

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

FIRST & SECOND
CORINTHIANS

25 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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DAY 1

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 1-2:5

If you were to open up your life like a gift that's been waiting for you beneath the tree on Christmas morning, what would it look like? Would your wrapping be crisp and clean, the ribbons that tie you together symmetrical and fashioned in such a way that made the most beautiful display envious? It is more realistic to imagine that the gift of our life would be wrapped in tissue that was crinkled and creased, perhaps even torn or shredded in places. That the ribbon was likely second-hand and mottled with random stains, having seen better days. When you opened the package and got down to the core of your life would you see evidence along the timeline of your days that was filled with the enriching love of Christ? Would you see the transformation within yourself from start to finish? Would it be evident in the way you treated your neighbor, in the way you handled your business affairs, in the way you treated both those closest to you as well as a passing stranger? (1:5-6) Furthermore, would you use the tools the Spirit equipped you with as you actively awaited Him to reveal himself, while strengthening you to finish the race, or squander the gifts bestowed upon you as you simply wait? (1:7-9)

The message of the cross is simple and at the fingertips of those seeking to receive, yet our humanness often struggles to submit. We seek continuous affirmation, influence, riches and wisdom (1:20-26), we are swayed by our own selfish desires and our own proud ambitions.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord” (1:27-31 NIV)

Paul speaks to the Corinthians from a place of humble acceptance of his place in this world. It is generous to say he was not a nice man before his life was changed on the road to Damascus. It is incredibly difficult with our human understanding to put ourselves in the shoes of Paul and see the complete transformation he underwent, yet his legacy as a follower of Christ is unparalleled. He relied on the workings of the Spirit, denouncing his own abilities, and the message of Christ crucified in seeking humble acceptance in sharing the testimony of God and His power (2:4-5).

Paul's wrapping had crinkles, creases, and numerous taped together tears, but the core gift of Paul's life beneath the ugly was a mess that could be transformed and Christ called Paul, as he does each of His followers, with grace, love and the offering of His Spirit's gifts.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God to give you a picture of how He sees your life. How does this compare to the way you see it?
2. Take a moment to thank the Lord for the way your life has changed, for the evidence you can see since receiving His gift of salvation.
3. God is Almighty, strong in power and extravagant in grace. Praise God for His gift of forgiveness and for the spiritual gifts He has graciously and abundantly provided, that we may know Him and His Spirit more personally.

DAY 2

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (2:11 NIV)

To simplify, the Holy Spirit is like the close-up, slow-motion, replay of an event that has taken place, which allows you to see the inner workings, the minute details, of a plan that has unfolded or is in place.

Before meeting Jesus and developing a relationship with God, we rambled around aimlessly, like dumb sheep, filling our lives with the lackluster trivialities the world has to offer. Once we received the Spirit of God in our lives we began to transform and began the reshaping of our thoughts and minds – gaining wisdom through the Spirit (2:10). The Spirit is not of this world, but is much like a conduit that gives us direct access to understanding the inner workings of our God (2:12).

Paul stressed that the message he brought to the Corinthians was not one he developed under the guise of his own human wisdom, or foolishness, but rather the message of Christ crucified that is revealed through the Spirit, in words given him by the Spirit. Furthermore, Paul stressed that the message of Christ could not be discerned and would be deemed foolish without the guidance of the Spirit that only comes from receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord of your life.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Think about your former life for a minute. What are several words that would have described you before you met Jesus? Has God used the Spirit to change you? When He began to change you, what looked like foolishness to the world, but has been life for you?
2. Take a moment to praise God for His mysterious ways, for His willingness to share Himself with us through His Spirit, and for His generosity in revealing Himself to us in such a manner that we might know it is Him.
3. Now ask the Lord to give you a promise for what He intends to continue to do in your life.

DAY 3

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

Paul opens chapter 3 with a sharp word of discipline and reproach. He is quick to air their stumbling, likening them to infants who cannot process the richer and more complex foods sought after by those more mature (3:1-3); the church of Corinth was more caught up in the worldly matters, holding fast by pride, rather than taking pleasure in growing in knowledge of Christ. They were specifically stuck on the importance of how the message was given to them and by whom they chose to receive it from over the message itself (3:5).

Yet like a worthy teacher, Paul doesn't call them out and leave it there. No, he continues and offers instruction on how to remedy the unfortunate pitfalls they'd been snared by. Paul, with gentle authority, corrects them *'So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.'* (v.7) Paul has a way of cutting to the chase; taking the message and making it simple and set firmly on the foundation of Christ. *'For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ'* (v.11) Paul expands this further by explaining that Christ is the foundation and everyone

who follows brings a different offering in building upon that foundation.

And finally, Paul offers a warning; it will only be on Christ's return that our offering will be found as lasting as gold or burned up by the fire (3:11-15).

Therefore, *'Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.'* (3:18-19)

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Thank God that He takes us where we are and sees fit to use us in advancing His Kingdom.
2. Confess the foolishness you cling to and ask God to replace it with a deeper longing for the wisdom of His Spirit.
3. *'For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building'* (v. 9). Is there an area in your life where God has been calling you to serve? If not, ask for guidance in finding that place where you can become a worker for God.
4. Thank God for His word, the Authority within it, and for His Spirit which brings us understanding as we mature from baby Christian into mature follower and proclaimer of Jesus Christ.

DAY 4

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 4-5:13

We all put on masks. We ready ourselves on the outside for each new day, putting forth our best face with clothing, style, makeup (well at least my fellow ladies do!), dark glasses and attitude; the way we carry our bodies through each task. We all put on masks for the world to see because, on varying levels, we care what the world will see and believe about us. Yet, Christ sees through our useless "cloak." Paul was the opposite. *'I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.'* (4:3) He lived the life we often fear when we consider being called to missions.

Our cloak hides our deceit, pride, lust, greed, immoral thought and actions, indifference and apathy, to name a few. We are soaked through by all the ugliness the world embraces. Yet God sees the rubbish that we want desperately to believe we are hiding under our masks; there is nothing and nowhere we can hide from God. *'He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.'* (4:5)

Chapter 4 wraps up with Paul challenging the people, not with the purpose of accusation but rather with a message of caution. Caution, not to shame, but to open their eyes and bring awareness to what is going on around them and to provide a clearer path for correction. Paul goes so far as to use himself as an example of a father guiding his children (4:14). *'Therefore I urge you to imitate me.'* (4:16) Paul, a man whom upon his conversion, laid down his life and picked up the cross for the message of Christ.

Chapter 5 pushes further with strong correction as Paul continues to address the Corinthians prideful boasting.

The unrepentant and hardened sinner should be sent away from the church and back into the world in order that they may see their sin and be encouraged to return to the church. This seems harsh, yet the state of the unrepentant is no less harsh, and therefore, must

be dealt with in such a way that it doesn't poison those near it. *'Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast – as you really are...Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.'* (5:7-8)

It is not Paul's intent to condemn others sins but to encourage and protect the upright and humble in spirit who confess their sins freely, not clinging to pride, those seeking to continue growing in the ways of Christ.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. When have you been disciplined by the Lord? What happened? How did you feel about it?
2. Take some time and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any sins you are harbouring. Confess those sins.
3. Ask the Lord to tell you if you are in danger of being disciplined for any of these sins, and what you can do to avoid His discipline.
4. Thank the Lord for His Word, for His gentle yet firm correction, and His generosity in revealing Himself in the always relevant words in the Bible.

DAY 5

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 6

Sometimes it's the simple things we need to be reminded of the most. One of the most basic elements of following Christ that we often take for granted, and therefore, trip ourselves up in the forgetting is; *'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own; you were bought at a price.** Therefore honor God with your body.'* (6:19-20)

In this world we struggle for individuality. We fight for our rights, for our freedoms, and for our heart's desires. We engage in gossip, materialism, covetousness, apathy, and sloth. Verses 9-11 warn against this, but do we remember in all that wanting and self-fulfillment that we are not our own? *'Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. **But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.'*** (ESV)

It is the most simple that we often do not understand or execute with ease; we are no longer our own when we receive Jesus as our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are His and His alone.

Our bodies are not our own to do as we please. We were created to please the One who created us. We can honor Him with what we put inside our bodies – food. We can honor Him by how we maintain ourselves – exercise. We can honor Him by how we present ourselves – modesty. We honor Him by being the healthiest version of ourselves that we can present before Him in mind, body and spirit.

PRAYER:

Thank you Father, for not giving up on me.

Thank you for receiving me where I am, even in the depths of the muck and mire where You found me.

Thank you for reminding me that, though I keep you in my heart, I am Yours. You created me in Your image and it is my purpose to become more like You.

Thank you for giving me Your Word to teach me how to be like You.

Thank you Jesus that You are Holy, that You are Good, that Your Glory is my breath of life.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Expand on this prayer and make it your own. Search your heart and do some listening to where God has something to say to you.
2. Spend some time confessing the areas where you do not surrender yourself fully to God.
3. Praise God and thank him for the price he paid (6:20) and ask him how you can honor him with your body.

DAY 6

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 7 & 8

Marriage is hard; for the Corinthians and for us today.

That said, it is also a beautiful covenant; one that was created by God, and made to enhance and protect a life devoted to God.

It seems even in the day of the Corinthians there was a lot going on regarding the issue of marriage; whether it was right, for what purposes, how to maintain the commitment and when it is Godly to exit a commitment.

Essentially, Paul states marriage was created to keep people pure in light of sexual immorality. He states clearly that though it would be ideal to remain single and wholly committed to pursuing God, it was better to enter the covenant of marriage than to fall into sin. (7:1-2)

Paul also needed to expand on the simplicity of this edict. Whether for selfish pursuit or other, the Corinthians (and us today) needed guidelines to follow in order to keep some semblance of order. Marriage is an institute that doesn't only affect the two who are entering into its covenant, but all who surround the couple and are around to bear witness to the relationship.

As followers of Christ our sole purpose is to worship God. That is our greatest calling. Obedience to Him and His statutes is what our focus should be. It is an act of selflessness when we submit to God's sovereignty over our lives.

He calls us His bride. We are His; and if we are called to be selfless that is because He too embodies the quality of selflessness, which He demonstrated unconditionally on the cross.

Marriage is hard. That's a simple fact. It's an endless work in progress. It is about selflessness, submitting to the commitment you made when you spoke your vows. It is not for everyone, and that too is good. However, when God is the center, it becomes beautiful; an act of worship that allows all else to be washed away because the heart of it is Jesus' love.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Reflect on your experience surrounding marriage. Is marriage a high value for you? Have you seen it valued in the lives of your friends and family? Is marriage about a couple or a family?
2. Whether married, single, divorced or widowed, thank God for the holy covenant of marriage.
3. Thank Jesus for the Godly marriages you have been privileged to witness, and how the intended purpose of marriage was an act of worship and another way to represent God's love.
4. Pray for your marriage. Whether you have been married for years, are committing in the near future or are years away from it, pray that it will be fruitful in God's sight and that He would be your whole focus and would bless the covenant you have or will be entering into.

DAY 7**READ:** 1 Corinthians 9

'Everyone who competes in the game goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.' (9:25)

Olympic athletes, the best trained bodies in the world, spend hours honing their craft. This means relentless training sessions, diet restrictions, hour upon hour of travel, financial sacrifice, grueling mental exercise, and once muscle memory has been so precisely mastered, more hours of practicing every dynamic their event entails. Athletes essentially beat their bodies in order to run the race and seek out their prize. As bystanders, we watch, admire, ooh and ahh and on occasion likely dream of what it must be like to "live the dream".

I imagine if the Apostle Paul were to walk into our neighborhoods, it would be much more comfortable to greet him on the 'safer' side of the fence. That is the side that doesn't require near as much sacrifice or laying it all on the line while still going through many of the motions of loving Jesus.

We don't like to feel like our Christian walk would reveal us as the one who doesn't toe the line. Unfortunately, when we break down these verses very few of us would be found standing at the top of the podium.

'Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.' (v.19) Paul made himself available to all sorts of people, hearing them and meeting them where they were at, as long as what they required didn't compromise his relationship with God or the Word he was preaching.

Paul had discipline. Paul had heart. Paul willing made the sacrifice with his time, his finances, in his relentless pursuit of Jesus Christ. *'No, I eat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.'* (9:27)

Paul was committed, ran the race, and was a praiseworthy example while doing it.

Fortunately for us, and again, by the grace of God, if we submit our lives to following Jesus and spend our days training for His team, there isn't only one winner able to find his or her way to the top of the podium.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Some people like the sports analogy that Paul uses here and others don't; which are you? If it resonates with you, why is that? And if it doesn't, what language would God use to motivate you in your walk with Him?
2. Regardless of how you think about the analogy, thank God that your race is not yet complete. Thank Him for how He trains you each day to become a better "runner".
3. Ask God to reveal to you an area of your commitment that needs work. Once He has revealed something to you, spend a bit of time praying for strategies to make changes in that area.

DAY 8**READ:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

'Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.' (10:6 ESV)

The Bible is full of teaching, warnings, examples of how to do better, revealing that a clear path - following Jesus - is the way to do it. In fact, the greater part of 1 Corinthians to this point has been a warning against following desires of the flesh. Chapter 10, however, takes it a bit further; warning not once but twice, that we are all vulnerable- merely flesh. Yet if we devour the Word as God intended, we have hope in understanding the examples that are laid before us as a warning to the temptations that we may encounter.

Verses 7-10 further emphasize the consequences the Israelites faced for their sins as their history is summarized in a way to demonstrate the devastating destruction of Israelite lives in the face of their sin.

'Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.' (10:11 ESV)

This second warning is followed by an assurance, a warm salve that is a gift to encourage, reassure, and weave a connective thread through God's people.

'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.' (10:12-13 NIV)

We are all human.

We all stumble and make mistakes.

The difference between us and those who don't know God?

We worship a God who is faithful.

He is Good.

He is Holy. Gracious. Patient.

He is a loving Teacher. A Strong Hand that picks us up when we fall and sets us on the right path when we ask.

He created us to love Him, giving us the tools we need to follow Him faithfully.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God to reveal to you an area where you waver or stumble. Confess this area. Further, ask God to renew your mind and strengthen the foundation on which you stand, that when you face temptation your first thought is to turn to Jesus.
2. Take a few moments to sit in God's presence, thanking Him for His faithfulness.
3. God is Good. More than good, in fact. Make a list of God's attributes and throughout the day praise Him for these qualities, whether you see them before you, hear them, feel them, or sense His spirit reminding you of His goodness. God is in everything, He is all around us and always with us. Thank Him for this.

DAY 9**READ:** 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

"Everything is permissible" – but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" – but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.' (10:23-24 NIV)

"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.' (10:23-24 ESV)

As people in this world, we are restricted by the laws of our Nations, Municipalities and Communities. We are restricted by the rules at work, school, and in our homes; these rules vary everywhere we go. As children of God we are given another picture to follow and these statutes do not waiver.

Paul explains this on two separate occasions in 1 Corinthians, first in 6:12 applying his words to food guidelines and sexual immorality, and again in 10:23-24. He is blunt and effective; *'all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful'*: meaning it may be acceptable, or allowed under the law, but under the statutes given us as children of God these things may lead us astray, causing us to stumble. Not everything is bad but opening the door, even a sliver, may lead to a slide that is irreversible. Only spending time with Jesus through prayer and His Word can we protect ourselves against the deception of slight compromises we allow to creep into our lives.

PRAYER:

Jesus, sharpen me through Your Word.

Please, Lord, make Your ways clear; revealing to me what is helpful to me.

You are Holy, Lord, open my eyes to what You find beneficial and let everything else take a back seat to Your will.

Lord, give me a burning desire for Your Word to be lived out in my life. Give me Your eyes, Your hands, Your feet, and I ask, Jesus, that Your voice be the delight of my heart.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Reflect on past areas of your life where you allowed compromise to creep into your life. What kept you safe from allowing these small compromises to become major controlling sins?
2. Ask the Lord to reveal where He kept you from the harm of compromise without you even realizing it.

3. Spend time thanking Jesus for His protection in your life.
4. Finally, write out one verse that has been a guiding Truth for your life.

DAY 10**READ:** 1 Corinthians 11**The Lord's Supper**

'For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' (11:23-26 ESV)

These commands are precious. The Lord's Supper is also an offering of submission to Jesus we can translate into our lives frequently. The act of communion is not only a physical reminder of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross but it is a tangible opportunity for us as believers to clean up our own lives and focus on Jesus. It is our chance to surrender and receive His gift while giving our own back to Him, in the form of our renewed commitment to living for Him.

'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' (11:26 ESV)

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are committing to eyes open, hearts ready, watching and waiting until the moment our Savior returns as promised. Watching and waiting is our calling as believers. Living fully for Jesus means being ready, awaiting His return with eager hearts and a spirit that is hungry for His teaching, preparing for the moment of His return.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. If today was the day Jesus showed up on your doorstep, would you be ready?
2. How do you prepare your heart to be ready? Confession. Praise. Adoration. Thanksgiving. Do not delay in preparing for the Lord. Spend a few minutes with Jesus right now, offering Him your confession, praise, adoration and thanksgiving.

DAY 11**READ:** 1 Corinthians 12 & 14

'But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.' (12:18-20 NIV)

In our humanness, we often tend to idealize certain spiritual gifts and arrange them in a hierarchy of importance; which in turn causes us to feel as though we need the "good" gifts or the "more important" gifts to do real work for Jesus.

That is a serious deception or more bluntly, a flat out lie. *'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.'* (12:12 NIV)

Did you know that you need your big toe for proper balance? Such a seemingly small part of the body plays quite a substantial role. This doesn't mean you would lose your ability to walk or function without it, but it would be a hindrance, an obstacle, and you would need to learn how to function in a very different fashion without it.

Our Heavenly Father created our human bodies with abundant precision and intricate detail. As much as human bodies need each major and minor part to be whole, so the Body of Christ needs each spiritual gift to function in all its fruitfulness.

'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.' (12:26 NIV)

God doesn't make mistakes. Ever. He created us with more love and care than we can understand. He has blessed us further with Spiritual Gifts that are tools from heaven to aid us in doing the work of the Harvest. Furthermore, the deeper our relationship with God grows, the more we will understand His plan for us each individually. When we draw near to God, He draws near to us, in turn giving us more of Himself, equipping us to do more work for His Kingdom. Let the gifts He's blessed us with be used to glorify Him; that's what worship is.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Are you using the gifts God saw fit to equip you with? If not, ask God to reveal the issues that are hindering you from using your gifts.
2. Thank God for the spiritual body you are a part of (the church) and ask Him if there is somewhere you could be useful to Him.
3. Thank God that all His gifts are good, pure, and desirable. Thank God that He works through us by giving us a piece of Himself to do His work.

If you don't know what your spiritual gift is, ask your cell leader, or make an appointment at church for personal ministry to explore further what God has in store for you.

DAY 12

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 13

If you could see love in a picture what would it look like?

Some of us are in love with love. Some of us are searching for love. Some of us have found it and wonder if this is what all the fuss is about.

The thing to understand is that everyone has their own unique brand and requirements to be met when it comes to love; love looks different to each person. Some of us are desperate for love in whatever form available. Some of us will settle for whatever comes our way the quickest. But is this love?

God is love.

He understands each of our individual needs and desires in much greater detail than we can comprehend. He loves us enough to know every minute detail that is a part of us. He even knows how many hairs are on our heads. *'Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.'* (Luke 12:7 NIV)

'He knit you together in your mother's womb.' (Psalms 139:13) That is a picture of love, the only love that sustains, heals, transforms and creates in us new life.

Jesus loved us so much that he willingly walked to the cross to carry our burden, giving himself without a fight and bearing humiliation in our stead. That is a picture of love.

'Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.'

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.' (13:8-13 ESV)

At the end of the day when Jesus has returned there will be no use for anything but love, and we will fall before Him, open, willing, and abounding in the only gift we have to offer; love.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Take a moment to think about what love means to you.
2. Thank God for loving you enough to be spending time with you in this moment.
3. Ask God to show you how to embody all the virtues of love; *'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.'* (13:4-7)

DAY 13

 **READ:** 1 Corinthians 15

'I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O death, where is your victory?"

O death, where is your sting?"

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.' (15:50-58 ESV)

Most of us live simple lives. We eat, sleep, work, play, and repeat. Our spirits, our thoughts, wills, whims and desires, are wrapped up in and inhabit bodies that are perishable, slowly aging, breaking down, and letting us down. We can't change this no matter how hard we try; ultimately we will all die.

When we receive Christ into our life, we receive immortality which ensures our spirit will carry on after our earthly bodies have ceased to function.

This is GOOD news.

It is not our bodies that make us who we are.

It is not what is on the outside that counts.

There is no sting in death because in the blink of an eye we will understand and we will see.

Our future is sealed.

Our victory has already been won.

Praise God for He is our victory.

He deserves our praise.

Praise God for His perfect plan in Jesus Christ.

'But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' (15:57 NIV)



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What are your *actual* feelings about death? Not what you know in your head, but how you *feel* about death.
2. What is your greatest fear regarding death? Imagine that God could take that great fear and replace it with faith. Would you be willing to submit it to Him? Take a moment now to submit your fear to God. And remember submission isn't necessarily a onetime occurrence – it is a daily practice.
3. Ask God to drill the truth of today's reading into your heart. Ask Him to work it there until death truly holds no power over your thoughts and emotions.

DAY 14



READ: 1 Corinthians 16

As a part of the church body it is our job to take care of each other. We are all gifted in different areas and were created to use our gifts for the glory of the Lord.

The calling is to give of ourselves through our finances. Ouch. Than can hit us so hard that we feel winded, incapacitated, or simply unable to part with the dollars we need to maintain our lifestyle.

But Paul is not speaking of a *tithe* here; he is speaking about giving *above and beyond* that which we tithe, out of mercy and to benefit those in need. There is need all around and not just a need that can be assuaged through a dollar amount.

Your neighbor may need help with their yard.

Your child's class may need a chaperone to an event that doesn't appeal to you.

A friend may need a babysitter in order to get to a doctor's appointment.

Someone may need a ride because their car won't start or has broken down completely.

A missionary needs support.

A ministry is in need of aid both financially and through personnel assistance.

The list can go on. But notice that none of these are "peak crisis" needs, which are prevalent in the lives of people we come in contact with daily, they are everyday ordinary needs, but pretty significant nonetheless.

As a church family, we were created to come alongside and lessen the burden.

Being aware of what is going on around us so we can extend a gracious and merciful hand is another way we can be Christ's hands and feet, another way we can show love.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to remind you about a time, or several times, when someone helped you out of the goodness of their hearts. Write down all the feelings you felt because of their action (some may be negative, like embarrassment or weakness.)
2. When was the last time you extended kindness without ulterior motive and simply because you were in the right place at the right time? Write down all the feelings you felt after you helped.
3. Consider the power of feelings. We are motivated to receive (or refuse) help and to help others based on feelings. But isn't it interesting that our feelings before we help are often very different than after we have helped!
4. Ask God to remind you of the result you and the person in your path will experience the next time you don't *feel* like obeying His prompting to make a sacrifice for someone!

2 Corinthians

DAY 15



READ: 2 Corinthians 1-2:4

'He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.' (1:10 NIV)

Are you currently going through a trial that is testing you to your limits, pushing you further than you feel you can be stretched and tossing you around violently while you're at it?

Do you ever feel like hearing God is just plain hard and that he may have taken a time out from you?

That your burden, the heavy weight on your shoulders, is too great to carry?

There is good news! You are not alone. Even the Apostle Paul struggled through difficult times, Paul's struggles were likely filled with scenarios of persecution and sickness, he struggled with being far away from his fellow believers, mourned that distance, especially believers he had once been with and guided towards the path of Christ.

Yet in all his struggle and uncertainty, Paul stops to praise and thank God; even amidst his trials and sufferings, as close as he was to facing death. He thanks God that he is being taught by his Father, in the depths of his struggle, to turn to Him during his moments of hardship. *'Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.'* (1:10 NIV)

There is encouragement littered plentifully throughout the Word, yet somehow there feels to be a different sort of depths to the encouragement we garner through Paul's sufferings. Perhaps it comes with the understanding that he is suffering to further the message of Christ; that Paul has, in complete trust, handed over his whole life for the purpose of spreading Christ's message. We get to see him as human; that he didn't always feel good about where he was asked to go or what he had to do, but in that he had pure confidence that God was

with him, guiding his steps and taking him where God himself needed Paul to be.

That is confidence in Christ.

That is what we need to strive for.

That is loving Jesus with your whole life.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Think about a challenge in your life. It might be the biggest challenge or just one of many small ones. How do you feel when you look at it? Small? Weak? Overwhelmed? Write down all the feelings you have, including the physical sensations you feel in your body.
2. One of the most powerful weapons to bring us through a time of challenge is thanksgiving. Make a list of things you are thankful for. Write out a prayer to God thanking him for standing by you through your most difficult trials and giving your heart a reason to praise Him and thank Him.
3. Now ask God for a promise, not necessarily an answer to your challenge, but a promise to get you through. Write it down! Put it somewhere you will see it often!

DAY 16

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 2:5-3:18

‘You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of *our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*’ (3:3-6)

Do you ever ask the question how can God use me? Do you wonder how your words, your actions and your efforts can be enough to direct someone to Christ?

In these verses Paul refers to the Corinthians as the letter of his heart; they are God’s people, His delight and Paul was used by God in this particular circumstance. Paul doesn’t want the accolades for spreading the gospel of Christ, for without the Spirit of Truth placing Paul in the right place at the right time with the inspired words of the Spirit, Paul’s ministry would be lacking, ‘*Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.*’ (3:5 NIV)

Paul is tremendously humble and perhaps that is one of the key components that made him so effective in his ministry. In 3:3 he makes it plain that the focus of their ministry was not on who preached, who directed, or the resources that were used. No, Paul made clear it was the Spirit of God who wrote directly on the Corinthians hearts, not the ink, not the tablets, not anyone to be commended but only the Spirit who touched their hearts. Paul’s capabilities came from God, ‘*You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.*’ (3:3 NIV)

Paul didn’t want accolades, not because he questioned how or why God would ever use him, but because he knew that without the power of the Holy Spirit and God’s guiding hand, he was nothing and his efforts would produce little; dry words in a barren land.

So perhaps instead of the question being how can God use me, the question should be where do you want to use me God, and in that, prepare me and use me for your Spirit’s purposes.

We are God’s active ministers preparing for His return. As we already studied in the 1st Corinthians, He has already equipped us for the task (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). Our job is to grow in faith and trust that, though we are not Corinthians, we too are a letter from Christ, and the Spirit of the living God has written on our hearts and given us a new covenant through the blood of Jesus, that we may encounter Him daily at a personal level.

We can look upon Him directly with unveiled faces, eyes clear, and we can approach Him in our daily lives unlike the people in Moses time who turned their faces away from Moses, who had been in the presence of the Glory of the Lord. Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, we are in touch, and asked to draw near. ‘*We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.*’ (3:13 NIV)

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Thank God for His son, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, through whom we are able to approach the throne daily to commune with.
2. Now that you are “before” His throne, ask God to show you how He has used you to be a “letter” written to the world. Let Him encourage you as He shows you how He has been able to use your life.

DAY 17

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 3:17

‘*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*’ (3:17 NIV)

Take a moment to reflect on this verse and then read the words of the song that follows.

Freedom Reigns – Jesus Culture

*Where the spirit of the Lord is
There is freedom
Where the spirit of the Lord is
There is freedom*

*Give your all to Jesus, give Him all
There is freedom, oh
Give your all to Jesus
There is freedom, yeah*

*Lift your eyes to heaven
There is freedom, lift your eyes
Lift your eyes to heaven
There is freedom*

*Jesus reigns in this place
Showers of mercy and grace
Falling on every face
There is freedom, oh, yeah*

*Freedom reigns in this place
Showers of mercy and grace
Falling on every face
There is freedom*

*Oh, yes, freedom reigns in this place
Showers of mercy and grace
Falling on every face
There is freedom
Jesus, my Jesus*

*If you’re tired and thirsty
There is freedom, yeah
If you’re tired and thirsty
There is freedom*

*Oh, my Jesus reigns in this place
Showers of mercy and grace
Falling on every face
There is freedom*

This isn't a magic formula. This is our God's promise; *'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom'* (3:17 NIV). What a glorious promise it is!

This doesn't mean that we go to God and our issues, problems, struggles and sins simply vanish.

No, it doesn't mean that at all.

It means that when we draw near to God in every circumstance and find ourselves resting in His presence, we find freedom through Him by letting go. By trusting. By giving ourselves over to rest in the strong hands of the Lord. *'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'* (Matt 11:28 NIV)

What better place to be than to dwell in the Spirit of the Lord, where there is freedom?

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Is this your reality? Are you free? Of course we are not all entirely free, but hopefully we walk in increasing freedom. Ask the Spirit to show you where you have grown in freedom. Now ask the Spirit to speak a promise to you in an area where you haven't received full freedom yet.
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present *right in* that area of bondage.
3. In fact, invite the Holy Spirit to be present *throughout* your life! Is there some way you can remind yourself of His freeing presence wherever you go today? Perhaps drawing a small cross on your hand will be just a little way to remember.

DAY 18

Before you read today's passage, knowing you are armed with an understanding of the previous day's passages, take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you, through the verses, something that's never impacted you before. Ask for new, unveiled eyes. If necessary, sit with the Holy Spirit until you feel your heart is ready.

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 4

We are in a battle. As part of the army of the Lord, our battle is against Satan and his deceptive persuasion of non-believers. God has placed His light in our hearts that we might shine through the lies, filth and darkness of the enemy's plans. *'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.'* (4:6 NIV)

We are the vessel of God's light, and as the days draw nearer to the returning of Jesus, the urgency of the gospel will become more pressing and filled with turmoil. Our bodies are the host of His presence on earth, and yet our bodies and hearts are fragile; like jars of clay, in many ways an easy target. Yet our bodies are not the focus, it is our will, our heart's strength, and our desire to stand strong in the name of the Lord and to see God's plan through, regardless of the circumstance we find ourselves in.

'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We carry around in our body the death of Jesus (light), so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.' (4:8-9 NIV)

God's light lives in our hearts as our Strength, our Rock and Foundation. Our bodies may fail us, but our hearts, when focused on Jesus, will keep us strong. Let's make it our prayer that we shine bright and face whatever may come our way with the glory of the Lord's light

shining through us.

'Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.' (4:16-18 NIV)

Prayer:

Lord, prepare us for the battles that we will face. Give us the strength, by the Spirit of the Lord, to stand strong and shine bright in order to bring You glory and honor Your Kingdom.

Thank you, Father, for Your Word. That You've equipped us and made us ready with the knowledge in Your Holy Scripture.

Thank you for Your promises. That we can trust all You say is true. That we can trust that You've gone before us to make a way for us to be with You in Your glorious Kingdom, and that, though our road may be rocky and steep, filled with trials and hardships, You, Father, are faithful to carry us through until we receive Your promise of eternal glory.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Where have you felt God's strength in you lately? If you can't remember a place, then ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of one.
2. How do we fix our eyes on the unseen? Precisely like this! If we can't perceive the Holy Spirit in an area of our lives, we ask Him to show us where He is! We ask Him to remind us of who we are to Christ, where we are ultimately going and what moves battle lines in the heavenly places!
3. The Holy Spirit *can* and will do this when we are intent on Him. Don't worry about losing your spiritual sight from time to time, but do take time to "open" your eyes to what is unseen throughout your day today.

DAY 19

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 5-6:2

'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' (5:21 NIV)

Think about that for a moment; *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.* (5:21a NIV)

Jesus never told a lie.

Never withheld the truth.

Was never untrustworthy.

Never failed to follow through on a commitment.

Was never about instant gratification.

He was never lustful, deceitful, slanderous, envious, a gossip.

He never turned his back on injustice.

He never held any sort of idol in esteem.

He didn't sin.

Not once.

We were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20a NIV) by Jesus, who was white as snow; perfect and blameless before God, carrying our filth. He surrendered all, giving his life in exchange for our own *'that we might become the righteousness of God.'* (5:21 NIV)

It doesn't seem too farfetched to want to give something in return when you are given a gift. We write thank you notes and show appreciation for other's everyday kindness in different ways. Why then is it so farfetched to think that we could give Jesus something in return for presenting us with the most precious gift imaginable?

'And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.' (5:15 NIV)

That we might become the righteousness of God..... There is no time to delay in choosing to take up your cross and follow Jesus by giving Him your life. *'For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.'* (6:2 NIV)

There is no better time than this moment to commit your life to Jesus, the Son of God, who willingly chose the road to the cross for those who love Him. Our earthly days are numbered but we have hope, through Jesus Christ, that we will spend eternity with Him in His Kingdom.

If Jesus did all that for each one of His beloved children, can we not offer all that we are and all He created us to be as our gift to Him?

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Have you ever received a craft or piece of "artwork" from a child? What is beautiful about it? The skill? Probably not. It's probably the heart behind the gift. Our gifts may seem insignificant to us when we attempt to offer them to our great God, but He doesn't see them that way! He treasures all sincere offerings of gratitude.
2. Do you have an artistic gift? Are you a painter, writer, poet or singer? If you are one of these things, then use your creative ability to create artwork for your King who gave up everything for you.
3. If you are *not* a particularly creative person, then write a letter to the Lord expressing your gratitude to Him. We have lost the art of writing good thank you notes, so this is good practice!

DAY 20

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 6:3-7:16

There is a lot going on in these verses beginning with Paul's hardships and ending with his joy. This portion says a lot about his character and the focus that has become his life; spreading the Gospel and Good News of Jesus Christ.

Paul's hardships are a direct result and purely due to the fact that he is following Jesus where he is being told to go. Paul is following Jesus with such zeal he has endured *'beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger;'* (6:5 NIV) as physical consequence. Furthermore his ministry was attacked, his personal being was attacked, and he received reports of how the people he'd spent time with and led to Christ struggled themselves; *'in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as imposters; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet always possessing everything.'* (6:6-10 NIV)

Again, there is a lot in these verses, but just imagine for a moment walking in Paul's shoes. Would you endure the beating? The harsh, critical and hurtful words slung at you accusing you and blaspheming your Saviour. Perhaps, if you got through those ugly moments you could get through the rest but Paul was close to death, *'dying, and yet we live on;'* (6:9b NIV) and he did not once declare the cause unworthy, waver in the Word he proclaimed, or throw his lot in with those who could forsake Jesus.

No, in the midst of Paul's hardship he rejoiced in the Lord and continued to share the Gospel, sharing God's light that all might have the chance to receive the Light of Life – Jesus as their personal saviour; *'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.'* (6:10 NIV)

Through the later verses of chapter 6 Paul gives a warning and then dives right into chapter 7 explaining how it is possible for a believer to endure the trials we will face for the name of Jesus.

The answer is simple: *'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.'* (7:10 NIV)

Simple: When we give our all to God and confess everything that is not right in His sight because we love Him; that is true repentance which leads us on the narrow path to God. There is no room for clinging to the things of the world which clutter our lives, and eventually, kill and destroy.

Just because something can be broken down to the simple doesn't mean it will be easy; that is life. But spending time with Jesus each day draws us nearer to Him, and the more time we spend with Him, the better we will know Him and His joy will permeate our lives, thus making the circumstance of our lives an easier burden to bear.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take a moment to think about your attitude during times of trial or hardship compared to your attitude during times of joy.
2. Thank God for the blessings in your life.
3. Thank God for the lessons He teaches you through the circumstances in your life.
4. Ask God to be the voice you hear in all circumstance, regardless whether hardship, joy, celebration or mourning. Pray that He would be the one who guides your thoughts, attitudes and reactions through each moment of your day.

DAY 21

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 8 & 9

'This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.' (9:12 NIV)

Generosity isn't always the easiest gift to embody. It means that we have to set aside our selfish desires and put others first. Furthermore, it isn't the easy people in our lives we need to put first, such as our parents, children, close friends or other family. No, true generosity, and more specifically the generosity Paul is speaking of, is generosity that is faceless, nameless, and a giving that bears heavenly reward.

The nearer you draw to God, the closer your heart becomes in likeness to His. This in turn would change us, even at the basest level, to embody qualities that are not innate to everyone's personality. That's what having a heart after God's means.

God is love. He loves His people. He hurts when we suffer, but when we, His children, use our gifts and hearts to come along side others, His heart is present there and He is pleased.

That is generosity.

That is God's heart.

That is what we are called to become.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take a minute to reflect on people in your life that have demonstrated extraordinary generosity. You may be the recipient of their kindness or simply observed it as they gave to others.
2. How do you honestly feel towards them? Do you feel like they might have done it for show? Or do you feel they were truly selfless? Do you think that although they gave much, that they could have given more because of their wealth? Or do you admire them in that although they are wealthy, they don't hold onto all of it?
3. Ask God if you have any attitudes towards those who are generous which are sinful. Then ask Him to show you how you can become more like these people in your generosity.

DAY 22

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 10

'But, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.' (10:17-18 NIV)

Everything around us will fade and fall away on the day of the Lord. Our accomplishments, the trophies we win while fulfilling our personal goals and pursuits, though good each in their own right, will mean little. Boasting and prideful platforms which represent our victories will someday all be ash blown by the fire.

Paul is explaining that even the work done for the Harvest, if taken as an accomplishment or made into a competition or comparison, is unproductive. Paul himself remained humble throughout the entirety of his ministry; it is a lesson, that by the grace of God, we all might learn early. This chapter is about gentle admonition, and though Paul's words are firm, clear, and cut straight to the heart, his tone and encouragement shine through. The heart of the matter shines through even as Paul clarifies that it is not each other we are jostling to gain position or battling to one-up as we spread the gospel, but rather a spiritual force that we battle. *'For through we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'* (10:3-5 NIV)

Essentially Paul is saying, we are not the leaders in this war, we are the foot soldiers being sent to carry out orders by our Leader, Jesus Christ, and therefore it is the mastermind of the battle who should retain our focus, not the small victories we gain in the field.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What are the areas of your life where your guard gets lowered? Are there times at work or school or home where you are not on alert and your thoughts are not captive to Christ? Confess your lack of focus at these specific times.
2. Pray that in all you do, in each moment that God would be the focus of your heart and that your words, intentions, and actions would honor and glorify His purposes.
3. Thank the Lord for how he is teaching you and for equipping you with spiritual weapons that have the power to guard your heart and demolish strongholds. Thank the Lord for changing you, and drawing you closer to Him, as you give Him the glory for the good work in your life.

DAY 23

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 11

'For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.' (11:13-15 NIV)

We live in an age that is dominated by media. An age where individualism and a need for each person's voice to be heard is held in higher regard than the name of the Lord or the Scripture His voice is spoken through.

It is an age that is dangerous not only because of the information at our finger tips but also because at the same time our individual thirst for knowledge increases, so does our need to fit in with everyone and everything around us.

We are thirsty for an understanding of what is going on in the world around us.

We are thirsty for that next piece of entertainment, propaganda, or wisdom that will tell us how to behave, how to love and where it is we actually fit in.

We are thirsty for the next big thing that will guide us to where society is telling us we need to be, and what is good, and right and fair.

If you break it down to how easily we are influenced, we are living in a very frightening age.

The good news is we have been warned about this. The reality and presence of false prophets is not new, the picture of a false prophet just changes with the times; and in our current time, if we open our eyes, we see it everywhere.

Paul's warnings are laid out throughout 2 Corinthians as he lays bare issues that we still struggle with today. Paul's warning in 11:13-15 lays it out further. We are surrounded, and yes, we have been warned, but he also firmly establishes the solution to being caught up in the voices that come from false prophets. If we go back a chapter and revisit the passage from 10:3-5, we see that focusing on Jesus Christ, and being fully aware of the battle we are waging, that we are fully equipped to enter the battle. *'For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'* (10:3-5 NIV)



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Do you know any false prophets? They may be in your life but you may also know them from TV or pop culture.
2. Spend some time with Jesus, asking Him to guard your heart and mind against the voices of false prophets.
3. Read Ephesians 6:14-18. Thank Him for making every tool available to us, and that by reading and knowing His word we are fully equipped when we put on the Armour of God. Thank God for His armour!

DAY 24

 **READ:** 2 Corinthians 12-13

Paul is disappointed that his return is not only needed but necessary. Paul poured his heart out through the message given to him by the Holy Spirit, and the people wonder why they didn't receive more from Paul and his ministry, all the while openly continuing to be led astray by indulging in sinful activities.

The contrast between Paul and the Corinthians is vast. The Corinthians are a prosperous people, entrenched in their selfish ways and wrapped up in the luxuries of comfort and a mindset that places them above others. Paul, on the other hand, has given up everything in his pursuit of Jesus Christ, and has done it through obedience which has taken him through unbearable persecution and near death. Paul's love, his zealous focus, and devotion to Jesus is paramount and unwavering.

Bringing this comparison out of Bible times and into today, we would likely be compared to the Corinthians. We are a 'more is more' society and though we understand hardships to a certain degree and have daily struggles in our lives, we have not fully faced persecution for the gospel or been placed in situations which draw a firm line in making us choose Jesus over consequence.

Paul's relationship with God went further. He received a vision that impressed upon him further all that God is and the love He has for us, which deepened Paul's devotion to the Saviour. Yet with all this wisdom from the Spirit, Paul was also blessed with humility, which came to him through a thorn in his flesh. Regardless of the specifics of this thorn, Paul learned that in any circumstance his Rock was Jesus Christ, and that whatever he faced in life, if his focus and trust was built on Jesus, he had all the power to see it through because of the blood of Christ.

Paul loved with the heart of God and took no credit upon himself as he shared the name of Jesus. Paul was forthright, humble, authoritative yet gentle, and anguished for the people who received him as he desired nothing more than for God's children to follow God fully, with a body and heart clean before the King. *'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.'* (13:5-8 NIV)



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Think about a time when you needed to hear God the most. Was it when you were low? Was it in a time of crisis when you cried out to God? Was it when you didn't know what else to do? Thank God for those moments and praise Him for always being present and everything you need.
2. Pray for an attitude that embodies *'for when I am weak, then I am strong,'* (12:10b NIV) that like Paul, we may *'delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.'* (12:10a NIV)
3. Pray for a desire to draw closer to God. That your understanding of His word would penetrate deeper than ever before into your heart and that your character would be shifted into one that represents truth. (13:8 NIV)

DAY 25

CONCLUSION:

Today, look back at your journal from the past 25 days. Take a moment to reflect on the points that have stood out to you while going through the Corinthians. If you can, listen and meditate on this song as well as those points which have taken hold of your heart.

Praise God for His word and for how it is still so very relevant today.

Thank God for the hard lessons we learn in life; for His faithfulness to us even as we stumble.

If you feel compelled, raise your voice and praise Him; How Great is Our God!

How Great Is Our God – Chris Tomlin

The splendor of a King, Clothed in majesty Let all the earth rejoice, All the earth rejoice. He wraps himself in light, And darkness tries to hide And trembles at His voice, And trembles at His voice	The Lion and the Lamb The Lion and the Lamb How great is our God, Sing with me How great is our God, And all will see How great, How great Is our God	Then sings my soul My Saviour God to thee How great thou art How great thou art How great is our God, Sing with me How great is our God, And all will see How Great, How Great Is our God
How great is our God, Sing with me How great is our God, And all will see How great, How great Is our God	Cause you're the Name above all Names And worthy of all praise And my heart will sing how great Is our God	
Age to age He stands And time is in His Hands Beginning and the End Beginning and the End The Godhead, Three in One Father, Spirit, Son	How great is our God, Sing with me How great is our God, And all will see How Great, How Great Is our God	



First & Second Corinthians

1st and 2nd Corinthians are letters written by Paul long after he'd left their presence; letters intended to water seeds that were planted earlier with the intention to clear up areas of struggle that were prevalent in the city, and more specifically, the church in Corinth. Paul, with intentions to return to Corinth, was rerouted by the Spirit through Macedonia and was unable to reunite with the church there.

1 Corinthians 1:27-31 (NIV)

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord"



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