Drifting is all too easy. Think about floating on a paddle board or raft in the ocean and not paying attention as you relax. It doesn't take long for you to end up farther down the coast and out to sea than you intended. Drifting occurs naturally and can be dangerous both in the ocean and in your spiritual life. The writer of Hebrews issued a wake-up call for all believers that we should pay close attention to.

The word "today" stresses the urgency of God's call. Every day is an opportunity to soften our hearts and make the necessary changes by responding to the Spirit. The more you put off the Lord, the harder your heart can grow and none of us knows that tomorrow will bring.

This passage also reminds us community plays an important role in the hearts and lives of believers. Following Jesus is not a solo adventure and we are called to encourage one another daily so our hearts aren't hardened.

- **Who in your life encourages you to stay sensitive to God's voice and who can you encourage the same way?**
- **Ask the Lord to keep your heart sensitive to His voice. Pray for the community you are involved with that you can encourage others to walk in faithfulness. Ask for wisdom to see where you are vulnerable to drift and be intentional about seeking to keep your heart from hardening.**

LISTEN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

GENESIS 22; 1 SAMUEL 3:1-21

NOVEMBER 16, 2025

MAIN POINT

All Christ followers must decide to listen to the voices of the world or the voice of the Holy Spirit. Those who seek to honor the Lord with their lives will listen to Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Think about the constant noise that surrounds you. From texts buzzing, emails chirping, news headlines scrolling, and others competing for your attention, it can be challenging to focus. All the noise makes it virtually impossible to truly listen. Consider how difficult it is to have a deep conversation with your phone constantly lighting up with notifications. It's distracting and often limits the connections we develop as distracted communication leads to shallow relationships. The same is true spiritually. When we struggle to listen to the Holy Spirit, our relationship with Him will suffer. If we aren't intentional about taking time to really hear from Him, we risk missing what God is saying to us.

- **How does it make you feel when someone you are talking with is constantly checking his or her phone? Why is this a problem?**
- **How does the noise of the world make it difficult to listen to the Holy Spirit daily?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read 1 Samuel 3:1-21.

When the events in this passage took place, the Holy Spirit had not been given permanently to God's people yet and Samuel lived in a time when the people's hearts were exceedingly hardened, so the word of the Lord was quite rare. Young Samuel had been dedicated to the Lord and was being raised by Eli the priest to serve in the temple. While he ministered on behalf of the Lord, he had a powerful encounter with the Living God. This passage reminds us God longs to speak to His children but too many times we are not tuned to hear His voice. Initially, Samuel did not understand he was hearing God's voice and thought it was Eli. Eventually, both Eli and Samuel recognized it was God calling the boy.

When God called Samuel a third time, he responded as Eli taught him. "Here I am Lord" is the appropriate posture for all who seek what the Lord has to say. If you wonder why you don't hear from the Lord in prayer or through His Word, consider if you are positioning your heart, mind, and body to receive what God has for you. If not, follow Samuel's example and put yourself in a position to hear from Him. Learning to hear from God takes time and practice and requires continually putting off the noise of the world.

- **Samuel listened to Eli's instruction in seeking God. Who are the voices you need to listen to that help guide you toward godliness?**

- **Why is it important for us to respond to God quickly and not delay?**

In that moment, Samuel could've second guessed or he could've refused to accept what he heard for some reason or another. He could've made excuses about why God would be better off selecting someone else. But Samuel's willing surrender reminds us that even when it seems like all hope is lost, God is at work, raising up faithful servants from unlikely places to fulfill His purposes and bring victory.

- **What are some things that give you hesitancy when prompted by the Lord to speak or act for Him? How can we grow in this?**

The best response to hearing God's voice is obedience. God honors those who pay attention and walk faithfully in His Word. For us, God typically speaks through His Word, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and other believers. The question is not whether God is speaking but if we are listening. Like Samuel, we need to quiet ourselves, stay attentive, position ourselves to hear, and respond in obedience. As we do, we grow in learning the voice of the Lord and responding quickly with, "Speak Lord for your servant is listening".

- **How can you quiet yourself to better listen to the Lord?**

- **Read Genesis 22:1-14. How did Abraham listen to God's voice in this passage? How did Abraham display obedience?**
- **What are some helpful, godly habits you want to cultivate? How will you pursue these daily?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **How will you seek to position yourself to hear from the Lord?**
- **What is something you have heard from God about but not obeyed yet? How do you need to respond now?**
- **How does listening for the Lord give us more opportunity to share about Him with others?**

PRAY

Thank the Lord for wanting to speak to you. Confess the ways you tend to allow the world to drown out His voice and commit to listening more intently. Ask for help to quiet yourself to listen and for boldness to obey as you hear from Him.

1 SAMUEL 3:1-21

3:1 On served, see 2:11. Prophetic visions were not widespread because of the general corruption of the time. God might withhold his word from people who showed by their conduct they did not want to receive it.

3:2–3 The lamp of God was to burn from evening until morning (Ex 27:21), so the wording suggests a time just before dawn.

3:4–6 When the Lord called Samuel, the youth confused the voice with that of Eli.

3:7 The text now gives a reason why Samuel did not recognize God's call—no prior vision or voice had come to him.

3:8 After the third time, Eli surmised that Samuel might be hearing God's voice. Perhaps no one else was present in the tabernacle complex.

3:9 Eli's suggested words to Samuel, Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening, provide a model prayer for those who seek to follow God's will.

3:10 The twofold Samuel, Samuel may indicate urgency, as it did with Abraham on Mount Moriah (Gn 22:11), with Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:4), or with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus (Ac 9:4).

3:11 The phrase everyone who hears about it will shudder means literally "the two ears of everyone who hears about it will tingle (or ring or quiver)," indicating a response to a horrific report (2Kg 21:12; Jr 19:3).

3:12 Everything I said about his family refers to 2:27–36.

3:13 Eli did try to stop his sons (2:23–25), but apparently his words came after he had let their abuses continue too long.

3:14 The phrase wiped out might be translated “atoned for.”

3:15 Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision, probably because Eli had served as Samuel’s guardian and mentor and Samuel did not want to give him bad news.

3:16–17 Eli’s words sound harsh, but they were probably intended to encourage Samuel to share the full details of his revelation. This was the standard form of an oath (cp. 2Sm 3:35).

3:18 The Lord’s word to Samuel confirmed the earlier word that Eli had received from the man of God (2:27–36). Eli’s words emphasize the sovereignty of God.

3:19 Samuel began his prophetic ministry, and the Lord authenticated it according to Dt 18:21–22.

3:20 The cities of Dan and Beer-sheba essentially marked the northern and southern borders of Israel, respectively, spanning a distance of about 110 miles (2Sm 3:10; 24:2).

3:21 Samuel had demonstrated a willingness to receive and follow God’s word, so the Lord continued to appear in Shiloh, whereas he had not done so during the unfaithfulness of Eli’s day (v. 1).

DEVOTIONALS

GIVE GOD YOUR WHOLE HEART

DAY 1

Deuteronomy 10:12–16

“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all His ways, to love Him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORD’s commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good. The heavens, indeed, the highest heavens, belong to the LORD your God, as does the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD was devoted to your fathers and loved them. He chose their descendants after them - He chose you out of all the peoples, as it is today. Therefore, circumcise your hearts and don’t be stiff-necked any longer.”

Moses reminded the Israelites of who God is, along with His faithfulness and His expectations for them. The Lord deserves and expects wholehearted devotion from His people. As a sign of the covenant between the Lord and His people, circumcision represents a heart surrendered to God.

We may want to offer bits and pieces of our lives to God. Maybe He can have Sunday mornings, crisis moments, and selective other areas of our lives, but that is not what God calls for. Moses used the phrase “all your heart and soul.” Halfhearted faith leads to wandering and destructive choices. On the other hand, wholehearted devotion leads to intimacy with God and wisdom to face life’s challenges.

The call Moses gave the Israelites is the same for us today. We are to love God fully and allow the Spirit to reshape our priorities and maximize our lives for the sake of the gospel.

- **What distracts you from loving God with all your heart and soul? How can you cut that away?**
- **Confess your struggle to love God with all of you and not to keep back pieces for your own control. Ask Him to identify anything that needs to be cut away from your life and for courage to carry it out.**

DAY 2

Isaiah 54:4

*“Do not be afraid, for you will not be put to shame;
don’t be humiliated, for you will not be disgraced.
For you will forget the shame of your youth,
and you will no longer remember
the disgrace of your widowhood.”*

Have you ever struggled to move beyond a poor choice from your past? Regardless of your past, Scripture repeatedly shows how God offers forgiveness and fresh starts. God’s people are not defined by their past failures but by His redeeming love.

The problem is shame is powerful. It whispers loudly and harshly, saying you can never get past what you did. Shame wants you to ignore the work of Jesus on the cross. His death and resurrection defeated sin and death completely. There is nothing outside the realm of what He can forgive. Through Jesus, shame is rolled away. He took your reproach so you could walk in freedom. Giving God your heart means letting Him define you over any mistakes, sin, or fears of your past.

Freedom from shame doesn’t mean pretending the past never happened. It simply means believing God’s Word over sin’s lies. Like Israel, we are invited to live with a new identity of freedom, forgiveness, and security because of Him.

- **How has shame kept you from wholehearted devotion to God?**
- **Thank the Lord for rolling your shame away through the work of Jesus. Ask Him to empower you to live in the identity and freedom He gives so that you are not held back by anything in your past.**

DAY 3

1 Corinthians 5:7–8

Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch. You are indeed unleavened, for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us observe the feast, not with old yeast or with the yeast of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Passover celebration was in remembrance of God's deliverance and provision of Israel from Egypt. Just as the lamb's blood protected the Israelites, Jesus's blood frees us from sin's slavery and calls us into new life with Him. Scripture calls us to remember Christ's sacrifice. This kind of regular remembering fuels the wholehearted living for God we desperately need.

We did nothing to earn the cross, but we look to the cross as the impetus to follow Jesus more closely. We are to walk in the light and obey His Word in all we do. Our love for Jesus should lead us to live out our faith with sincerity and truth.

Consider the difference it could make if more Christians took these words to heart. Reflecting on Jesus's sacrifice leads us to desire to follow Him and live like Him as much as possible. As we do, we will have a kingdom impact on others around us.

- **What would it look like for you to live with sincerity and truth this week?**
- **Thank Jesus for being your Passover Lamb. Ask Him to help you live in gratitude for His sacrifice and obedience to the call for sincerity and truth.**

DAY 4

Romans 2:28–29

For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart - by the Spirit, not the letter. That man's praise is not from men but from God.

The ultimate goal for believers is not external rituals but transformed hearts. True devotion to God is an inward reality fueled by the Holy Spirit. Things like going to church, reading the Bible, and service are helpful practices for believers. The issue comes when what's happening inwardly doesn't match up with an outward projection of devotion. Outward signs matter but they must reflect inward surrender. When our hearts belong fully to God, our obedience will flow naturally. A transformed heart will be evidenced by an obedient, godly life.

These verses challenge us to check our practices and our posture to make sure we are aligned with the Lord and His Word. We should regularly assess the depth of our devotion and ask God to grow in affection and desire for Him.

- **Where are you prone to substitute outward appearances of faith for actual heart surrender?**
- **Ask the Lord to work in your heart and transform it from the inside out. Pray that your inward devotion would match your outward appearance and actions that God might use you in mighty ways.**

DAY 5

Deuteronomy 30:6

The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, and you will love Him with all your heart and all your soul so that you will live.

God's people were familiar with the physical act of circumcision, but Moses was describing a deeper transformation. God would cut away the things that kept His people from whole-hearted love for Him.

True devotion to God is not something we can manufacture by our own willpower. Israel's history proved that religious rituals alone couldn't produce lasting obedience. The people's hearts continually wandered away from God. What they needed was an inner work of God. Only He can transform a selfish heart into one fully alive to Him. God doesn't just want outward expressions. He desires people who delight in Him, love Him deeply, and experience the fullness of life that comes from living in His presence.

We need the Spirit to continue working in our hearts to convict us and fill us with love for God above all else. Surrendering your whole heart to God is not about trying harder but yielding to His transforming power.

- **How does this verse challenge you in places you need to surrender more fully?**
- **Thank the Lord that transformation isn't dependent on your power. Praise Him for the work that he has done in your life and ask Him to continue the transformation He has already begun in you.**

GIVE GOD YOUR WHOLE HEART

JOSHUA 5:1-12

NOVEMBER 23, 2025

MAIN POINT

Believers are to be set apart and to give God their whole hearts.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Imagine wedding vows that included a line stating intention to love the other person at least five days a week but reserving the other two days in case they didn't feel like it or wanted to give their love to someone else those days? Crazy, right? None of us would sign up for that limited type of commitment. Refusing total commitment is not a good precursor for a winning relationship. While this is a silly example, many times we try the same in our spiritual lives. Today we are studying the need to love God with our whole hearts.

- **What would you say to someone who was going to marry a person who had that lack of commitment from the start?**
- **Why do you think it is important to love God with your whole heart?**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Have a volunteer read Joshua 5:1-12.

As the Israelites continued into the promised land, those residing in the region were alarmed. The kings of Canaan heard about the Jordan drying up so God's people could cross, and their courage failed as they lost heart. Interestingly, instead of attacking immediately, Joshua was told to circumcise all the males of Israel. Circumcision was tied to covenant commitment, and the Lord wanted His people fully committed to Him. One might think doing something to make all the men physically weak for a time would be counterproductive, but the Lord made clear victory would not be determined by their physical strength but by God's presence.

- **What are some ways Christians are called to live today that may seem odd to others? Where does this require faith and obedience?**

The people had been in a time of wandering due to rebellion of the generation that died in the wilderness. This was their opportunity to renew the covenant God had established with Abraham. God wanted them to move forward with hearts in the right place. Obedience would make them vulnerable, but it was part of God's plan to teach dependency on Him and not themselves. They were to trust the Lord in their weakness.

- **Why is it important to trust God over your own strength? Why is it tempting to do the opposite?**

- **When was a time that helped you learn to trust God in your weakness?**

God told the people that He had rolled away the reproach of Egypt. Their shame and slavery were behind them and it was time to move forward with the Lord in the promised land. He gave the Israelites a new start and He offers us the same.

- **What old reproach or shame do you need to ask God to roll away from your life?**

- **Why can you have confidence in His willingness and ability to do so?**

As an act of obedience to the covenant, the Israelites celebrated Passover. This reminded them of God's deliverance from Egypt and His faithfulness to them. Wholehearted devotion to God includes remembering His work in our lives. Circumcision and Passover both pointed to deeper realities fulfilled in Jesus. In Him our hearts are circumcised, and He is the true Passover Lamb. Through the Spirit, God dwells in Christ followers and we are enabled to give Him our whole hearts. This type of devotion is not focused on religious rituals but daily surrender. Halfhearted commitment doesn't cut it. We need to be intentional about seeking God to shape our priorities, guide our decisions, and lead us to walk in faith.

- **How does Jesus's sacrifice free you to give Him your whole heart?**

- **How can you make a pattern of remembering God's faithfulness in your life?**

Before Israel fought any battles, God called them to surrender their hearts. Before we seek success, influence, or victory, He calls us to do the same.

- **What is a situation you desire to see God at work in? How can you seek Him in this? How is He calling you to be set apart for His purposes in this?**

APPLICATION

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's Word.

- **What preparations might God be asking you to make before He leads you into your next step?**
- **What distractions compete for your heart's devotion right now? How can you work to diminish these influences in your life?**
- **What steps of wholehearted obedience is God asking you to take today? How will you respond?**

PRAY

Thank the Lord for His faithfulness. Commit to giving Him your whole heart. Confess the things you have allowed to steal your devotion and surrender your heart to Him afresh.

JOSHUA 5:1-12

5:1 The Amorite kings dominated the hill country whereas the Canaanite kings lived near the Mediterranean Sea. The message that these kings heard concerns how the Lord had dried up the water of the Jordan, and it links 4:24 and the statement there. While the effect in chap. 4 was to increase faith, here it had the opposite effect on the enemies. The key word, crossed over, again occurs (1:2). That they lost heart is literally “their hearts melted.” This repeats Rahab’s description of the Canaanites upon hearing of Israel’s victory over Egypt (2:9–11, which also includes the same verb for drying up the Red Sea).

5:2 The command to circumcise implies that this generation had not been circumcised (vv. 4–7) and revives again this act of covenant-making that God began with Abraham (Gn 17). Thus Israel would once again become children of Abraham and heirs of the promised land.

5:3 Gibeath-haaraloth means “the hill of foreskins,” an unknown site.

5:4–9 Words and phrases are repeated and interwoven to explain the necessity of this act. A contrast is made repeating the verb to end, to finish in vv. 6 and 8. Thus the previous generation died off (v. 6) while the present generation “finished” being circumcised.

5:5 The generation coming from Egypt had been united in their circumcision. Egyptians also circumcised their males, but as Gn 17 suggests, the Israelite practice precedes their time in Egypt.

5:9 The wordplay on Gilgal, which means “circle” as a noun and “roll” as a verb, refers to rolling away the disgrace of

Egypt. This was the rebellion of the previous generation of Israel that caused them to die in the desert. Because this current generation now had followed the covenant and had been circumcised, they could now enter the promised land and leave behind forever the disgrace of their parents.

5:10 Israel was explicitly commanded to celebrate the Passover when the people arrived in the promised land (Ex 13:5). Israel thereby inherited the covenantal promises and blessings that the earlier generation had received when it left Egypt. This was the Israelites' fortieth year out of Egypt but only their third Passover celebration (see Ex 12:1–28; Nm 9:1–14).

5:11 The days of unleavened bread follow the Passover (Ex 12:17, 20; 23:15; 34:18). The basic food of Canaan was barley that ripened at this time. Manna had been all that the present generation of Israel knew. Now they would begin to eat from the food of the new land. Israel enjoyed the fruits of the land where they had arrived as a token of the greater abundance they were to enjoy when the entire land was taken.

5:12 The cessation of the manna signaled a new phase in Israel's history. The people were no longer in the wilderness but in their homeland. They began a new life in keeping with the celebration of God's historic acts of redemption. Today this occurs with the new life in Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection bring it about.

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