

An Everyday Lift For Everyday Life

FINISH LINE FAITH



365 ONE-MINUTE MEDITATIONS TO HELP YOU TAKE THE
NEXT STEP OF FAITH IN YOUR WALK WITH JESUS

Jimmy D. Brown

"I have kept the faith. I have finished the race." – 2 Timothy 4:7b

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January

January 1

Time. Is. Precious. It's precious because it's short, we don't know how much more of it remains, it is gone forever once we use it, and there are staggering implications for how we use it. There is only One Who knows how to best use the time that remains for you and me, so let's not leave Jesus out of our plans today or any day. Remember this: we can spend our time any way we choose, but we can only spend it once. As we live by grace, in dependence upon the presence and power and purposes of Jesus, He will help us give less priority to the things that really don't matter and more priority to the things that do.

January 2

Followers of Jesus take steps of faith in our day-by-day "walk" with Him. Wherever He leads, we follow in the same direction, one step at a time. In loving obedience. With humble dependence. For a blessed experience. While there are many places we will go and things we will do, there are four basic steps that every Christian never stop taking until they follow Jesus all the way home: Pray. Read the Bible. Respond to what tells you. Help others do the same. This is how God is honored in us and we are happy in Him. Certainly we will take mis-steps along the way; but Jesus will never let us permanently lose our way.

January 3

There are many things that are true about prayer. One of them is this: prayer involves seeking what we need to do what God wants. We don't talk to God in order to secure what we need to build our own kingdoms; we talk to God to request what we need to live for His kingdom. Prayer is not a hotline to heaven we use to override His will so He will give us what we think will make us happy; it is a lifeline to heaven we use to ask Him to show us His will and make us happy with what He gives us. If we want to pray for what is best for us, this is the prayer that never fails: Your will be done in my life as it is in heaven.

January 4

You can talk yourself into just about anything. Other people will try to talk you into something. Only God will talk to you truthfully about everything. There are many voices that speak into our lives such as family and friends, news and social media, advertising and entertainment, and especially ourselves ... but the loudest (most influential) should be God. We are being shaped by influences all around us which is why it is essential that each day we read God-breathed words in the Bible and listen to God-sent voices who speak His truth to us. When we listen to Him... He won't just tickle our ears; He will delight our souls.

January 5

God wants us to be happy. When He tells us in the Bible to do, say, correct, believe, feel, think or share something, it is not to take away our happiness; it is to take away the things that are in the way of our full and lasting happiness. We must trust that God is after our happiness, that He knows best how to bring about our happiness, and that what He tells us in the Bible is designed to lead us into happiness. Doing what God tells us is not always easy, popular or instantly gratifying. But it is always for good, always better in the end than sin, and always the best option for making us truly, ultimately, and eternally happy.

January 6

God has divinely positioned you so that your life intersects with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and teammates so you can help them take the next step in their spiritual journey. These people that He will bring into your path today desperately need to know what you know about Jesus. God has sent you to tell them about the riches of His grace, and the only message about Jesus that He can't use is the one you don't share. One of the greatest aims of your life should be that the people in your life grow in their relationship with Jesus because of their relationship with you.

January 7

For genuine, growing Christians, our relationship with Jesus increasingly influences how we live. As we turn to the Bible and turn its pages, we learn of His good plans for us, His gracious promises to us, and His guiding presence with us. Only when we regularly read and respond to the Bible can we be who we were made to be and do what we were made to do. That's why it is essential that we... Read it. Pray it. Live it. Share it. If your ultimate aim in life is to be as happy as you can and bring as much honor to God as you can, there is no substitute for the nourishing, encouraging, strengthening, transforming Scriptures.

January 8

God sees what we cannot. While delays, detours and dead-ends can bring about disappointment and frustration, they may be God's way of blocking us from something He doesn't mean for us to do or have because it is not good for us or others in the end. Let us rejoice when this happens, for when God says "No" to our plans, He is saying "Yes" to something He has planned that is far better. Costly mistakes are avoided, and wonderful blessings are gained when He steps in to order our steps. Remember: when God graciously reroutes the lives of those who are trusting in Jesus, it is always to put us on the right path.

January 9

Remember this as you follow Jesus in faith: it's not what happens to us that is of greatest importance, but rather the end result of what happens. Things often won't go as we plan, things often won't work out like we hope, and things often won't be as simple or easy or comfy as we would like. But in the hands and plans of God, our struggles are not setbacks. They are stepping stones to the good result He has in mind. So... Don't stop believing. Don't stop proceeding. Something good is coming even if you don't yet see it. Take heart! Things would look much better if we could see them not as they are, but as they will be.

January 10

No matter who you are. No matter what you've done. No matter how big your need. There is grace for you! God's grace is sufficient for every situation, every location, every imperfection, and every opposition. It. Will. Never. Run. Out. Even though there are moments when your sin, your struggles and your situation may get the best of you, if you are trusting in Jesus, it is simply impossible for you to out-sin, out-run, out-last, out-need, or out-hope God's grace. It is always there and always enough! You will never find yourself in a place where God has not already plastered, "My grace is sufficient for you."

January 11

We don't like to think about it. We don't like to talk about it. But death is coming for us all. We may not be certain of the time of its arrival, but the certainty of its arrival is never in doubt. Instead of ignoring, downplaying, or fearing it, we should let its reality accomplish two essential and monumental things in our lives: be purposeful to experience life before death, and be prepared to experience life after death. Jesus makes both of these possible as we trust Him. He gives us grace so we can give ourselves to the things that matter most. In every step of faith, let us rely on Him to help us... Live fully. Die ready.

January 12

Living fully is not about having the most fun, experiencing the greatest pleasure, and doing the biggest good in this world as if this place is all there is. Instead, it's about the eternal ripple your life can make when you use it for Jesus. That doesn't mean you leave happiness and helpfulness behind; it means you find it in a more meaningful way. We are to be faithful witnesses for God in the everyday things of life that we're doing on earth (from cookouts to workouts to hangouts) in such a way that we'll be glad we did when we get to heaven. Enjoy blessings. Do good. Glorify God. Live this life in light of the one to come.

January 13

Dying ready is not about trying hard to do more and be better so God will accept you into heaven when this life is over. Instead, it's about trusting in Jesus and the work He has finished on your behalf and, in response, finishing the work that Jesus has entrusted to you. We don't work for our salvation; we work out our salvation. We don't pay Him back. We love Him back. With our hope in Him, we journey homeward in loving obedience (though imperfectly executed) knowing that the death we once feared is actually the doorway to full and lasting joy with Him. Death is not the end; it is just the beginning.

January 14

There is often a tension between belief and doubt when things become difficult. It would be plausible to lose hope and lose heart when facing things that are too much for us to handle if we were forced to handle them alone. But Jesus has promised to never leave us alone, always supplying the grace we need for the needs we face. The more we trust in Him, the more we will rely on Him during the unexpected, uncertain and unpleasant difficulties of this broken world. He will work it out for good as we work out His purposes for us. With faith all things are not made easy. With faith all things are made possible.

January 15

God certainly works in supernatural ways at times, but He also works at making supernatural changes inside of His people so we who have been touched by His grace and generosity will pay it forward to others. You can't do everything, but you can do something to make a difference ... one need at a time, one moment at a time, one person at a time. Therefore, show the world His heart for them by being His hands and feet to them. The church of God, His people, you and me, are His Plan A for blanketing the world with good works and spreading the good news of Jesus everywhere we go. There is no Plan B.

January 16

Christians should talk more about what God does than about what we do. Even when we speak of what we do, it should be as a platform to talk about the enabling power, provision and presence of God in our lives. We don't have it all together. We won't get it all together. We can't keep it all together. None of us wear capes as if we are super Christians; we wear the righteousness of Jesus. None of us have magical powers that enable us to do things; we have the power of the Holy Spirit. None of us belong on the throne of worship; we belong to a Heavenly Father Who does. Not to us, but to God be the glory!

January 17

If there is one thing you can be sure of, it is this: people will hurt you. It may be accidental, or it may be intentional, but it will happen. There will be things said and left unsaid, things done and left undone, which bruise and break your heart and spirit. But there is a sweet-like-honey truth to overcome the bitter taste of how others treat you: Jesus is not like others. He is a friend who will never betray you, abandon you, disparage you, neglect you, exploit you, condemn you, harm you, mis-prioritize you, belittle you, mistreat you, lie to you, pretend with you, or withhold love from you. He will only do good to you.

January 18

Jesus is not only a doer of good to you, He is also an un-doer of bad done to you by people. They hurt your heart; He heals it. They distance themselves; He draws near. They sting you with their words; He soothes you with His. They overlook you; He pays attention. They cheat you; He blesses you. They intend you harm; He works it out for good. They judge your sins; He dies for them. We all do each other wrong, but Jesus begins to make things right in us when we turn to Him, and He will someday make things right in all of creation. Until then, let us seek His grace when others wrong us and when we wrong others.

January 19

Do you know what your failure is for? It has a purpose, and that purpose is to help you succeed. Not just so you'll try harder next time. Not just so you'll be wiser next time. Not just so you'll do better next time. But rather so you will rely more fully on Jesus next time. His strength. His guidance. His way. His plan. His timing. His help. The right response to failure is faith, for every person who turns to and trusts in Jesus will win in the end. Remember this when you find yourself coming up short: Futility and frustration are intended to move you away from self-reliance to Savior-reliance. And that move is always for the better.

January 20

You will never experience real peace until you rest in God's grace. Anything else results in some version of regret for your past, pressure to measure up in the present, or worry about what might happen to you in the future. Peace is elusive when we look to ourselves to make things right because there is always this ever-present feeling that we are not doing enough. Indeed, we cannot do enough. Nor do we need to, for Jesus has done it all. Resting in God's grace means trusting that Jesus forgives, Jesus frees and Jesus is faithful to provide. Herein is peace found: All I need to be and do rests on all Jesus is and does for me.

January 21

If our contentment depends upon our lives being full of good times and good things, we're going to ride a roller coaster of highs and lows. We will never be satisfied for long. Why not? Because we will find that the details of our lives are constantly changing so that we often have what we don't want or want what we don't have. Jesus offers us something infinitely better... His unchanging presence. His unchanging promises. His unchanging provision. This doesn't mean life won't have its ups and downs. It means whatever life is like, we will find the lasting satisfaction we fail to find elsewhere when we look to Jesus.

January 22

The attention of every single consciously awake and aware human being is captured by something at all times. We are either focused on something that nurtures a deeper love for, stronger dependence on, greater obedience to and better enjoyment of Jesus or something that drains that from us. Our aim as Christians should be to interrupt the fixation of others on the world and its ways and shine a spotlight on Him, so they can experience the blessings and benefits of knowing Him and the privilege and pleasure of worshipping Him. Today, let us get people to look at us so we can encourage them to look at Him.

January 23

Since trusting in Jesus is the basis for our hope of eternal life, how can we know that we really trust Him? The short answer is: we look for evidences that the trust we have in Him is changing us. Genuine saving belief never leaves you the same. We gradually become less like the world and more like Jesus as we follow Him in faith. Trusting Him leads to ongoing and loving... Repentance, because we believe what He offers is better than sin. Obedience, because we believe His ways are always good and right. Confidence, because we believe what He has promised us will happen. We believe. We change. That's how we know.

January 24

It's easy, common and right to feel and say how good God is when the trouble was avoided, the trial has ended or the treasure is received. Oh, how good He is to us! But when we don't get what we want, or when we get what we don't want, God is still good, and God is still good to us. His goodness doesn't disappear when hard things appear; it shines ever so brightly as He works for us to provide all the help we need to endure life's disappointments, detours and disasters until we get to the other side to something better. Praise Him! For truly... God is good all the time. And all the time God is good.

January 25

We were not made to be self-reliant, self-sustaining or self-sovereigns. God created us to be dependent upon His gracious care and provision, turning to Him and trusting in Him, moment by moment for what we need. Our wisdom and willpower are inadequate for handling life, but His is infinite, and it is readily available to those who trust in Jesus. Don't try to make it on your own. You were never meant to. When there is a mile-high mountain or a mountain of little stuff piled up a mile high that is too big for you to climb, perhaps God put it there as a gracious and loving reminder for you to depend on Him.

January 26

Christian love has two parts: affection and action. Love feels something on the inside. Love does something on the outside. These two parts work together in the lives of those who follow Jesus to help us relate to each other like Jesus relates to us. When we look at how His love for us is, we see how our love for others should be. To the degree that we anticipate and appreciate His care for us in seeking our good, we will reflect that same lovingkindness towards the people in our lives as we seek their good. Spurred on by His love, let us love today like Jesus ... caring about others and caring for others.

January 27

God doesn't need us to do anything for Him as if He could ever be deficient in some area that we could supply for Him. But our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, teammates, and strangers do need us to do for them. Not because God is failing to meet their needs, and we should make up for His oversight or indifference, but rather because in His loving providence, He has sent us to bring His aid to them. God puts us in places where needy people are right in front of us so we can be like Jesus to them by offering a helping hand, a guiding word, and a loving embrace. He is working all the time and often it is through us.

January 28

Our hope is not in who sits in the Oval Office, but in Who sits on the throne in heaven. Our hope is not in who governs us on earth, but in Who reigns and rules over the entire universe. Our hope is not in what laws are passed, but in the One Who has written His law of love on our hearts. While politics, parties, programs and policies do have an impact upon our lives and our country, and we should take these things seriously, the optimism we have for everyday and eternal well-being does not rise and fall on one of us, but on Jesus, Who is God with us. This is where we pin our hope: Jesus governs our lives.

January 29

You were made to influence the world for good in such a way that God gets the credit. God calls you. God prepares you. God sends you. God empowers you. God uses you. God rewards you. He gives you a platform to shine light into the surrounding darkness. He gives you a platform to salt the surrounding flavorlessness. Why? So others come into the light. So others taste the flavor. Christians are salty and shiny when they make God and His kingdom taste and look good through what we say and do, so that others find their way to happiness in Him and He is honored in them. Be salty. Be shiny. Be like Jesus.

January 30

God's love for you does not rise with every new entry on your resume' and does not fall with every new entry on your rap sheet. God's love is not based on your performance as if He only cares about you when you get it right. You are loved; not because you are perfect, but because you are His. You are valued; not because of what you have made of your life, but because you were made by Him. You are treasured; not because you cross off items on a checklist, but because Jesus died on a cross for you. God will continue to shape you into the person He made you to be. But He deeply loves the person you are today.

January 31

Health will thrive and decline. Leaders will come and go. Portfolios will gain and lose. Relationships will flourish and break. Careers will advance and falter. Pleasures will intensify and fade. Only the steadfast love of God for us in Christ will remain forever. It stays with us through the good and bad, the highs and lows, and the gains and losses of this world. Let us anchor our lives to the unchanging, unending faithfulness of God's love for us, knowing this: It will never decline, go, lose, break, falter or fade, but will endure to the end of this life and extend into the life to come where it will thrill us forevermore.



February

February 1

Others need us to point them to where they can go for help in hardships. Others need to believe us because they see us going there ourselves. The people in our lives need to see us suffer well, handling hardships with hope because we have Jesus in our lives. They need to see and hear our joy-filled, hope-filled, peace-filled confidence in this: He will get us through every test, trial and tribulation until He gets us home. As we walk through seasons of suffering, let us testify to the faithfulness of Jesus in walking with us so others can know, that because grace is available, they never have to walk alone either.

February 2

It is right to enjoy the good gifts of God in the way that He designed them to be enjoyed because that's why He gives them to us. The sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches of the created world are supposed to be enjoyed because God made them to send and made us to receive ... pleasure. But rather than enjoying them too little (ingratitude) or too much (idolatry), let us enjoy them as they were intended, as a catalyst for treasuring the Gift-Giver far beyond what He might give to us. The gifts that God sends us are wonderful; but they are nowhere near as wonderful as Him. He is the real gift!

February 3

God has written our stories. We may not know how this chapter ends and the next one begins, but we trust that God knows exactly what He is doing in every scene of our lives. People aren't always who they ought to be. Places aren't always what we want them to be. Plot twists aren't always what they seem to be. But God is writing a beautiful story for those who trust Jesus! We don't know what comes with each new turn of the page, and it won't always make sense to us, but it doesn't have to. Because our faith is in the One who does know the happily-ever-after ending to our story. After all, He's the One who wrote it.

February 4

Satan wants to convince us that our doing good isn't actually doing much good. He will skew the facts, point to the wrong metric, and mislabel our actions as failures. But God doesn't measure our success by social media likes, comments and shares. God sees us quietly toiling behind the scenes loving Him by loving others and measures our success not by our fruitfulness or fanfare, but our faithfulness. What's even more encouraging is this: God is working through us in ways that are unknown to us. So... keep on faithfully serving King Jesus because it all counts. Nothing you do for His kingdom will ever be wasted.

February 5

Crawling comes before walking. Planting comes before harvesting. Starting comes before completing. There is an order to things, and for followers of Jesus... Praying comes before doing. You and I often handle things backwards from how we should handle them by acting and then seeking God when we should seek God and then act. The best thing we can do to handle what we face in life is to seek our Heavenly Father before we do a thing more. We ask. He answers. We act. He assists. This is the only way to live happy, holy lives. Turning to Him shouldn't be our last resort; it should be our first line of defense.

February 6

It's so easy to give up on people who don't seem to get it or don't seem to care. It's so easy to distance yourself from people who are negative. It's so easy to walk away from people who don't agree with us. It's so easy to check out of relationships when we give more than we receive. But don't stop showing people the love of Jesus, because it is the love of Jesus that can soften a heart, transform a life, rewrite a story, and impact an eternity. Though it is sometimes hard to do good to others, let us never give up on people by remembering that Jesus never gives up on us. As He does for us, may we do for others.

February 7

There are days when our faith falters, but Jesus does not abandon us. There are days when we feel like giving up, but Jesus does not let us. There are days when we are too overwhelmed to carry on, but Jesus does not move on without us. Jesus came from heaven to earth to make a way for sinners like you and me to go from earth to heaven. And every step we take together is assured because of His willingness and faithfulness to do the Father's will: namely, to keep us until the end of this life and raise us up at the beginning of the next. We will remain faithful to Him because He remains faithful to us.

February 8

God wants you to be great. But... It's not about size. It's not about strength. It's not about superiority. It's not about success. At least, not in the ways that the world calculates those things. In the world we live in, the more people who serve you, the greater you are. In the kingdom of God, the greater you are, the more people you serve. God intends for your greatness to be in ways that are radically different than the world's standards, for He measures greatness in the cross of Jesus Christ and in every act of His children that expresses that same kind of servant love towards those in need of it. By grace, be great today.

February 9

How much authority does the Bible have in your life? How is it shaping the way you see the world, the way you see polarizing issues, and the way you see yourself? How fully and frequently do you rely on it as the final say in how you live? The Bible isn't an out-of-date, out-of-order, out-of-touch book with no real relevance for us today. It is God's Word that still speaks today telling us what is good and bad, right and wrong, true and false, beautiful and ugly, necessary and frivolous, wise and foolish. God intends for us to seek it out and live it out as the ultimate authority for the Christian life. Indeed, it is where life is found.

February 10

It's a fact. It's a certainty. It's a promise. God will provide for your every need. But He often won't do this in the way you think He will. Instead, He will astonish you with a "didn't see that coming" choice of the 81st way you might have thought He'd come through for you. It may come through a shepherd boy instead of a warrior, an ark instead of fair weather, a few fish instead of ample supplies, a manger instead of a throne. But it will come exactly when it is needed to accomplish exactly what is needed. Today, expect God to work in your life for good. Just don't expect Him to do it like you think He will.

February 11

God never freaks out. There is never panic in heaven. Things never start to unravel in such a way that even a single situation in all of the universe is beyond His sovereign rule. Even the evil things done by His enemies to His people will be turned around to serve His purposes. No matter what we face today, let us remember that what happens in our lives is not ultimately decided by chance or luck, humans or demons, Satan or self, but rather there is a good, wise, powerful, loving King who reigns over all for the good of all those who trust Him. Things are often out of our control, but they are never out of His.

February 12

You are not someone else; someone else is not you. God has ordained that each of His children be equipped with gifts, abilities, opportunities and resources to fulfil a specific purpose in a specific place to a specific people. Some are more visible and more vast than others, but all are important. To avoid falling into the trap of comparison as we seek to live out the plans Jesus has for us in His kingdom, it is important for us to remember that the measurement of godly stewardship is not fruitfulness, but faithfulness. It is not the size of your platform that is most important; it is what you do with what you have been given.

February 13

Following Jesus means leaving some places, people, and pursuits behind to go wherever Jesus leads us, to do whatever Jesus says to us when we get there. It also means being faithful in the season, situation and spot He has already led us, to do whatever He brought us here to do. Sometimes this faith journey will require us to go to hard places, have hard conversations, do hard things, endure hard circumstances and deal with hard people. But Jesus will be with us every step of the way to make a way for us to take every step. Be encouraged! He never said it would be easy; He only said it would be worth it.

February 14

Let's be honest about something: oftentimes our lives are a mess. Busted. Bruised. Broken. Things don't work out like we hoped they would no matter how hard we work at things. In times like these, let us not lose heart! This is our hope in Jesus: the best is yet to come. Let us believe it, expect it, anticipate it and await it to come true because Jesus said it's true. Let us watch for the daily doses of His grace to appear when we need them. And let us regard the eternal pleasure of heaven with Him as something wonderful on the calendar that is certain to come at the appointed time. Because it is. Because it will.

February 15

One of the most exhausting things in all of life is trying to be in control of your life. Things simply will not always happen the way we want them to, and the more we try to force them to, the more worn out and weary we will become. But there is good news for frustrated control freaks like us: God rules and reigns over the cosmos for the good of His people. So... Step off the throne; that's where He sits. Step away from the wheel; that's His to turn. Step out in faith; that's when His rest comes. Watch the frustration and exhaustion melt away when you operate by this truth: God is in control; we can stop trying to be.

February 16

One word that defines every genuine Christian is this: perseverance. That is, those who are heaven-bound keep going until they get there. Grace will make sure that they do! He who has called us is faithful to keep us! So... If you find that serving Jesus feels fruitless or pointless, keep serving. If you find yourself fighting back discouragement and fighting for joy, keep fighting. If you find yourself tempted to give in to the world and its ways, keep resisting. There will be many moments that you fail and fall, but don't despair. Trust in Jesus and trust in this: He will pick you up and power you on... so you can keep going.

February 17

The gospel emboldens us to not draw back when others push back against our countercultural loyalty to God and His ways. Because Jesus has overcome sin, Satan and death, we can have courage; the kind of courage that does not shrink back from saying and doing the right things no matter what people might think of us, what might happen to us, and what it might cost us if we remain faithful to Jesus. Our courage and encouragement are based on this truth: Jesus has overcome all the tribulations, troubles, trials, tests, and temptations of this world! And... He is for us. He is with us. He is coming to get us.

February 18

Do you know how God works through your life to change someone else's life? The everyday moments of life. Don't think there is no value in the chaos of your life. Don't believe that your normal life isn't anything special. Don't accept the lie that what you do and how you do it doesn't matter. Don't give up when your efforts seem fruitless and unappreciated. Don't be silent about communicating the love of God in both your words and actions. Moment by moment you can bear the Father's heart, bear witness to Jesus, and bear the fruit of the Spirit. Every moment counts when you live it to point people to God.

February 19

Admit it, some days are a blur. We wake up and it's a nonstop rush throughout the day to not fall behind. You know what the cure is for being overwhelmed, worried and frustrated about the many things on our schedules? Making the right choice to spend unhurried, undistracted time with Jesus today so He can refresh us, reorient us and ready us for what He knows is coming next. It's the most important part of our day, and it should have the most intentional part of our schedule, because it's the most influential part of our lives. We're not too busy to spend time with Him; we're too busy not to spend time with Him.

February 20

Christian is the adjective that should describe every category of our lives. We are Christian family members, Christian friends, Christian workers, Christian movie-goers, Christian neighbors, Christian drivers, Christian shoppers, and across all categories, Christian mistake-makers. Flawed, but forgiven. Imperfect, but improving. Unworthy, but unfinished. Knowing Jesus... Has changed, is changing and will change who we are and what we do as we grow to trust Him and be like Him more fully in more areas of our lives. A question we need to ask ourselves is this: Do I live as if Jesus is my life or just a part of it?

February 21

You are greatly influenced by the people you invite into your life. You start to act and speak and think and live and become like them. The question is: are you becoming more like Jesus by becoming more like them? It is important that we carefully choose who we allow to get close enough to us to begin to change us. While we should love and serve people who are far from God, we should not take our cues for how to live from them. Instead, we imitate those who are imitating Jesus. As much as possible, surround yourself with people who exemplify Him and encourage you to become more like Him.

February 22

The enemy of your soul doesn't care about you. His only interest in you is as a victim. He wants to "steal and kill and destroy," and a primary way he attempts to do this is by leading you astray. How? By making sin look attractive, and obedience seem restrictive. He wants you and me to believe that sin isn't sin, that sin is worth it, that sin isn't that serious, and that sin won't cost too much. Jesus leads our lives to deliver us from sin and deliver to us abundant life now and eternal life later. When He calls us to follow Him in loving obedience, it is not because He's a tyrant; it's because He intends to set us free from one.

February 23

It's not Sunday church clothes. It's not a cross necklace. It's not a t-shirt. Being a Christian is not something we put on and take off depending upon the place we are at, the position we are in, or the people we are around. We should strive by grace to speak, act and live in the same manner at all times, not picking and choosing when we let our Christianity be seen. People will know that we belong to Jesus not because of what we have on, but by how we love on those around us. 24/7 we are imperfect image-bearers of the One living in our hearts. Our identity is not something we wear, it's something we are.

February 24

Our motive. Our mission. We need to communicate these two things to others when we show them love through the way we treat them. First, we need to let them know that the good we do for them comes from appreciation for what God has done for us and anticipation of what God will do for us. It is from the overflow of what we get from Him that we give to others. Second, we need to let them know that we do good works because a good God has commissioned us to go in His Name to share His love with others. Let us credit Him by telling people this... God has done good to me. God has sent me to do good to you.

February 25

Darkness isn't just the time between dusk and dawn; it's also any time you are facing the unknown. This is especially true of those seasons of suffering when the light at the end of your tunnel is nowhere to be seen. It is during those times that you must not give up hope. For even on those dark days when you can't see what is up next, what step to take next or how anything good will come next, hope remains. Jesus is still there and Jesus still cares! Ask Him to give you the faith and inner strength that is needed to endure. And though the outer darkness may yet linger, the Son will rise and shine His light in your heart.

February 26

Being in a loving relationship with Jesus brings both gracious privileges and glorious responsibilities. On one hand, we are given endless blessings that will carry on throughout eternity. On the other hand, we are given important assignments to be carried out until completion. While it may seem like the privileges are more desirable than the responsibilities, this should not be so. Our assigned tasks are opportunities to proclaim, serve, please, model and glorify the One Who saves us by His grace. When we do the good things that Jesus has planned for us, we do them unto Him. That, in itself, is a privilege.

February 27

With what are we filling up our social media feeds, texts and emails, and in-person conversations? Speaking about our confidence in a political leader should pale in comparison to speaking about our faith in Jesus. More important than warning others with our conspiracy theories is warning them about the consequences of their sin. We shouldn't talk as if our hope is in the hands of our government, but in the hands of our sovereign and loving Father in heaven. People desperately need to hear... Biblical truth. Good news of salvation. Grace-dripping words. Unshakeable promises of God. More. About. Jesus.

February 28

You can look all around and conclude that God is absent or that He is present. May He give us spiritual eyes that see... Not just the beauty of a sunset, but the God who paints the sky. Not just the miracle of a baby's birth, but the God who brings things to life. Not just the taste of a great meal, but the God who invented flavors. Not just the satisfaction of achieving a goal, but the God who empowers us to do so. Not just a lovely wedding, but the God who created marriage. Not just a great day, but the God who offers us eternal life. Shining through every good and right and true thing we see is an ever-present God.



March

March 1

Christians should count the various trials in our lives as joy. Not as defeat. Not as pleasant. Not as punishment. Not as meaningless. Not as insignificant. Not as a reason to complain. Not as a lack of God's care. Trials can be many things, but they cannot be joy-stealers unless we let them. While it may feel like trials are breaking you today, you can be sure that God is building you up through them in ways that are going to be amazingly good in the days to come. Your faith muscle becoming stronger. Your deliverance becoming sooner. Your witness becoming louder. Your homecoming becoming sweeter.

March 2

It is defined in different ways. It is pursued in different ways. It is measured in different ways. But what happiness has in common no matter how it is defined, pursued and measured is this: every single human being wants it. The message of the world is to "do what you want to do and be who you want to be" and this will make you happy. Only it ... Does. Not. Work. The message of Jesus is "do what I want you to do and be who I made you to be." In doing so, we will experience His joy, and our joy can be full no matter what else is happening in our lives. Want to be happy? His. Way. Works.

March 3

Faith in Jesus is followed by following Jesus in faith. Saving belief leads us to step off the throne, take off the crown, and let Jesus take over ruling our hearts and lives. We haven't really put our faith in Jesus if we are indifferent to what He wants and resistant to what He says. That's not trust. That's a lack of trust. That's mistrust. Real faith in Jesus makes us want to give up our sin and self-rule to follow His steps, His ways and His commands (although imperfectly executed) more fully over time. Why? Because we are confident that life His way is better than any other option, and that for eternal life He is the only option.

March 4

Like a thousand-piece puzzle, your life often looks like a jumble of disjointed and disconnected fragments that don't seem to fit together very well. But God is putting everything into place exactly where He wants it so you can be who you were made to be and do what you were made to do. He has a good reason for and a good result from everything He allows to come into your life. Someday all will make sense, all will be made right, and all will be made new when He completes the good work He has started in you. Take heart! When the last puzzle piece is put into place, you will see what God has been seeing all along.

March 5

Great is MY faithfulness is not part of a proverb or hymn. Nobody would ever celebrate my ability to do what I should do or do what I say I will do. I'm both a promise-maker and a promise-breaker. A thousand times I have failed to follow-through on my intentions in keeping God's expectations as I have followed Jesus. And a thousand times I have received in return... Grace. Mercy. Forgiveness. Encouragement. Renewal. Correction. Power. Motivation. Reassurance. Acceptance. Instruction. Hope. Love. I cannot say that I have kept all of my promises to God. But I can say that He has kept all of His promises to me.

March 6

God is at work... Through every trial and trouble. Through every problem and perplexity. Through every heartache and hardship. What is God doing during these times? He's teaching you to look to Jesus, and transforming you to look like Him. When you face adversity, don't give up hope, because God hasn't given up on you. You may feel like everything is falling apart, but He's actually putting you back together again so you can feel, think, speak and act like the person you were born to be. When you look back, you'll find this to be true: your circumstances may not have changed, but you certainly have.

March 7

This is the jaw-dropping reality of just how much you are worth: Jesus loves you, gave Himself for you and lives in you. Don't you see? Your worth is not based on who you are; it is based on Whose you are. Your worth is not based on your performance; it is based on His. Your worth is not based on your making a name for yourself; it is based on the Name of the One who lives inside you. If you belong to Jesus, the old you is dead, and the life you now live carries a value that is not found in any personal achievement, accolade or attribute. You don't have to prove your worth. Jesus already did that.

March 8

When we are secure in our identity in Christ, we are free to have relationships that are not defined by comparing ourselves with others, but by caring for others. If our sense of personal worth comes from how God feels about us, treats us, and remakes us as His children, then we don't have to prove ourselves in categories of better and worse, more and less, or ahead and behind in how we measure up against the people in our lives. Instead of ranking ourselves as better off than others or resenting others who we think are better off than ourselves, we can joyfully love and serve them as equal image-bearers of God.

March 9

Many people see God's commandments as a life-draining set of rules that is unpleasant, unnecessary and unwanted. They are seeing them wrongly. Do you know how bridges are designed, built and maintained for our safety? By "rules." Do you know how meals are prepared, served and consumed for our nourishment? By "rules." Do you know how music is composed, recorded and performed for our delight? By "rules." God has decided how things should work for our ... Safety. Nourishment. Delight. God's good design for all things in our lives and in our universe is not life-draining; it is life-giving.

March 10

God delights to give His children the good things they ask from Him. Why then are there times when we don't get what we want in life? One reason is simply that we aren't asking Him for good things. That could mean that we aren't praying at all, and we don't get what we ask for because we aren't asking. That could mean that we are praying, but what we are asking for isn't good for us to get. Whether it's the wrong thing, the wrong track, or the wrong time, God loves us too much to say "yes" to all of our requests that we would regret in the end. When He acts differently than we asked, it's always an upgrade.

March 11

We go to great measures to gain treasures in this world. But trophies, trips, triumphs, titles, toys, things and time spent on earthly pursuits and pleasures with no regard for eternity will undo us in the end. It's not that these things are inherently wrong, evil or unprofitable; it's that we often ignore God to pursue them and value them more than we do Him. God has given us all things richly to enjoy, but the point of that enjoyment is to point us to Jesus. To gain all that the world has to offer yet not have Jesus is to have nothing at all. To gain all that Jesus has to offer yet not have the world is to have everything.

March 12

Chosen means to be selected. Chosen means to be wanted. Chosen means to be included. And there is always a basis for being chosen that explains why any person, place or thing is selected, wanted and included. I've been chosen to be on an all-star team, to be a keynote speaker and to be a husband. These were all based on merit. But when God chose me to be in His family, it wasn't because I deserved it. It was because Jesus took all of my sinfulness and replaced it with all of His righteousness. His merit replaced my demerit. I wasn't chosen because of my skill, knowledge or charm. I was chosen by grace.

March 13

Every single day you and I should do whatever it takes to be happier in Jesus. That's how we win against temptation, frustration and dissatisfaction in this life. The attempts we make to improve ourselves, improve our circumstances, and improve our lives should not simply be about trying to take away things we dislike and add in things we do like. Instead, our goal should be to know and enjoy Jesus more and more and more. We grow in our inner peace, rest, security, confidence, hope and joy not because over and over we figure out a way to make things better, but because over and over we find our way to Jesus.

March 14

Who He is deserves it. What He does deserves it. Our great God accomplishes great things and is worthy of our heartfelt praise. Let us stand still, stand back and stand in awe of the One Who is perfect in every act, every decision, every purpose, every trait and every way. He creates from nothing. He rules over everything. He can do anything. And all that He is, says and does is good. We cannot improve upon a single thing in the universe that bears His handiwork or bears His likeness. Today, let us worship Him with glad and grateful and glory-giving hearts, remembering this: It is always appropriate to applaud God.

March 15

The ultimate goal of our lives is for God to be honored in us and us to be happy in Him. There isn't anything higher to aspire to than the duality of God's honor and our happiness. When we thank Him, trust Him, and treasure Him, these two things are achieved. Thanking Him means our hearts are glad because of something He gets glory for doing. Trusting Him means we delight to do what God has decided because we believe that He is good. Treasuring Him means we find enjoyment in His companionship because He is infinitely worth knowing. To seek His honor is to seek our happiness.

March 16

He didn't need a blueprint. He didn't need inspiration. He didn't need assistance. God created all of the universe without anyone's ideas, input, ingenuity, innovation or imagination. He just designed it all and made it all out of nothing. When you consider the amazing diversity and creativity and majesty displayed in every corner of the created world that we can see, hear, smell, taste and feel, God's handiwork is just absolutely stunning. He created angles and dimensions, shapes and textures, colors and flavors, scents and elements, and, well, everything known and unknown to us. Praise Him for He has done great things!

March 17

He doesn't need advice. He doesn't need instructions. He doesn't need guidance. God rules and reigns over every location and situation in the universe with absolute certainty. You will not find Him getting confused, getting caught off guard or getting into a place where He second guesses Himself. He always knows what to do, how to do it, and when to do it in order to accomplish the goal of His purpose and the good of His people. This is the One we turn to and trust in! When we struggle to make sense of our lives, let us remember: Even if we don't know what it is, God always knows exactly what He's doing.

March 18

The paths will divide. The objectives will conflict. The plans will differ. The desires will compete. The advice will disagree. We will often find ourselves having to choose sides for who we will listen to, go with and live to the satisfaction of ... God or people. We simply cannot be and do what will make Him happy and others happy at the same time, all the time. Rather than compromising to satisfy the crowd, let us show others the better path, the better objective, the better plan, the better desire and the better advice found in the good news of Jesus. Today, by grace, let us prioritize pleasing God over pleasing people.

March 19

God has not blessed us with time just so we can use it binge-watching Netflix. He has not blessed us with money just so we can spend it on more comforts. He has not blessed us with abilities and skills just so we can serve our own interests and passions. The generosity of God has been extended to us with blessings of time, talent and treasure that we might both enjoy them ourselves and extend them to bless others. Those of us who are trusting in Jesus have been entrusted with showing the world His heart for them by being His hands and feet and mouth to them. You have been blessed; now go be a blessing.

March 20

One of the enemy's biggest lies is convincing us to live as if this life is all there is. He wants us to prioritize and pursue things that won't matter for long over things that will matter forever. But everything looks different when you look past the temporary to eternity. This place isn't our home; we're heading home. This life won't last forever; the next life will. This treasure trove will fade away; the ones laid up in heaven have an everlasting shine. Yes, let us enjoy our time on earth and the things of earth as God means for us to do. But, even more, let us think, feel, speak and act as people who have set their sights on eternity.

March 21

Birds fly. Flowers bloom. Honey sweetens. Water dampens. Light illuminates. It's automatic and appropriate that they do these things because that's how they were made. This is their nature and design, and it is right to expect them to act in a certain way just as it is right to expect saving faith in Jesus to work itself out in love. It is normal. It is natural. When God's grace remakes us into people of faith, the new love we have for God will burst forth in acts of love for others. We can't help but love. We can't stop loving. We will live this out imperfectly, but this is for sure: A faith that saves is a faith that loves.

March 22

Someone once said that God doesn't care how many Bible verses we memorize as long as we love others. But the Bible is where we find our definition for what love is and our demonstration of what love does. Knowing what God has to say about love keeps us from forming our own opinions about what is right and wrong about how we feel and treat other people. It also reminds us of His steadfast love for us despite our faults, flaws and failures. This helps us be loving towards others who, like us, are in need of grace. God cares that we know the Bible because that's how He prepares us to care for others.

March 23

Imperfect words. Imperfect actions. Imperfect thoughts. Imperfect attitudes. Imperfect motives. Even though we are not who we used to be, we are also not yet who we will become. We are imperfect people. That doesn't mean we should be indifferent to our sin-produced flaws or complacent in our grace-driven effort to overcome them. We should work hard to act like Jesus on the outside while God works to make us more like Jesus on the inside. But we do this secure in His love, safe in His mercy and strengthened by His power. Today, let us strive for holy living while relying on and resting in His grace.

March 24

Bad circumstances, bad people and bad news make me want it. The more I survey the landscape of the sinfulness and brokenness we are all a part of, I look forward to our eternal heavenly home that Jesus is preparing for us so we can be with Him forever. A place where there will be no more sorrow, suffering or sin. A place where bad things will be eliminated, good things will be perfected and the best things will be unveiled. Our citizenship is in heaven, and God has put a longing in us for our homeland. When it's hard here, let's take heart and remember: He is preparing a place for us, and preparing us for a place.

March 25

Our joy will always be at risk if it is dependent upon things that we look to instead of Jesus because we are always at risk of losing them. The thrill fades away. The moment is over. The thing breaks. The experience disappoints. The person leaves. But Jesus has promised to give us a joy that doesn't burn out, fade out, check out or sell out so we don't have to miss out on real and lasting happiness that is only found in Him. Though every other form of happiness will inevitably leave or forsake us, He never will. In Jesus, we are offered a joy that can never be taken from us no matter what else is.

March 26

When we try to make others pay for their sin, we have forgotten that Jesus paid for our sin. As recipients of grace, we are to release our instinct for revenge when others wrong us to let God judge, punish and make all things right in His timing and in His way. Our role is to model His grace, not His judgment. Even when we must seek appropriate justice, it should be motivated by love, not hatred. So, let us overcome evil with good and leave it to God to do the work He means to do. We who have received grace should be quickest to extend it, praying that others will turn to Jesus as we ourselves have done.

March 27

Here's a simple, but significant, lens through which life looks radically different than we often see it... will this matter 100 years from now? How we think, feel, speak, act, and react would be wonderfully different if we saw things in light of eternity, and remember that this short life is not all that there is. Our lives would create an everlasting ripple if we could look a century into our future to see the impact of our today. As we live by grace, in dependence upon the presence and power of Jesus, let us give less priority to the things that really don't matter and more priority to the things that do.

March 28

God is worthy to be praised for Who He is, what He has already done for us, and what we are trusting Him to do for us in Christ. Every good thing that we have in our lives past, present and future is a gift of His grace. Even the things we think we worked hard to gain for ourselves are made possible by Him, for every ability and opportunity are given to us from Him. Therefore, let us celebrate Him before others and commend Him to others for all that He does for us, and that He delights to do so. Today... Honor Him for His blessings. Honor Him by enjoying His blessings as He intends. Honor Him for being a Blessor.

March 29

Is your prayer life more about getting God to do your will or you to do His? I'll be the first to admit that it's much easier for me to pray about my preferences, priorities and plans than it is to say to my Heavenly Father, "nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done." Yet, there is nothing so freeing and fulfilling than to be right where God means for me to be doing right what God means for me to do. Prayer involves many things, but the most important thing is to request what we need to live for His Kingdom, not to secure what we need to build our own. Today, ask God to give what you need, to do what He wants.

March 30

God is actively working behind-the-scenes for you right now to meet your needs in ways that you don't see. You don't have the answers; God does. You don't know the next move; God does. You can't see how it will work out; God does. Everything you really need will really be supplied. Not maybe. Not probably. Definitely. God will provide for every need. Not some of them. Not most of them. All of them, without exception. Right when you need it, not a second too late. Today, do the work that God has said is for you to do, and believe that He is doing the work that is not for you to do.

March 31

An ongoing battle that every Christian faces is the one between the person you were before you met Jesus and the one you are now that you have met Him. Old temptations beckon. Old habits resurface. Old desires rekindle. Old loyalties divide. Old beliefs hinder. Old memories haunt. When you feel this tension, remember that you have a new identity, a new life and a new you because you believe in and belong to Jesus! You have been changed, are being changed and will be changed by His transforming grace. So fight the good fight of faith against sin as you rejoice in this today: that's not you anymore.



April

April 1

Our happiness does not depend upon us getting something we want or getting rid of something we don't want. The secret to contentment, regardless of what we have and don't have, what we get to do and don't get to do, who we are and who we are not, is to expect Jesus to fulfil the longings of our hearts. When we look to Him for hope, peace, rest, comfort, courage, security, strength, and provision, and trust that He will sustain us and satisfy us in all circumstances, God is honored in us, and we are happy in Him. We can be joyfully content whether we have little or much because we have it all in Jesus.

April 2

I wish I could say that my batteries are always charged, my tank is always full, and my engine is always revved up so I can handle well anything that comes my way. But I cannot. I often find myself depleted and run down on the inside. And so do you. When we wonder how we can continue, we don't need to look to our own inner strength, or our own resources, or our own usual escape. Instead, we need to look to Jesus and lean on Jesus, because He will recharge our batteries, refill our tanks, and rev up our engines. Remember... God doesn't help those who help themselves. He helps those who cannot help themselves.

April 3

Every single day we are forced to choose sides. We will either serve Jesus or something else. We will either prefer Jesus or something else. We will either trust Jesus or something else. The enemy of our souls wants us to look away from Jesus, look at substitutes for Jesus, and look for life apart from Jesus. So, he calls out to us over and over again... Look. Over. Here. He offers distractions to divide our attention and divide our loyalty so he can divide and conquer us. Therefore, let us pray every day that God would get our focus where it needs to be so we look past the distractions to Jesus for help on how best to live.

April 4

God has committed Himself to the long-term transformation of making us more like Jesus. He is acting as both demolition crew and construction crew in us, tearing down those things that don't belong and building us up in ways that better mirror His image. He will not stop until the good work in us is done, loving us just as we are, but never content to leave us that way. We are His beloved unfinished masterpieces, treasured works-in-progress that are always under the skilled brush of God Who graciously and patiently adds His loving strokes to who we are so we can become who we were made to be.

April 5

Don't waste it. Don't misuse it. Don't underestimate it. God has graciously given you a life that is rich with meaning and purpose in this world, at this time, for His kingdom. Your home life, work life and play life are all a part of His divine plan to make a difference in the lives of the people He has connected you with and entrusted you with. You were made to shine His light! The ordinary things of your everyday routine can be done in a way that counts forever. Today, prayerfully consider what steps of faith He wants you to take in living and loving like Jesus, remembering this: He can do great things through you.

April 6

We don't pretend it never happened. We don't stay there for long. We don't give up because of it. As we experience godly sorrow in honest ownership of our sin, it should lead to rejoicing in Jesus. Rejoicing over His forgiving grace. Rejoicing over His transforming grace. Rejoicing over His empowering grace. Yes, we feel genuine regret over our sin because it breaks God's heart and breaks our lives. But we quickly remember that the finished work of Jesus makes it possible for us to finish well in our fight against sin. It's not that the standard has been lowered for us; it's that the standard has been met for us.

April 7

It is wonderful to love. One of the greatest gifts that God gives us as humans is the capacity to care for things and care about things. From pizza to people, fireworks to friendships, Chick-Fil-A to conservation, jobs to justice, adventures to Apple, and countless other things, it's good to give affection and attention to the good things God puts in our lives. But... Only one love can be supreme. Only one love can be primary. Only one love can be central. The love we have for Jesus should be greatest of all. Let us stir our affections for Him, knowing this: We will love other things best when we love Jesus most.

April 8

You don't have to cross your fingers. You don't have to be cautiously optimistic. You don't have to wonder in uncertainty. You don't have to have a glass half full disposition. You don't have to fear the worst. You can have a real hope in this broken world with broken people even when life doesn't work out the way you thought it would, because you are certain it will work out for good. That's what real hope is: a confident expectation of something good in your future. And it comes from trusting that Jesus will be with us in time of need, give to us all that we need, and one day put an end to our needs.

April 9

If you are trusting Jesus, you are blessed whether you feel like it or not. The Bible doesn't say you possibly are blessed, probably are blessed or periodically are blessed; it says you ARE blessed. This is a continual certainty for those who follow Jesus in faith. There is... No reason to feel shame for your yesterday because you are blessed with His pardon. No reason to feel discontent with your today because you are blessed with His presence. No reason to feel afraid of your tomorrow because you are blessed with His promises. His mercy is yours. His satisfaction is yours. His kingdom is yours. All because you are His.

April 10

The world often portrays being blessed as the measure of how good we are or how good we have it. We are blessed because of what we do, what we get to do and what we get from our doing. But being blessed in the Kingdom of God is more than that. It doesn't necessarily mean that all is well on the outside, but that all is well on the inside. It doesn't necessarily mean that all is well in the everyday matters of life, but that all is well in what matters most. It doesn't necessarily mean that all is well now, but that all will be well forever. Know this: Real blessing comes in things that can never be taken from us.

April 11

The gospel is not a self-help plan; it is a rescue plan. God does not ask us to fix ourselves in five simple steps, but rather to trust in the one stunning step He took in sending Jesus to fix all that is broken in us. His generosity is breathtaking, His goodness is jaw-dropping and His grace is amazing, for He treated His Son like a sinner on the cross so sinners like you and me could be treated like a son. The more we are aware of the depths of our sin, the more we will appreciate the depths of His salvation. So... let us marvel at and rejoice in this today: Jesus paid a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay.

April 12

Jesus lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death, and rose victoriously from the grave. He did not live, die and rise so we could remain stuck in our sin and struggles as if He did nothing at all. He came to forgive us and free us from: bitterness, selfishness, laziness, unkindness, purposelessness, sadness, fearfulness and all ungodliness so we might walk in newness of life. Sin-defeating, life-enabling, heart-transforming, joy-securing resurrection power is ours! May we have a confidence in and dependance on the power and presence of Jesus today. We aren't who we used to be, and we don't have to live like we are.

April 13

Jesus knew what awaited in Jerusalem. Unimaginable torment. Unthinkable anguish. Unspeakable evil. Unwarranted brutality. Unprecedented suffering. No one would ever face anything like what Jesus set His face to go to. He would absorb the wrath of God for our sins to secure the grace of God for our salvation so we could become the people of God for all eternity. He knew the horror of what was coming, but He lovingly and unflinchingly set his face towards it, locked eyeballs with it, and did not back away, back off or back down from it. The spotless Lamb of God headed for the place of His slaughter for us.

April 14

The gruesomeness of what Jesus went through should grip us. This was going to be an ugly, horrific scene that should rightly furrow our brows, sicken our stomachs, and stab our hearts because it was our sin that caused this sacrifice to be needed. The graciousness of what Jesus went through should also grip us. This was going to be a beautiful, wonderful act of love that should make our eyes dance, make our faces smile, and make our hearts leap with joy because He was willing to do this for us. Hallelujah! No one goes to heaven except through Him. And no one would go through Him unless He went to the cross.

April 15

Confusion. Shock. Fear. Uncertainty. Heartbreak. Silence. When they laid the breathless, lifeless body of Jesus in the tomb, it must have seemed like their own breath and life had been drained from them. Jesus. Was. Dead. And when the stone was rolled into place, it must have looked like their hopes and fate were sealed inside with the One they had pinned their hopes on and trusted their fate to. They didn't see it coming and wished they hadn't seen it at all. They laid Jesus there. But He would not lie there for long. They thought it was the end. But it was just the beginning. It was finished. But it was not over.

April 16

Wait it out. Wait and see. Wait upon the Lord. Things will break our hearts and leave us in stunned silence. But our God is sovereign, and though the sinfulness of people, the brokenness of this world and the maliciousness of Satan all rise up to seemingly stop God's work, He makes them bow down and serve His purposes. Struggles, suffering, sin and Satan will be defeated! Every foe we will ever face will be overturned, overthrown and overcome because Jesus is putting and will put every enemy under His foot in final and forever victory. Until then, we wait. But we wait in real hope of better things.

April 17

He Is Risen! We can rejoice and worship for the empty tomb changes everything. Because the Lamb of God was slain, rose again and the tomb is now empty, we can be forgiven and free forever. If you are trusting Him, you are a new person with a new eternity in your future, and new potential, new purpose, new power, new pleasure in Him for everyday life even now. All because He lives! This is our hope: Jesus has overcome the world, is with us as we live in the world, provides all that we need in this world, and promises to come back to deliver us from this world. Rejoice! Our lives are full because the tomb is empty.

April 18

Do you believe that Jesus is alive? Then don't live as if He's still dead. Don't live as if you are left to your own wisdom, strength and resources to navigate through life. Don't live as if this world and its stuff is all there is, and you can't be happy unless you have more of it. Don't live as if your life has no real meaning and purpose, and how you spend your time doesn't really matter. Don't live as if you are a victim of temptation and sin, powerless to stand up to it and resist it and defeat it. Don't live as if life is out of control, and you have just cause to worry and fear and dread. If you believe He's alive, live like He's alive!

April 19

Jesus did it all. Jesus paid it all. Jesus conquered it all. We couldn't live up to God's standards, so Jesus lived perfectly for us. We couldn't break free from sin, so He set us free. We couldn't atone for our transgressions, so Jesus died in our place. We couldn't defeat death, so He conquered the grave so we too will rise. We couldn't earn an eternal retirement, so He paid for our inheritance. We have become rich in salvation, forgiveness, joy, peace, glory, kindness, favor, righteousness, love and hope because of what He accomplished on our behalf. Every good thing that is ours displays the good news of Jesus.

April 20

It's easy to be mistaken about this, assume this, believe this, want this and live like this: that your life is all about you. But the Bible teaches that your life is all about Jesus. Let us daily be reminded that you and I are to exalt, proclaim, model, know, serve, praise, believe, seek, adore, please, magnify, worship, defend, treasure, follow, trust, enjoy, obey and love Jesus. We do so to bring glory to the One who was slain for us, conquered sin and death for us, offers forgiveness and life to us, and has become a treasure and joy to us! Because here's the thing... A life that is full of personal honor for Jesus is also full of personal happiness.

April 21

Every person in your life is there for this reason: for you to love on them. God put you where you are, and brought people into your life where you are, so you could demonstrate His love for them, to them. These aren't just neighbors, co-workers, and teammates; they are intended recipients of God's affection to be administered through you. Every meeting, conversation and encounter is a wonderful occasion to bless and brighten someone else's life to the glory of God. Remember today...The intersections where your life meets someone else's life hold a beautiful, God-given opportunity and responsibility to love like Jesus.

April 22

Let's be honest... Loving others isn't as easy as it sounds. Some of the people where we live, work and play are know-it-alls, gossips, selfish, cry-babies, back-stabbers, unforgivers, lazy, troublemakers, judgmental, self-righteous, unkind, power-hungry, cheaters, entitled, drama queens, hypocrites, snobs, braggarts, and downright unlikeable. Who would love people like them? Jesus. Jesus would love people like them. Jesus loves people like you and me, who are just like them. We may sin differently than others we know, but we are sinners just the same. And Jesus loves us anyway. So we love others in His way.

April 23

This is the model, means, and motivation for every expression of our love toward the people God has put into our lives... Jesus loves us. Jesus loves us. Jesus loves us. For who better to love imperfect people than those who were at their own worst when Jesus loved them anyway? He loved us then. He loves us now. He will keep loving us forever. Listen: It's not about trying harder to love better; it's about rejoicing in the love that God has shown us in Jesus and then responding by loving Him back and sharing His love with other people. There is grace for us when we get this wrong and grace to help us get it right.

April 24

For those who are trusting in Jesus, God is always doing much more in us, for us, around us, and through us than we are aware of. All we see is the show, but He is working behind the scenes. All we see is the ship, but He is working beneath the surface. He is precise. He is punctual. He is providential. We don't have to make sense out of everything that is going on or that we are going through, but we do need to trust that God is tirelessly at work in ways that would make sense if we knew all that He knows. And when we can't see it with our eyes, let us believe it in our hearts. That's what faith is for.

April 25

God will bring you through 100% of your dark days until He brings you home. He will not forget you a single moment. He will not forsake you a single time. He will not fail you a single day. Will it always be easy? No. Will it always be comfortable? No. Will it always be the way you want it? No. But it will always be under the careful, calculated and compassionate rule of a Father Who loves you and has a purpose for you. You are alive and breathing today because God made it so; God made it so because you were made to be a light in this dark world. And you are not done shining yet.

April 26

One thing most of us struggle with is disobedience by delay. That is, we wait to do what God has called and equipped us to do. We wait until a more convenient time, thinking we have plenty of time, but more often than not, we will run out of time. For most of us, God doesn't mean for us to wait until some future day to serve Him by going out in a million-dollar blaze of glory, but rather He wants us to give ourselves to Him in daily nickels and dimes of service. By grace, lay up treasures in heaven with how you use your time today. It's not what you leave behind that matters most. It's what you forward ahead.

April 27

There is an infinite difference between... Who we were and who we are. What we were and what we are. We were sinners who were infinitely separated from God with no hope of avoiding the coming judgment and wrath for our sin. But God demonstrated His infinite love for us by sending Jesus to shower infinite grace upon us through His perfect life, sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. By faith, we are now infinitely forgiven through Him, infinitely connected to Him, infinitely secure in Him, and infinitely blessed by Him! So... Let us use our lips and our lives to give Him what He deserves: infinite praise.

April 28

Today, when that temptation is offered, that relationship blows up, that meeting goes wrong, that diagnosis is grim, that pleasure is available, that problem shows up, that plan falls through, and that thing happens ... you will believe something to be true. Instead of believing sin's promises that you have been abandoned by God, or you should accept a substitute for God, believe the promises of God. Place your full weight on God's Word, for it is the only solid ground in a world full of cleverly-disguised sinking sand. If He says it, you can believe it. And if you can believe it, you can experience its life-giving assurances.

"I have kept the faith. I have finished the race." – 2 Timothy 4:7b

April 29

The things of this world were not designed to bring you full and lasting satisfaction; that's why they never do. They leave you longing for something more, something different, something better. You'll look for it your entire life in people, places, pursuits and possessions, but you'll only find it in Jesus. He doesn't offer to get us that new job, new spouse, new vacation, new baby, new home, new personal best, new recognition, new bill of health, or new thing that we think will make us happy. He offers to give us Himself. Our satisfaction depends not on us having the things of this world, but on us having Him.

April 30

Many people see the commands of Christ as "restrictive rules" that are keeping the good stuff out of our lives instead of seeing them as "gracious guardrails" that are keeping our lives out of the gutter. He is our Good Shepherd Who protects us, provides for us, empowers us, refreshes us, delights us, guides us and delivers us safely to our eternal home in heaven. How? We hear His voice (the words of the Bible with all of its instructions, truths and promises made clear to us by the Holy Spirit) calling us into His care, and by faith we do as He says. He leads. We follow. That's it. He takes care of us by taking care of all the rest.



May

May 1

What you'll discover about life with Jesus is this... The better you know Him, the longer you follow Him, and the greater you enjoy Him, the deeper you will experience all the blessings and benefits of grace. He will be honored in you and you will be happy in Him. And that's what grace is all about. God and sinner reconciled so that... God receives the full and lasting worship He's always deserved, and you receive the full and lasting happiness you've always desired. It starts now, grows over time, and will extend into eternity where it will explode into unhindered, unbridled, uninterrupted pleasure forevermore.

May 2

If you know a tornado is headed for me, I don't want you to disregard, downplay, deceive, or delay in telling me about the danger of my situation or my inaction. I want the truth. I need the truth. I may not like the truth, but my life depends upon you telling me the truth. As Christians we should be... Lovers of truth. Guardians of truth. Speakers of truth. Receivers of truth. But we shouldn't be manufacturers of our own truth. God has ordained that we communicate the truths of His word and His world to each other so that we can be set free from sinful self-destruction and find our way to safety in Him. Truth matters.

May 3

Who you were. What you do. Where you're from. Where you're going. What you believe. Who you are. Every Christian has a story to tell, and each one is important and worth telling when Jesus is rightly portrayed as the Hero of it. Your narrative is unique, and you will unfold it in bits and pieces in everyday conversations with the people in your life. As you do, be sure to point them to the Author of your story Who is the Source of every good thing you have in your life and all that you hope for in the one to come. Tell your story. Tell His story. People need to know what you know ... that they need to know Jesus.

May 4

Gospel change is not the result of simply trying harder to do better the next time we face temptation. Fighting against our personal shortcomings and sins is never enough to consistently win the battle and prevail in the end. We must, by God's grace, fight for something better that is offered to us than what the temptation offers to us. A better way. A better delight. A better outcome. Our inside-out transformation is not just a fight against something; it's a fight for something. It's a fight for the guilt-free, longer-lasting, fuller option. Let us resist temptation by embracing and enjoying all that God offers to us in Jesus.

May 5

Every Christian should not only lovingly do good things, but should also spur on other Christians to lovingly do good things. This includes encouraging both those who are passive and those who are active in serving God's kingdom. Some people need to be convinced to get going. Some people need to be cheered to keep going. It's easy to get distracted and discouraged when it comes to pursuing eternal priorities, so we need to help each other not lose focus and not lose heart. Instead of assuming others will continue in a life of good works in the Name of Jesus, we should be affirming them as they do.

May 6

The alarm clock rings, and we're already running behind. Before we even know if we're ready, willing and able to enter the day, it's ready, set, go. The remedy for busy, frantic lives is not to speed up, but to slow down. The thing that will most help us with what we face each day is to simply spend time with Jesus getting recharged so we can be prepared for what lies ahead, and refocused so we can prioritize the things that matter most. At the beginning, middle, and end of the day, take moments to connect with Him. You're not too busy to spend time with Jesus. You're too busy not to spend time with Jesus.

May 7

I'm a recovering sight-walker. Give me the plan. Give me the map. Tell me where we're going, how we're going to get there, what's going to happen along the way, and what awaits us at our destination. While the Bible does give us the "big picture" view of these things, the everyday details of our individual lives aren't specifically given to us in advance. It takes faith for us to follow Jesus into the unknown, uncertain and, often, unfamiliar spaces where He leads us. But our faith rests firmly in this: When Jesus calls us to leave our comfort zones, we can be sure He will always go with us and provide for us.

May 8

There are many reasons to regularly gather with other followers of Jesus, but each of them points to the ultimate reason for getting together. Christian community serves as a reminder that we are not the center of it all. It's an interruption of our thinking that it's our duty to carry out our plans in our ways with our wisdom by our strength to accomplish our goals so we can be happy with ourselves and our lives. Attending a "church service" reorients us and refreshes us so we get our minds and hearts back where they belong, on Jesus. This is how He gets the honor He deserves and we get the happiness we desire.

May 9

Even if no one repaid them. Even if no one appreciated them. Even if no one saw them. The acts of kindness, acts of generosity, acts of sacrifice, acts of love and all other times you act like Jesus are not unnoticed in heaven. While it may be tiring to keep giving up your time and giving of yourself to do good to the people that Jesus brings into your life, don't give in to the temptation to stop blessing others in His Name. Remember, the things you do for others, you do for Him. And Jesus sees them. Jesus appreciates them. Jesus will repay them. Someday you will see the glorious outcome of the good you do today.

May 10

Not guilty. But it happened. Not guilty. But You saw it. Not guilty. But I did it. Not guilty. But I owe for it. Not guilty. When we repent and believe the gospel, God applies the perfect life of Jesus and the atoning death of Jesus to our record, and we who really are guilty of sin are set free. Free from shame. Free from judgement. Free from punishment. Therefore, we can dismiss fear of death, face life courageously and look forward to an eternity where punishment has been replaced by reward, inheritance and blessing in God's presence. Rejoice today, for Jesus has the final word for those who are trusting in Him: Not guilty.

May 11

No matter how tough we are, removed we are, indifferent we are, or protected we are, there are real threats to our peace of heart and peace of mind. In this world, we will have troubles. But Jesus entered our world of troubles so we could have our peace restored, now and forever. This brings peace: Jesus has overcome the world, is with us as we live in the world, provides all that we need in this world, and promises to come back to deliver us from this world! If you trust that He can handle sin, death and Satan to give you eternal life, then trust He can also help you through all the issues you face in everyday life.

May 12

Though binge-eating, relaxing and other ways of coping might offer some temporary numbness when we cannot escape or eliminate the trials of life, we need something better. Because sooner or later, the numbness fades. What Jesus offers is a real comfort that doesn't wear off. It's an encouraging, strengthening, sustaining help that is ours when we stop looking to other helpers to do for us what only the Helper can do. Jesus will not walk away from us, but will walk with us to help us this very hour, and He will stay with us to help us through every test, trial and tribulation until He brings them to an end.

May 13

The decision we need to make, the step we should take, the future that is at stake are all too important to risk trying to take our best guess and our best shot at getting it right. The good news is, we don't have to. The sweet voice of Jesus will guide us from where we are to where we need to be when we ask Him to do so. But we will not hear these life-giving, joy-producing, hope-inspiring, course-correcting, God-honoring, truth-telling words of His if we neglect to read the Bible and pray, as this is where asking and receiving takes place. So... Before you make a move, your first move is always to ask Jesus for your next move.

May 14

There is not a human being on the face of the earth who fully discloses every thought, feeling, motive, desire, and attitude to others. We hide many of those things within ourselves, hoping that no one ever finds us out, because we fear the ugliness we keep tucked away would drive others away. So, we put on a mask, and we put on a show, make-believing we are something that we are not. But there is Someone Who knows the real you and loves you with a forgiving, lasting, transforming, blessing love. Christian, you are fully known by Jesus and fully loved by Jesus, even with all of your sins and shortcomings.

May 15

What Jesus has done, is doing and will do out of His love for us is what makes us safe and secure. He atones. He rules. He provides. He sustains. He delivers. There is nothing that can stop Him from loving us like that. And there is nothing that can separate us from a love like that. Because Jesus loves you... He gave His life for you in the past, He's walking with you in the present, and He's coming back for you in the future. Christian, take heart today, for though your life is not without threats and troubles, your life is safe and secure in the love of Jesus. He has loved you every day of your life. Today will not be any different.

May 16

When others wrong us, repaying evil for evil is never the right answer, solution or response. We are commanded to release our instinct for revenge and let God judge, punish and make all things right in His timing and in His way. God will repay, either by accepting the payment made by Jesus on the cross should the evildoers repent and receive His grace, or by making them pay in hell if they do not. Therefore, let us overcome evil with good and leave it to God to do the work He means to do in their lives. We best model the grace of Jesus when we show it most to those who deserve it the least.

May 17

Biblical humility is a response to grace. It is an acknowledgement that God helped us over and over in the past and an awareness of our need for God to help us again and again in the future. When you are humble, you know that the good things about who you are and the good things you have done are because Jesus has freely and fully made it so. We work hard, but He empowers us. We make decisions, but He enlightens us. We take opportunities, but He equips us. We keep going, but He encourages us. Let us humble ourselves and exalt Him, for nothing good about our lives would be possible without Him.

May 18

Over the course of our lives, we will make countless decisions, and each of them will change the course of our lives. Some significantly. Some insignificantly. But all of them will steer us in varying degrees as we journey through this world into the one to come. While we often let intuition and emotion be our inner guide as to what is right and wrong for us, these often lead us astray because they are skewed by many biases, experiences and influences. Thankfully, God does not leave us alone to navigate through life. He graciously directs our paths when we trust in and submit to His guidance. His way is always the right way.

May 19

The thing about being deceived is you don't know you are being deceived. You think something is real, but it's not. You think something is true, but it's not. You think something is right, but it's not. Things aren't always what they look like, sound like or feel like they seem to be. And often it's our own hearts that trick us into believing what we want to be genuine. So, how do we spot counterfeits? By hearing, embracing, knowing and living out the message of Jesus. We must look to His life-giving, life-enriching truth to be the fountainhead of our thinking and feeling and desiring that sets us free from all deception.

May 20

The Bible doesn't pretend that bad people don't exist or bad things don't happen. It actually warns us about the reality of bad stuff, prepares us to deal with bad stuff, encourages us as we go through bad stuff, and guides us to get past bad stuff. Supplies may be short, but God will supply our every need. Finances may crash, but God will be our security. Relationships may deteriorate, but God will never leave us. Sickness may invade our bodies, but God will ultimately heal us forever. Whether we escape trouble or endure it, we can be sure of this... There is always good news that overcomes the bad news.

May 21

The incomparable and incalculable benefit of following Jesus is that we get to be with Jesus. We get the pleasure of His company and the contentedness of His presence. It's not just life. It's not just the best life. It's not just the best life now. It's not just the best life now and forever. It's the best life now and forever with Jesus. We go with Jesus not just because it's the smartest thing to do and the safest thing to do, but even more so, because it's the satisfying thing to do. Giving up all the world's substitutes for Him, in order to be with Him, is not a trade-off; it's a trade-up. It's an infinite upgrade to know and enjoy Jesus.

May 22

The singing lauds the greatness of Jesus. The preaching proclaims the message of Jesus. The offering furthers the mission of Jesus. The discipleship equips the people of Jesus. The prayers unleash the power of Jesus. The Spirit transforms the image-bearers of Jesus. The communion celebrates the finished work of Jesus. The invitation welcomes new believers of Jesus. The fellowship encourages the good deeds of Jesus. The service nurtures the joy of Jesus. The gathering sends out the representatives of Jesus. Why go to a church service? Because it leads to greater honor for Jesus and greater happiness for you.

May 23

Because of Jesus, we can have courage; the kind of courage that does not shrink back from saying and doing the right things no matter what people might think of us, what might happen to us, and what it might cost us if we remain faithful to Him. We press on, knowing that He will graciously keep us and empower us and provide for us and go with us and deliver us and save us because He has promised to do so. Therefore... Be bold to speak the truth in His love. Be brave to face enemies with His love. Be encouraged in opposition by His love. If He is for you, it really doesn't matter who is against you.

May 24

We spend planting day in anticipation of harvest day. We spend pre-season getting ready for post-season. We spend rehearsal time longing for show time. We spend work hours to enjoy weekend hours. All this for a fleeting yield, championship, applause, and pleasure. How much more important is it to spend today in getting ready for, in anticipation of, and in longing for eternity? This life isn't all there is! Eternal fruit, eternal victory, eternal glory and eternal enjoyment are coming. Christian, rejoice and recommit to living for what matters most. This life will soon end, but praise God, the next one never will.

May 25

It's okay to not be okay. It's not okay to stay that way. Especially when God has equipped the church to take care of one another as we depend upon Him to graciously provide what we need in our time of need. He calls, gifts, empowers, mobilizes, and sends the church of Jesus to be His hands, feet, and mouth to people inside and outside the family of God. Therefore, the smartest thing you can do when you find yourself feeling overpowered, overwhelmed or overloaded is to ask for help. If it's more than you can handle alone, that's God's way of saying He doesn't want you to handle it alone.

May 26

Here's the ironic truth about gossip: it says more about the one doing the talking than the one being talked about. Gossip reveals a heart that finds more pleasure in the transfer of information than in the transformation of an individual. It is the opposite of the gospel for it is indifferent to its harmful effect on others, or it is intent on that harmful effect. Rather than pointing out the bad news about others, we should use our words to point to the good news of our Savior. Let us fill our minds and our mouths with things that repeat His story. If we're going to say something about someone else, may it be about Jesus.

May 27

Human effort couldn't overcome it. Human wisdom couldn't solve it. Human goodness couldn't cancel it. But God did something glorious and gracious about our biggest problem: He condemned our sin on the cross so you and I don't have to be condemned for our sin. For those who are trusting in Jesus, this means we don't have to live in constant unease that God is going to turn against us or turn us away when we don't measure up. Our sins, our shortcomings, our struggles and our setbacks have all been dealt with once and for all. We are safe in Jesus. He takes away our sin and makes a way for us to not sin.

May 28

Every hour of every day we must choose between two options for how we will live: the ways of the world or the ways of God. The temporary pleasure, the quick fix, the easier path, the feel-good philosophy, the you-do-you attitude and the comfort zone are incredibly popular and powerful enticements. They aren't always wrong options, but they are never right options if we choose them over what God tells us. The good news for us is this: We do not have to face life's temptations, tests and turns in our own power and wisdom. When we rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us, He will always choose what is best for us.

May 29

It's incredible. It's inevitable. It's irreversible. Life after death is coming for every person who has saving faith in Jesus. Jesus decisively defeated our enemy, our sin and our unbelief through His perfect life, His atoning death, His victorious resurrection and His effectual call upon our lives. In doing so, God removed everything standing in our way from fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore in His presence in heaven. Because of this, we do not need to fear death for we know what awaits on the other side. Take heart! For Christians, death is the door to life, and Jesus has left it unlocked for each of us to enter in.

May 30

Are you praying for God to change the lives of those who are close to you but far from Him? It may not look promising right now, but don't lose hope because no one is a lost cause. That family member, that friend or even that foe can be changed by God no matter how disinterested they are in Him or distant they are from Him. A rebellious will can surrender to the plans of Jesus. A closed mind can open to the good news of Jesus. A hard heart can soften to the love of Jesus. Keep talking to God about that person and keep talking to that person about God. Remember: He can do for others what He has done for us.

May 31

Human beings tend to be treasure hunters. We are inclined to attach too much value to, and become too attached to, earthly possessions and pleasures. We often want to have more of these for ourselves and have more of these than others do, so we spend our lives collecting and comparing. When we remind ourselves of all that we have in Jesus, this frees us to pursue better things. As adopted children of God, we are heirs to every good possession and endless pleasure in heaven. This means on earth we can be joyous no matter what we have, generous with what we do have, and unenvious of what others have.



June

June 1

There is no quota to meet. There is no bar to clear. There is no stage to reach. When it comes to serving the Kingdom of God with our lives, there are two things we need to understand. First, we don't work to get into the kingdom. Second, we don't stop working once we get into the kingdom. We are completely accepted because of the completed work of Jesus, and our faith rests in what He does, not what we do. But that doesn't mean we rest from doing. God has ordained that we do good works all the days of our lives, never reaching a stopping point until we reach home. He saves us and sends us to share His love.

June 2

Take a look around. That's all it takes to see that this world and the people in it are broken. Relationships are broken. Bodies are broken. Environments are broken. Hearts are broken. Communities are broken. Suffering is a reality that we all experience: everyone, everywhere, every day. What helps us get through the suffering is knowing this simple truth: it will not always be this way. A glorious day is coming when the broken will be made whole, the wrong will be made right, and the pain will be made into pleasure forever. No matter what comes next, we know what comes last and longest: Heaven. Take a look ahead.

June 3

The scoreboard may show us behind, but the game isn't over yet. The pieces may be a jumbled mess, but the puzzle isn't assembled yet. The road may seem to lead in the wrong direction, but the journey isn't complete yet. For those who love Him, God is working ALL things together for an ultimate good. That means there is not a bad thing in the universe that isn't factored into His plan. Even the difficult things, painful things, unexpected things, and hostile things will work toward a good result, a good fit and a good place for believers. When things don't seem to be working, let us remember that God still is.

June 4

God is able to carry the heaviest burden you will ever face and carry you to the other side by His grace. There is no weapon too powerful. There is no mountain too big. There is no task too great. There is no situation too hopeless. There is no adversary too insurmountable. Not. For. Him. Whatever you are struggling with... God will get you over it, under it, around it, through it, or away from it some way until the day comes when every obstacle has been permanently removed. Rest in this today as you trust the day to God: It may be too much for you to handle, but it's never too much for Him.

June 5

The holiest nature. The brightest glory. The highest authority. The strongest power. The wisest intellect. The longest reign. The surest justice. The loveliest artistry. The kindest heart. The closest embrace. The greatest mission. The biggest sacrifice. The finest reward. The fullest grace. The deepest love. God doesn't just have some of these things, He has them all. He doesn't just have some of each of these things, He has the fullest portion, capacity, scope and measure of them all. Let us stand before Him today mind blown, hands raised, head bowed, heart stirred, mouth open and declare Him Worthiest of all.

June 6

All times. All places. All circumstances. That's when and where Jesus will be there with you and for you if you are trusting in Him. There are occasions so wonderful that you never want them to end. There are occasions so painful that they feel like they will never end. The key to not being distracted by the highs and defeated by the lows is to keep your eyes on Jesus and experience His strengthening, sustaining, satisfying presence in both the ups and downs, the wins and losses, the pleasures and pains. Today, trust and treasure Him. You can rightly go through all things because Jesus goes right through them with you.

June 7

There is an enormous, eternal difference between knowing Jesus and knowing about Jesus. We can know about someone without being in a personal relationship with that person. So, how can we be certain that we really know Jesus and we are really bound for heaven? We look for evidences that He is changing us from the inside out. Knowing Jesus transforms us into people who increasingly, though imperfectly... Love His family. Desire His will. Value His mission. Treasure His word. Choose His way. Long for His return. Delight in His presence. No one who truly knows Jesus is ever left the same.

June 8

Life can be stressful. There are... Problems we can't solve. Situations we can't handle. Demands we can't meet. Changes we can't avoid. Troubles we can't escape. As Christians, we aren't exempt from the stresses of life, but we are empowered to endure them. Real relief from stress comes not from the absence of tense and troubling situations, but from the presence of Jesus with us in those situations. Stressful becomes stress-free when we trust in this: Jesus will be with me. Jesus will help me. Jesus will guide me. Jesus will deliver me. Rest in knowing that you're not the one who holds it all together. He is.

June 9

A semi-painted canvas doesn't show the whole picture. A rough draft doesn't tell the whole story. A list of ingredients doesn't look like the whole entrée. Similar to these things, you and I are works-in-progress in the transforming hands of our loving Father. And He will continue changing us from who we used to be into who we will be. We are... Unfinished, but not unsaved. Unfinished, but not unfixable. Unfinished, but not unloved. Because God will finish what He starts in you, you don't have to give in to despair when you stumble in your faith or give up in trying to live out your faith. He isn't done yet. And neither are you.

June 10

People go to great lengths to safeguard their money, health, jobs, computers, phones, homes, families, and minds against dangers that threaten their well-being. They look for security in a variety of places like their bank account balances, home alarm systems and workplace seniority. But all of the security measures people take have one thing in common: they can fail at any time, which means they don't really offer security at all. Real security is having something which guarantees a good future for you that can never be lost by you or taken from you. And that kind of security is only found in the love of Jesus.

June 11

God didn't reluctantly choose you because there was an empty space in His family tree, and He was down to His last option in you. He readily chose you because that spot in His family was reserved especially for you. He doesn't regret it for a moment, even in those moments when you feel like He does because you have fallen short and failed Him. Because of the moment you put your faith in Jesus... He delights in you. He rejoices over you. He is pleased with you. Whether you stand by His grace and get it right, or fall into His mercy when you get it wrong, you were chosen by God. And He's happy with His choice.

June 12

Praise doesn't take away from our enjoyment of something; praise adds to our enjoyment of it. Think about it... We can't wait to share great news. We can't help but cheer a great play. We can't stop singing a great song. We can't keep quiet about a great result, great movie, great experience or a great meal. Praising is the natural response to something that excites and delights us, and it always increases and intensifies our enjoyment of that thing. So, above all, let us admire and applaud our God for Who He is and what He does, that our hearts might explode over His greatness with the greatest of all joys.

June 13

What you and I have is ultimately not our own; it all belongs to God. Our time is His. Our Talent is His. Our Treasure is His. Little or much, temporary or lasting, tangible or unseen, everything in our lives is the property and possession of God. We have been entrusted to steward it faithfully, dispense it liberally, and credit it clearly to the One from Whom all blessings flow. Our stewardship will not be judged by the amount we are able to give, but by the readiness, cheerfulness and faithfulness of our giving. It is not a matter of how much we have to be generous with, but how generous we are with how much we have.

June 14

We are to be generous with our words, actions, time, money, forgiveness, kindness, hospitality, patience, service, friendship, compassion, skills, truth-telling and love. Even as we enjoy what God does for us and gives to us, we can confidently share every good resource in our lives as He leads us, knowing that even as we give away, there is always enough. God is continually pouring out more forgiveness, goodness, kindness and blessedness so we can be more of a witness to His generosity by giving away part of what He gives to us. Overflowing cups are not for us to choke on, but for us to let others drink from too.

June 15

No matter how much we grow to look like Jesus, there will be countless times when we don't look much like Him at all. Because Jesus never sinned, and we often will. The natural response for us when we think wrong things, say wrong things and do wrong things is to hide. Hide the truth. Hide our responsibility. Hide from God. But because God is gracious, we don't have to do any of these things. When we sincerely repent, He is faithful to extend grace. Every. Single. Time. He isn't reluctant. He doesn't have a shortage. He won't turn you away. Run to God with joy knowing this... His fountain of forgiveness will never run dry.

June 16

One of the primary aims of Christianity is to invite as many people who are far from God into the joy that we have in Him so they can experience it with us. To fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith means not only enduring in the gospel ourselves until our homecoming, but also equipping others with the gospel so they can fight on, race on, and keep on when we have gone on, until there is no place left that has not heard the good news of Jesus. A life well-lived means we press on in the faith ourselves and pass on the faith to others so that God is honored in more of us and more of us are happy in Him.

June 17

God wants us to be happy. When He tells us in the Bible to do, say, correct, believe, feel, think or share something, it is not to take away our happiness. Instead, it is to take away things in the way of our full and lasting happiness in Him. We must trust that God is after our happiness, that He knows best how to bring about our happiness, and that what He tells us in the Bible is designed to lead us into happiness. Doing what God tells us is not always easy, popular or instantly gratifying. But it is always for good, always better in the end than sin, and always the best option for making us truly, ultimately, and eternally happy.

June 18

It's ironic, isn't it? For some people... God receives all of the blame for everything bad that happens and none of the credit for anything good that happens. God is questioned when things don't work out right in the end, but He wasn't asked in the beginning about what things are right. God gets treated as if He isn't there most of the time and as if He should show up when summoned at any time. God is met with disbelief that He ever shows His love and disbelief in the cross where His love was most greatly shown. But... No matter how He is seen, God still does good, still works things out, still shows up and still loves.

June 19

God didn't create you primarily so you could make a lot of money, take a lot of trips, have a lot of fun, and indulge in a lot of temporary pleasures. Those things may be a part of your experience, but they are a means to this end: "to let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Today, be mindful of the beautiful calling upon your life: You were made to be... An image-bearer. A darkness-brightener. A difference-maker. A good-works-doer. A Jesus-treasurer. A God-glorifier. That is why you are here ... so, go shine your light!

June 20

It is hard to know who is telling us the whole truth, withholding the truth, distorting the truth, misinterpreting the truth, or creating their own version of the truth. We can easily be deceived into thinking something is true when it is not. So, who can we count on to be honest with us with what we need to hear? What is the standard by which we can evaluate all other guiding life principles and philosophies? What truth can we live by so we do not live in vain or error? Who can we believe? Jesus. Jesus is Who we can believe. We can always count on what He says to be true for us and good for us.

June 21

Satan is a liar. And there is one lie he both whispers and shouts that is the fountainhead from which ten thousand other lies spring forth: God. Doesn't. Care. He wants you to believe... God doesn't care about your sin, your struggles, your service or your sorrows. The enemy wants you to believe that God doesn't care about your life. But Satan is the one who doesn't care about you! God showed His care by sending Jesus to defeat sin, turn struggles around for good, make service meaningful and replace sorrows with rejoicing. All around you are shouts and whispers from God proclaiming one wellspring of truth: "I care."

June 22

God loves us, but He doesn't approve of everything we think, say and do. God took our sin seriously enough to put His Son Jesus to death in our place; we should take our sin seriously by fighting against it instead of trivializing it, rationalizing it or fraternizing with it. Let us feel godly sorrow for our sin, but may that conviction give way to celebration of the forgiveness and freedom that is ours because of Jesus. Grace means there is pardon for our sin and power not to sin. We fight against it, we fail in the battle, we fall into mercy, we fight on, we finish. For those who are trusting in Jesus... Grace always wins in the end.

June 23

As image-bearers of God who are to model Jesus to a hurting and hungry world, there are two things we need to do: Make it clear what Jesus is like. Make it clear that Jesus is not like us. In other words, we need the people in our lives to see us showing them the heart of our Savior. But, let's face it. We're going to get this wrong a lot of times. So, we also need to tell others what Jesus is like. That He is... Purer than us. Wiser than us. Calmer than us. Kinder than us. Stronger than us. Greater than us. Let us strive by grace to show others Who Jesus is, but let us also tell others that He is far better than what they see in us.

June 24

Love your spiritual siblings. Love your neighbors. Love your enemies. The Bible makes it clear that we are to love other people, but sometimes we are not clear about what it looks like to love other people. One thing we need to understand is this: It is un-loving to be silent. Silent in calling people to repent. Silent in calling people to follow Jesus. Silent in calling people to live abundantly. Love isn't indifferent to the well-being of others or tolerant of the wrong-doing of others. We are to show up, speak up and stick up for people in ways that invite them in to enjoy the ever-present, everlasting love of God.

June 25

Striving for self-worth through your own performance will create more unhappiness in you than you ever dreamed possible. Why? Because you will face disappointment in yourself when you don't perform well, discontentment when others don't applaud your performance, and depression when you don't get to perform at all. The good news is this: that's not where your value comes from at all. You are priceless because of God's unrelenting love for you in Christ. God doesn't love you because you're beautiful, witty, popular, fit, wealthy, fast, intelligent, kind, influential or talented; He loves you because you're His.

June 26

For all who trust in Jesus, there is a glorious eternity ahead in which bad things will be eliminated, good things will be perfected, and the best things will be unveiled. We have an eternity with Him that... Never gets stale. Never gets boring. Never gets routine. Never gets unappealing. Never gets finished. There will always be more to discover and enjoy from the immeasurable riches of God's grace towards us in Christ Jesus. Don't live for this day; live for that day. Don't be discouraged by this day; be encouraged by that day. Take hope in this every day: for those who are trusting in Jesus, the best is always yet to come.

June 27

Last week is behind you. This week is ahead of you. What did you do, and what will you do, that really matters? It's important that we take regular inventory of how we are spending our time to make sure we don't waste away on unimportant things the lives that God has given us. The enemy wants us to lose our focus and lose our purpose. And one of his primary weapons against us is busyness. Much of it is meaningless distraction away from the important work God has given us to do. Today, listen for your Father's voice calling out from the noise and leading you to do great things that matter forever.

June 28

God is the most-powerful, all-powerful being in existence and is able to do whatever He purposes to do. Nothing is too hard for Him. Nothing is mightier than Him. Nothing can stop Him. And He has graciously chosen to use His power over all things to work all things together for our good. Praise God He needs no help! Praise God He helps those in need! When we grow weak, He strengthens us. When we grow weary, He sustains us. May we rest today knowing He will use His power in ways that will bring blessing to us when all is accomplished as He intends. He has made us promises, and He is able to keep them all.

June 29

It should make us bow in awe knowing that God knows everything. Just thinking about the scope and span of His knowledge is mind-boggling to me, and yet knowing everything that has happened, is happening, will happen and could happen doesn't boggle His mind at all. He doesn't need research. He doesn't need reminding. He doesn't need rest. How amazing He is! How amazing too that He knows all our sinful actions, words, thoughts, feelings and attitudes, and He loves us anyway. Let us praise the all-knowing One, for He showed His love on the cross to cleanse our sin so we can now know Him.

June 30

Rejoice in this today: Though God is a million miles away, He is also right here with us. We cannot be in two places at the same time, but He is in all places at all times. Everywhere He is present, and nowhere is He absent. Let us praise Him as the uncontainable, unlimited, unequalled One Who is always both there and here, both far and near. So amazing it is that He can be high above it all and still be close enough that we feel Him... Guiding us. Helping us. Correcting us. Delighting us. Sustaining us. Here with us. In any place we are, may our hearts be full of worship for the One Who is in every place.



July

July 1

While things in us and around us seem to constantly change, it is comforting to know that God will always remain the same. He is perfect in Who He is. He is perfect in what He does. He is perfect in every way. There is no possibility for Him to become better or worse. His goodness, forgiveness, graciousness, faithfulness, greatness, faultlessness and all God-ness will forevermore remain unchangeable. He will keep His good promises to us and fulfill His good purposes for us. Rejoice in the Lord today and remember that all our hope and happiness rests on this unchanging truth: that God is unchanging.

July 2

God doesn't just do good for you; He delights to do good for you. When it comes to blessing you both now and forever, your Heavenly Father is not grumpy or grumbly about it. You will find no hesitance or reluctance in Him as He continuously pours out over your life what He knows is good for you. He... Gladly guides you. Fervently forgives you. Eagerly equips you. Cheerfully comforts you. Readily refreshes you. Willingly welcomes you. Happily helps you. God is not forced to give us benefits and blessings in Christ. Oh that we might see His loving heart behind all He does for us: He doesn't have to. He wants to.

July 3

You're going to get wobbly against temptation. You're going to stumble in your faith. You're going to take a fall into sin. And here's what you're going to find when you do: Jesus is there with grace. Grace that forgives you for what you have done, and grace that frees you from doing it again. And Jesus will repeat this over and over again for the rest of your life. Now... Don't mistake this for a license to sin. It's not a loophole, permission slip or pre-paid ticket to live unrighteously. So, let us both repent and rejoice at this: Jesus took our sin seriously enough to die for it, and He took grace seriously enough to die for us.

July 4

Freedom isn't just wanting to do something, being in a position to do something, and having the ability to do something. Real freedom is all of those things plus no regrets over what you do. You're not really free if you have the desire, opportunity and ability to do something that you later wish you hadn't done. Only Jesus offers this kind of full and forever freedom. He takes away our enslaving sin and all of its pain, and makes a way for us to experience life with God and all of its pleasures. Freedom comes by receiving through faith all that He graciously gives us to enjoy without guilt. Restraint free. Regret free. Really free.

July 5

Christians aren't exempt from hurt. No matter what precautions we take to safeguard our lives or how hard we work at being godly people, something will inevitably come uninvited, unannounced, and unwanted into our lives and cause us pain. Yet... Healing will come. Comfort will come. Justice will come. Restoration will come. Deliverance will come. Joy will come. Eternal life will come. This is all true because Jesus has come. Take heart in this: He has come to join us in our suffering; indeed to suffer in our place on the cross so that one day we can enter into a place where there is no suffering at all.

July 6

The world says you can get what you want in life if you believe and behave the right way. You just need to be full of... Self-confidence. Self-value. Self-motivation. Self-effort. Self-interest. Self-reliance. In other words, you need to be full of self. But that simply doesn't work for long, if at all. The Bible says something radically different: that we need to be empty of self and full of Jesus. So, let us ask God to drain us of all that would get in the way of our more fully enjoying all that He has for us. Looking to Jesus to evaluate, encourage, empower and exhilarate us, we will find the happy life we've been looking for elsewhere.

July 7

God does not send us ill-equipped into battle against the enemy of our soul. Instead, He dresses us in His own armor. In order for us to fight the good fight of faith, we must put on that armor of God ... ahead of time, in advance of the skirmish. We put ourselves and others at extreme risk if we wait until the battle begins to ready ourselves for war against sin and evil. The enemy does not allow us to call timeout or grant us a recess to gather our ammunition and put up our shield. This is why we should arm ourselves with a daily dose of God's instructions, truths, and promises found in God's Word. Slow down and suit up.

July 8

No one wants you to be happy more than Jesus does. No one will make you happy more than Jesus can. But Jesus isn't primarily aiming at making you happy by getting you past a bad time or helping you have a good time. His goal isn't a happier you because He worked it out so you got the new job, got over the breakup, got through the illness, got to take a vacation or got the result you wanted. Those may be part of His blessings to you, but His main concern is your soul. He is after your happiness in being forgiven and free from the devastating consequences of your sin so you can know every pleasure of knowing God.

July 9

An evidence that you are a genuine, growing Christian is that you want to be freed from your sin, not just forgiven of it. It's not just escape from the penalty and consequences of sin that you desire, but escape from the power and control of sin as well. Those who love Jesus will inevitably and increasingly hate their sin. We are not perfect, but we want to be. We will fail, but we wish we wouldn't. We like some wrong things, but we long for change. Jesus will soon fully deliver us from sin, but until then, let us pray for Him to progressively replace our taste for wrong things with new appetites for the better things He has for us.

July 10

When we remember and rejoice in Jesus' removal of our own condemnation, we will stop condemning the people around us. For those of us who have received His priceless gift of salvation, there is no condemnation for our sins, though we were rightly deserving of that condemnation. By the lavish grace of God, we are pardoned. Guilty, yet set free. Flawed, yet forgiven. Outsiders, yet welcomed in. Enemies, yet made family. Deserving of hell, yet shown mercy. Wages of death earned, yet eternal life freely given. Instead of condemning others, let us point them to the fountain of grace we ourselves are drinking from.

July 11

The weights we carry around inside of us come in many shapes and sizes. We face an ongoing onslaught of worry, uncertainty, fear, overwhelm, discontentment, indifference, pressure, grief, unrest, outrage and discouragement. Within these categories are countless daily instances which can let us down, get us down, put us down, shut us down, hold us down and run us down. But... There is a Burden-Bearer we can turn to for help for the stresses and messes of life. Nothing is too intense, too great, or too difficult for Him to replace with peace, hope and rest. Today, cast your cares on Jesus. They aren't too heavy for Him.

July 12

Biblical faith has a responding side and a receiving side. Part of faith is responding in obedience. We trust what God says, we trust He will help us do what He says, and we trust that He will be pleased when we do what He says. Part of faith is receiving what God does for us. We trust what God says, we trust He will do what He says, and we trust that we will be pleased when He does what He says. Real faith includes believing in the promises of God and living out the purposes of God because we trust Him. Today, let us confidently do what God tells us to do because we are confident in what God tells us He will do.

July 13

There are days when our faith falters, but Jesus does not abandon us. There are days when we feel like giving up, but Jesus does not let us. There are days when we are too overwhelmed to carry on, but Jesus does not move on without us. Through every sinful setback, every stagnant season and every stormy squall, Jesus remains faithful to get to heaven all those who believe in Him. By grace, let us keep taking the next right step in front of us knowing that Jesus is with us every step and will overcome even our missteps to take us home. Hallelujah! He will not lose us on the way. He will not let us lose our way.

July 14

If you do it out of duty, you'll be resentful. If you do it for attention, you'll be prideful. If you do it just when it's convenient, you'll be neglectful. But... If you do it because of love, you'll be joyful. Obeying Jesus isn't a matter of duty, show or convenience; it's a matter of the heart. Our affection for Him produces our devotion to Him. We don't say and do the right things because that's the way we should live, but because that's the way we should love the One who tells us what things are right for us to say and do. May grace continue to change how we feel about Him so that more and more His wants become our wants.

July 15

We've been conditioned our entire lives to keep our eyes on the scoreboard. The metric may come as points in a game, likes on a social media post, balances in savings accounts, members of a network, or notches on whatever kind of belt you're wearing. However it is measured, the attitude is the same: the one with the best score wins. But in God's kingdom, it's not about how we rank against others or how we are rated by others. Instead, it's about depending on Jesus to faithfully use what we have been given to do what we have been assigned. The only score which matters is the one in which Jesus wins in our lives.

July 16

Hard times can cause people to harden their hearts against God, but good things in life can make us just as unfeeling toward Him. When things go wrong, we are tempted to blame God; when things go right, we are tempted to ignore God. Overcoming this sinful tendency to live as if God doesn't care or as if God isn't there will only happen when we regularly remind ourselves of Who He is and how good He is. He helps us in hard times and gifts us with good things so that we will... Remember Him. Rejoice in Him. Remain with Him. Don't let the seriousness of the bad or the shininess of the good keep you from Him.

July 17

Some storms build slowly. Some storms develop quickly. Some storms end quickly. Some storms disappear slowly. But... No matter how great or lasting the storm that arises in your life, Jesus rules in absolute control over when it rages and when it ceases. It doesn't get in the way of His plan working out; it's a way of working out His plan. Even storms serve His purposes for good! Listen... If you trust Jesus for eternal life, then trust Him during everyday life. And if the storm doesn't scare Him, it shouldn't scare you either. Because you are in the boat together, and He's already promised to get you to the other side.

July 18

The enemy wants to convince you that God isn't using your life to make much of a difference in this world, but nothing good you do for others in the name of Jesus is ever wasted. What you do matters! Even the small stuff counts, for a tiny spark can start a wildfire and a tiny seed can birth a mighty tree. In your home, at your workplace, throughout your neighborhood, across your community, around the world... Keep doing what you were made to do even when it is hard, unpopular, tiring, inconvenient, thankless, lonely or unnoticed, trusting that God will work through you to fulfill His purposes.

July 19

They may not listen. They may not care. They may not believe. But the people in our lives need to hear us bear witness to what Jesus has done for us. We have been summoned to take the stand and testify to what we know to be true. How? One way is by pointing to Jesus as the source of everything bragworthy about our past, present and future. He forgives, restores and guides us. He gives us peace, strength and rest. He is our security, hope and joy. He fills our lives with purpose, confidence and blessing. By God's grace, may it not be that others do not know of Jesus because we did not tell what we know of Him.

July 20

Most people don't like to be told what to do. Our immediate response is usually pushing back or pulling back from those who are giving us unwanted instruction or information. We want to make our own choices for what we will and will not do based on what we like and do not like. But as we trust Jesus more fully, we increasingly... Like to hear His voice. Like to receive His guidance. Like to have Him tell us what to do. Why? Because we know that He loves us and will speak to us about what is best for us. Let us follow Him in faith today, knowing that whatever He has us do, we will like it very much in the end.

July 21

As Christians, what we do needs to be grounded in what Jesus graciously has done, is doing and will do for us. Otherwise, it will become a joyless, hopeless burden on us. It's not just "be strong," it's "be strong in the Lord." It's not just "rejoice," it's "rejoice in the Lord." It's not just "hope," it's "hope in the Lord." It's not just "boast," it's "boast in the Lord." It's not just "have faith," it's "have faith in the Lord." It's not just "stand fast," it's "stand fast in the Lord." Self-confidence and self-effort will sooner or later lead to self-despair and self-destruction. Remember: It's not about trying really hard; it's about relying on the Lord.

July 22

Entertainment has an agenda, and it's often not just to entertain. While Christians have varying convictions on what they should and should not be entertained by, all of us need to be cautious of the influence that movies, music, books, podcasts and so forth have on us. Much of the events and content that is available to entertain us glorifies sin and desensitizes us to sin. It makes... Wrong things look right. Holy things look comical. Forbidden things look acceptable. Godly things look foolish. Bad things look good. So, let us consider turning off those influences that turn us away from loving and following Jesus.

July 23

An incredible burden is lifted when we rest in the forgiveness that is ours in Jesus. We can apologize for our shortcomings and admit our wrongdoings because His grace covers them all. Every wrong thought. Every wrong attitude. Every wrong motive. Every wrong word. Every wrong action. We're not perfect, and we don't have to pretend to be. Yes, we strive by grace to grow into the new people Jesus is remaking us into, but we don't have to fake it, hide it or rationalize it when we fail. We can own it because of this glorious truth: it is forgiven. Move on from sin and shame... We did it, but Jesus died for it.

July 24

Temptation often invites us to sin in two ways. The first is like a carny barking at us to "Step right up" for a chance to have a thrilling experience or win a desirable prize that is never worth it in the end. The second is like a boat at sea gently rocking us back and forth until we have drifted to sleep in indifference to God's better ways. Whether it shouts or whispers, temptation beckons us to look away from Jesus, love something more than Jesus, and live for a substitute for Jesus. By grace, we can resist by reminding ourselves that the biggest thrills and the best prizes are enjoyed by those who are anchored to Him.

July 25

God has mapped out our lives in such a way that we can be all that we were made to be, do all we were made to do and enjoy all that we were made to enjoy in Him. Our problem is that we often follow a map of our own design instead of His. We detour away from the narrow road He has called us to and spend too much time traveling the myways of life. Ours is truly a road that leads to nowhere. At least nowhere that is good for us when we get there. But here's good news: God allows u-turns! There is grace for misguided people like us. Today, seek God, and He will make your path straight to where it needs to go.

July 26

God has given spiritual and physical gifts to each member of His family to be used in serving others. We steward His grace by using our "time, talent and treasure" to extend His help and express His love to the people in our lives. God graciously does at least six things as we receive and use what He blesses us with: He gives us these gifts, brings us enjoyment as we use these gifts, fulfills a divine purpose with these gifts, blesses others by these gifts, brings about eternal results from these gifts, and glorifies Himself through these gifts. Therefore, let us aspire by grace to do the very best we can with what we have been given.

July 27

The Bible is a light that illuminates dark places. When you read it or hear it, it lights up the darkness of... Your heart. Your path. Your witness. Your life. It exposes the sinfulness of your heart so you can go to Jesus for forgiveness. It shows you the pitfalls of the path you are on so you can follow Jesus safely to where you are meant to go. It brightens your witness before other people as you go so you can point them through your good works to the hope and happiness you have in Jesus. It shines encouragement into your life so that you can keep going because of the promises of Jesus. So... turn on the light today.

July 28

How many of these we have and what we do with them differs, but we all get 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week and 365 days in a year. What our enemy wants us to do is fill them up with vain pursuits. We have countless options and distractions available to steal our attention. Rather than scrolling and clicking and watching and recreating our lives away on things that don't matter, Jesus is calling us into something better. Namely, to glorify God by experiencing real joy in Him and helping others experience it too. So... While we still have time, let us make the most of it by living out our big-picture purpose.

July 29

Let's be honest: In an ever-churning sea of distraction, we are vulnerable to forgetfulness. We forget Who God is and what God does and what God says about what we are to do and who we are in Christ. We forget His plans. We forget His promises. We forget His provision. We forget His power. We forget His presence. We forget His preciousness. It is essential that we fill our lives with things that redirect our attention to Him and rekindle our affection for Him. We need reminders that He is for us and He is with us. Today, you will think a lot about tasks, troubles, and things. As you do, be sure to think about God.

July 30

Too many of us live as if we are still imprisoned by our sin, sorrow and struggles with no way out of the cell that confines us. Too often we let regrets from the past, imperfections in the present and fears of the future enslave us as if we are helpless and hopeless to do anything about them. Too soon we give up and give in when victory has already been secured and is almost ready to be seen. Jesus has made amends for our past, makes provision for our present and will make a way for our future until we have been fully delivered from all fears, foes and faults. Follow Jesus right out of that cell today. You have been set free.

July 31

First glances can be deceiving. Initial observations can be short-sighted. The opening paragraph doesn't tell the whole story. While it is easy to see the obvious things happening in, around and through our lives, without a careful look through a gospel lens, there is a lot that we can miss. God is doing a thousand things for us today, and we may not have our spiritual eyes locked in on any of them. Rejoice! Our lives are under the careful rule of a wise, powerful and loving God Who is moving us along toward the glorious return of Jesus when all will make sense, and all will be made right, and all will be made new.



August

August 1

We face many uncertainties today as much of the circumstances and people in our lives are completely out of our control. But that doesn't mean we have to head into the day with fear or worry that things will go from good to bad or from bad to worse. Instead, we can be of good courage and cheer because... God has promised to be with us. God has promised to help us. God has promised to provide for us. In the morning, let us remember that He has made these promises to us. In the evening, let us rejoice that He has kept these promises to us. In between, let us live certain of this: God will do for us what He says to us.

August 2

What we say and think about ourselves is sometimes quite different than what God does. We say we can't do something. God says we can do all things through His strength. We think we are a flawed and worthless mess. God thinks we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We say we are unlovable because of our sin. God says He loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die for our sins. We think our lives can't make much of a difference. God thinks He can change the world through people just like us. We need to see ourselves like God sees us: A forgiven, empowered, beloved son or daughter who is learning to live like it.

August 3

There are two words that Christians ought to use regularly to encourage believers and engage with non-believers: I understand. We get it that perfection isn't possible. We get it that mistakes will be made. We get it that flaws will come forth. We are all sinners who struggle with being the people we were made to be and doing the things we were made to do, even if we have been following Jesus for decades. We never outgrow our need for His forgiveness and help. Others need to hear us honestly acknowledge that we are fellow-sojourners who fail and fall too. And that we know where to go for grace when we do.

August 4

He doesn't take a day off. He doesn't take a break. He doesn't take a nap. God never stops working for you and me. 24/7/365/Lifelong. He is continually doing things we cannot do, doing things on our behalf and doing things to ensure that He is honored in us, and we are happy in Him. Tirelessly. Flawlessly. Endlessly. God keeps going to work things out for our good, work to make us more like Jesus, work through us to change the world, and work to get us safely home. What grace! Today, we will not see all that God does for us. But let us never forget the good news that He will never stop doing His good work.

August 5

You can tell Jesus anything about the help you need and He will tell you something to help you with that need. Tell Him you're uncertain and He will tell you to follow Him. Tell Him you're worried and He will tell you to trust Him. Tell Him you're dissatisfied and He will tell you to enjoy Him. Do you know what will happen when you tell Jesus that you're tired, discouraged, lonely, angry, hurting, stressed or sad? He will tell you that His grace is sufficient to bring you relief, rest, renewal and even rejoicing as He brings you through hard times. Tell Jesus what's on your heart and let Jesus tell you what will unburden your heart.

August 6

An effective lie of the enemy works like this: It is rejected. It is tolerated. It is approved. It is encouraged. It starts out so absurd that only someone considered a fool would believe it. It ends up so accepted that only someone considered a fool would not believe it. If something is said loud enough and long enough, people will think it is true. As Christians, we must look to God over politicians, journalists, bloggers, podcasters, peers and other people for what to believe. We must turn to Scripture over culture for truth and wisdom for how to live. Let us believe this... God is not our enemy, and God will never lie to us.

August 7

We rob ourselves of satisfaction when we long too deeply for something more or something different than what God has given us. We will not like our lives when we think too much about how unlike they are from... The way it used to be in better times. The way we want it to be in current times. The way it seems to be for others at all times. But we can stop this robbery by trusting God knows best what to give us and by treasuring what God does give us in, through and because of the gift of His Son. Contentment will be ours if we stop focusing on what is absent from our lives and start rejoicing that Jesus is present in them.

August 8

Life is a series of personal, societal and general changes. But there is one thing that remains the same: our God is worthy to be praised through all of the ups and downs of our lives. Therefore... We praise Him when we succeed, but also when we fail. We praise Him when things are comfortable, but also when they are difficult. We praise Him when we get what we want, but also when we miss out. God deserves our praise because of Who He is and what He does whether we are experiencing a high or a low. So... Let's praise Him today as the One Who gets us to the mountaintops and gets us through the valleys.

August 9

Never give up on your family member who is far from God. Never stop praying for your friend who is cold toward God. Never lose hope over your loved one who doesn't believe in God. We were all there in some way at some time in our past, and God changed our lives. He can do it again! He is still rescuing sinners by His grace so they can find their way to new life in Jesus. No matter how far away they are. No matter how cold they are. No matter how unbelieving they are. It takes a miracle for someone to repent and believe the gospel, but that's exactly where we pin our hopes: Our gracious God still works miracles.

August 10

It may surprise us. It may confuse us. It may overwhelm us. But when it does, let us rest in knowing that the plan of God is good for us in the end, better than our own preferred ideas, and the best way of doing things to get what we're both after. The mutual goal for our lives is simple: for God to be glorified in our happiness. We don't have to choose between God being honored and us being happy. We have to choose between God's way and our way for getting there. Trust Him today because... His plans are perfect even when we don't think they are. Our plans are flawed even when we don't think they are.

August 11

How is God glorified through our happiness? There are at least three ways... First, He is glorified when we trust that He knows best how to make us happy, and we lovingly do what He says to bring about our happiness. Second, He is glorified when we thank Him for the good things He gives to us and does for us that make us happy so that He gets credit. Third, He is glorified when we treasure Him as our ultimate source of happiness by delighting not just in His gifts, but in Him as a good and generous and gracious Giver. Trust Him. Thank Him. Treasure Him. This is how God is honored in us and we are happy in Him.

August 12

Christians are to be both consumers of and contributors to the mutual building up of the family of God. In our role as consumers, we are to let others do for us. In our role as contributors, we are to do for others. All of the "one another" commands in the Bible for how we are to interact with each other are two-sided. We are to be encouraged by others, and we are to encourage others. We are to be served by others, and we are to serve others. We are to be cared for by others, and we are to care for others. Every Christ-like act of love should flow in both directions. By grace, let's do two things today: give and receive.

August 13

Worshipping Jesus is war against worshipping anything else. Only one person, pursuit, prize or passion can rank as your highest priority, get your greatest admiration and be your fullest joy. The more you value Jesus above all other things, the less you will value other things above Jesus. Your heart. Your mind. Your will. These will all bow down to something or someone that means the most to you. While we are "given all things richly to enjoy," none of these things are meant to compete with our love and loyalty for Jesus. Who is worthy of our worship? May we answer with our hearts, minds and lives: Jesus is.

August 14

As Christians, we are in an ongoing war against our sin, and there are daily occasions in which we lose the battle. This spiritual journey we are on is one in which we have not yet been fully delivered from the presence of sin, so we must fight against it and confess our failings when we lose a skirmish. Ours is a humble and simple cry out for grace: "I did it. I regret doing it. Help me not do it again. Lead me to something better in you." Because Jesus has already secured the final victory over our sin, there is grace for us. Grace that gives us pardon when we lose the fight, and grace that gives us power to fight on.

August 15

There is a lot we learn to love about Who Jesus is, which we learn about from what Jesus does. We love that He is gracious, kind, powerful, wise and compassionate ... and we see He is all of those things in the way He relates to us. He forgives us, so we know He is gracious. He blesses us, so we know He is kind. He helps us, so we know He is powerful. He guides us, so we know He is wise. He cares for us, so we know He is compassionate. But it is His character, nature and personality that draw us and delight us. We don't love Jesus because we see His wonderful acts; we love Jesus because we see His wonderful heart.

August 16

You can't afford it; but it's already paid for. You can't earn it; but it's freely given. You can't secure it; but it's always available to you. God's grace has countless implications and applications for everyday life and eternal life, ranging from getting good things to getting through bad things to getting to the best things. There is grace for you to have the life of real contentedness that you've always wanted. And that's just the beginning, for it will expand and extend throughout eternity. All you have to do is ... Want it. Ask for it. Receive it. Enjoy it. Grace isn't about your doing or your deserving; it's about God giving us His gifts.

August 17

Grace is God's answer to the question of how sinners like you and me could ever be welcomed into His presence, His family and His blessing. Then, grace poses a question for us to answer: will you receive it? The gospel of grace is only good news if it is true, if you are included in it, and if you believe it. It is true. You can be included. Do you believe? You can have it all if you believe Jesus is Who the Bible says He is, Jesus did what the Bible says He did, and Jesus will deliver all the Bible says He will. Grace leads us to Jesus. Faith leads us to follow Jesus in loving obedience. Nearness leads us to enjoy real life with Jesus.

August 18

Faith is saying "yes" to God's grace by agreeing with Him that you're a sinner who cannot do anything to make yourself good enough to be accepted by Him, and then by asking Him to begin a good work in you to increasingly change you into a radically new person that is acceptable to Him. Faith is also saying "no" to our old lives of indifference and rebellion to God by turning away from them to Him. We mean it when we say of our sin: "I did it. I regret doing it. Help me not to do it again. Lead me to something better in you." When that happens... God doesn't just give us different lives; He makes us into different people.

August 19

We're given... New identities. New desires. New lives. New futures. Christians have a faith in Jesus that is demonstrated by loving obedience, though imperfectly executed. That means there is grace to help us get this right, and there is grace to help us when we get this wrong. Our entire spiritual journey is one in which we rely on grace to take steps of faith in living as God intends for us, and in which we rest in that same grace when we take mis-steps knowing that God won't give up on us. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and we can be sure of this: God will finish what He starts in us.

August 20

Has He started that good work in you? How can you and I know that we have received God's grace? There are two really good indicators that your faith in Him is genuine: you have a growing hatred for sin and a growing love for Jesus. You don't just want to be free from the consequences of sin, but sin itself. You don't just want to have the blessings of God, but God Himself. There is a desire that begins growing inside of you to experience all that God has for you, in this world and the one to come. You believe in Jesus for the first time, and then you believe in Him more fully over time. We grow. That's how we know.

August 21

So... Where do you go from here? What is your next step? Step one is to welcome Jesus into your life for Who He is: Savior, Provider, Counselor, Leader, King, Treasure. If you have never repented of your sinful life apart from Him and received the life that comes with Him, then by faith ask God for this right now. If you really mean it in your heart, He will give it to you. Step two onward is to grow in grace. Step after step, you let Jesus be Who He is ... for you. You seek to know Him, follow Him and enjoy Him, letting His peace, hope and joy rule in your heart as He rules your life for your good.

August 22

If you put all of my weaknesses on one side of the scale and all of my strengths on the other side of the scale, it's not even close in comparison. Strength wins easily. See if you agree with me on this. My weaknesses: I don't have all the right answers. I don't say all the right words. I don't make all the right moves. Day after day, there are countless ways in which I am wrong, not right. My strengths: Jesus. The scale always tips to the side of grace! Day after day, He gives me the right stuff I need and forgives me for the wrong stuff I do. Let us rejoice in this good news today: His strength will overcome our weakness.

August 23

There are many things we long for about heaven, such as being with Jesus, reuniting with loved ones, eliminating sorrow and experiencing fullness of joy. One big thing that we should daily and decidedly look forward to is the complete defeat of all sin. What a day it will be when we sin no more! No more unkindness, hardheartedness, covetousness and selfishness. No more idolatry, bigotry, adultery and mockery. No more rebellion, manipulation, inaction or division. Every sin completely gone forever because our Savior has secured the victory! Take heart, friends. Jesus is coming, and so is the end of sin.

August 24

When was the last time you took the time to encourage someone else to keep serving God with his or her life? Not only should we actively do good works for the kingdom of God ourselves, we should actively spur on others to do good works for His kingdom as well. One of the reasons why people give up and give out when they serve is because no one is there to verbally cheer them on as God has commanded us to do. Therefore, speak up often because God may intend to use your words to prevent someone from quitting. Remember: It matters today that you encourage others to keep going and keep doing for Jesus.

August 25

Many Christians are slowly being poisoned by the indoctrinating words of the world they take in day after day. Words that contaminate their minds with fears and fakes that convince them to look away from God for hope and happiness. If what you're reading doesn't encourage you to follow Jesus, stop reading it. If what you're watching doesn't build up your faith in Jesus, stop watching it. If what you're listening to doesn't deepen your love for Jesus, stop listening to it. There is something better. You and I don't need to drink poison when there is a fountain that flows with the life-giving water of God's truth and promises.

August 26

The truth will set you free FROM fearful hearts, false hopes and fleeting happiness that cleverly disguised sin creates. But only if you know what the truth is when you see it. False things are often mixed in with true things which leave us mixed up if we can't tell the difference between the two. Do you know how to spot a fake? By knowing what the real thing looks like. That is why it is so important to fill our hearts and minds with the truth of Scripture, the promises of God, the commands of our King, the words of Jesus, the beauty of the gospel. The truth will set you free TO enjoy real heart-peace, real hope and real happiness.

August 27

Our world is not going to get better until we realize we cannot fix ourselves. The fix is not in more laws or more freedoms. The fix is not in more penalties or more incentives. The fix is not in more pre-education or more post-counseling. Whatever entry you want to add to the list ... that's not it either. The fix is Jesus. Only He can transform us from rebellious, idolatrous sinners into the glorious image-bearers of a loving God we were created to be. When we turn to Him again and again in faith, He will... Change our minds. Change our hearts. Change our lives. He takes our broken pieces and puts them back together again.

August 28

Light bulbs depend upon a power source. Flowers depend upon water. Humans depend upon oxygen. Everything in creation depends upon something in order to continue existing and functioning as it was created. But God does not depend upon anyone or anything for He does not have any needs. He has all the power, all the wisdom, all the sovereignty, all the perfections from all categories to do all He desires. He does not need us, but oh, how we need Him! Let us praise the One Who never came into existence, will never go out of existence and never stops ruling for good our existence as we trust in Jesus.

August 29

There are a lot of important questions we should ask ourselves on a regular basis throughout our lives to make sure we don't ruin our lives. These include: Who are you following? Where are you going? What will you be doing? There are consequences to who we allow to influence the direction of our lives. These can be positive or negative consequences, depending upon where we go and what we do. That's why wisely picking your mentor, your tribe and your community is essential. Surround yourself with people who are following Jesus and join them. He will help you all go to the right places and do the right things.

August 30

We often place too much value on the value that other people place on us. While it matters what others think of us as it relates to being the hands and feet of Jesus, it doesn't matter at all what they think of us as it relates to our true worth in the eyes of Jesus. When you are approved by Jesus, you don't have to be appreciated by everyone else. When you are invited in by Jesus, you don't have to be included by everyone else. When you are loved by Jesus, you don't have to be liked by everyone else. No matter what others say or don't say about you today, remember what really matters: You are precious to God.

August 31

If God and I don't think the same way, it's me that is thinking wrongly. If God and I don't speak the same way, it's me that is speaking wrongly. If God and I don't act the same way, it's me that is acting wrongly. God never adjusts His ways to match mine, but is continually and graciously transforming me to be more like Him. So... It's never right to conclude that God is wrong. Yes, He does things we can't understand. Yes, He does things we don't like. Yes, He does things we wouldn't choose. But He absolutely never makes an error in anything He does. Let us trust in this: He knows what He is doing, even when we don't.



September

September 1

Here's just one of the many things that is so amazing about God's grace: we would still be walking in darkness if He had not shined His light upon our hearts. We would not have seen our sin for what it is, but even if we did... We would not have cared, but even if we did... We would not have been able to do anything to change. But God has solved all of this. His light exposes our sin, reveals His grace and leads us to faith in Jesus. Whoever follows Him does not live in darkness, but has the transforming light of life. Today, as we walk in the light, let us remember to praise God for drawing us to the Light of the World.

September 2

Devastating tragedy. Unexpected loss. Agonizing heartache. There is no way to be adequately prepared for sudden suffering when it blindsides us. We don't see the hardship coming, but we can be sure of this: we will see the grace of God coming. He will not leave us alone to face the trials of this world. We don't have the answers, but He will give us guidance. We don't have the will, but He will give us strength. We don't have optimism, but He will give us hope. We don't have a lot of things on our own, but we do have Jesus. And He is everything. Take heart in this: He will help us every moment we cannot help ourselves.

September 3

Christians. That is what we are. Love. That is what we do. The entire Christian experience of following Jesus in faith is characterized by love. But only when we love rightly. All the sins of all the people in all the world are the result of loving wrongly. To love like God loves, we should not... Love what it is wrong to love. Fail to love what should be loved. Love too much what should be loved less. Love too little what should be loved more. There is an order to love. By grace... We are to love God above people. Love people above things. And love things in such a way that they help us to better love God and love people.

September 4

Every human knows what it feels like to be stuck. Stuck in repeated mistakes, personality flaws, bad habits, unfulfilling rhythms and inner unrest caused by our sinfulness. But God in His grace sent Jesus to get us un-stuck and offer real transformation for those who put their trust in Him. This is what becoming new in Christ means: a change in our standing with God, a change in what makes us happy, a change in what controls our lives, and a change in what our eternity will be like. He changes everything! Trust Him day by day and watch Him change you from who you used to be into who you were made to be.

September 5

The One who knows us most is also the One who loves us most. He sees every sin, every shortcoming, every struggle ... and He sets His affections upon us anyway. God loves us just as we are, but He loves us enough not to leave us as we are. When we put our faith in Jesus, God begins to transform us into people who both hide less and less and have less and less to hide. He doesn't expect us to change our lives before He welcomes us into His family, but rather He welcomes us into His family and then He begins to change our lives. Remember today: We are not fully changed, but we are fully loved sons and daughters.

September 6

Who God is and what God does is powerful enough for the entire universe and personal enough for you. He knows everything that is happening in the universe. He knows you. He sustains everything that is enduring in the universe. He sustains you. He guides everything that is staying on course in the universe. He guides you. He helps everything that is fulfilling its purpose in the universe. He helps you. He blesses everything that is enjoyed rightly in the universe. He blesses you. No matter what today brings, remember this wonderfully good news: God isn't just out there somewhere; He is right there with you.

September 7

We need help every single day to wisely and safely and joyfully and productively keep going in life. And we will have every single day's worth of help that we need to keep going in life because we have Jesus! He is gracious, so He is ready to help us. He is loving, so He is willing to help us. He is mighty, so He is able to help us. Ready. Willing. Able. His grace means we don't have to earn His help, His love means we don't have to pry His help, and His might means we don't have to doubt His help. Be confident and courageous today knowing that no matter what comes your way, the help of Jesus is on the way.

September 8

Pride includes thinking and acting and speaking as if self is the source of everything good about who you are, what you have and what you do. Humility includes the opposite. It recognizes that we would be nothing good, have nothing good and do nothing good apart from the grace of God. We can know whether we are prideful or humble by whether we take credit ourselves or give it to God, take charge ourselves or trust in God, and take care of ourselves or rely on God. Today, let us humbly and joyfully praise Him for all that is good about ourselves and our lives, remembering this: If it's good, it's from God.

September 9

In this world, we will have tribulation. Trouble has either already made its way into your life, or it is on its way. But... Jesus has overcome the world. His power is greater than our enemies, His sovereignty rules over our battles, His promises reside in our hearts, His forgiveness ensures our futures, His presence empowers our lives, and His grace provides for our needs. Though He doesn't always remove the threats from our lives, He does render them powerless to do anything that would prevent us from joyfully enduring and prevailing in the end. Take heart! He didn't get you this far just to get you this far.

September 10

We should never approve or applaud someone else's sin. But we should also be a lot more gracious with other believers who live differently than we do. It can be helpful to remember that every one of us who is following Jesus does so at varying paces and is at varying places in that journey with Him. Not everyone will... Understand things like we do. Interpret things like we do. Practice things like we do. Rather than criticize others because they aren't carbon copies of us, let us cheer on others to continue growing in the likeness of Jesus. None of us are as mature as we will be; but we're also not as messy as we used to be.

September 11

We often hear one thing when God is saying another thing. We hear, "You can't do that or have that or be that." God is saying, "That is not good for you." We hear, "You must do this or have this or be this." God is saying, "This is good for you." What we interpret as a restrictive rule, God intends to be a gracious guardrail. While we may think His commands are something that will rob us of joy, He is actually saying them because He knows they will safeguard our joy. Therefore, let us trust Him as we listen to Him. Remember, even when we hear God saying something we don't like, He is actually saying, "I love you."

September 12

We live in a world that is full of exaggerations that routinely don't live up to the expectations they create. People often make claims that misrepresent reality by making something seem bigger and better than it really is. While there are many stretches of the truth in the words of those around us, the Word of God is a reliable source of truth. Consider what it says about Jesus. The Bible does not over-state, over-hype, over-sell or over-promise on who Jesus is and what Jesus does. As infinitely perfect and infinitely great as He is spoken of in it, Jesus lives up to it. This is our expectation: He is as awesome as He seems to be.

September 13

When reading the Bible, if you don't experience both conviction and celebration, you're not reading it correctly. On one hand, we should not ignore the places where God's words challenge and correct the way we are living if we are disobedient to His commands. On the other hand, we should not isolate the places where God issues His commands so all we have is a list of "dos and don'ts." A proper reading and understanding of the Bible should equip us to joyfully do as God intends and encourage us with all that Jesus has done, is doing and will do for us. His doing makes our doing possible and makes it worth it.

September 14

There is much I love about my heavenly Father. One thing is this: He doesn't just let me do anything I want to do. He knows that there are many things I want to do which are not good for me or for other people. So, instead of letting me live selfishly, He removes some things from me in order to replace them with better things. His plans for my plans. His ways for my ways. His outcomes for my outcomes. The result isn't that I experience less, but that I experience more. More peace. More joy. More hope. More purpose. Remember, when God says "No," to something, He is saying "Yes" to something better.

September 15

Every day there is a tug-of-war for your thoughts, feelings, motives, attitudes, words and actions, pulling you in the opposing directions of what sin entices you into and what God invites you into. Look to Jesus for help and look for His help to arrive as a way to leave the temptation, the power to say "no" to the temptation, a divine removal of the temptation, the arrival of someone to help you through the temptation, and / or a promise of something worth waiting for that is better than the temptation. Rejoice! You are never helpless against temptation for there is a throne of grace you can run to for help.

September 16

Many people strive to look stylish, look good and look fit. And while the Bible emphasizes modesty and simplicity for believers, this doesn't mean we shouldn't value our outward appearance as well. However, it is important that we value who we are more than what we look like. We should focus more attention on our hearts than our hair, our minds than our makeup, our character than our clothes, and our personhood than our physiques. By grace, let us pursue becoming who we were made to be, knowing... Godly character is in style within us. Morals look good on us. Christlikeness is a nice fit for us.

September 17

As we trust Jesus to come through for us, we will be filled with peace when we're running low, renewed with spiritual energy when we're running out, helped through difficulty when we're running down, and kept steadfast when we feel like running away. This is our hope in Jesus: the best is yet to come. Let us believe it, expect it, anticipate it and await it to come true. Let us watch for the daily doses of His grace to appear when we need them. And let us regard the eternal pleasure of heaven with Him as something wonderful on the calendar that is certain to come at the appointed time. Because it is. Because it will.

September 18

Let's be honest: It's tempting to quit doing good in this world when the good we do is not noticed by others, appreciated by others, reciprocated by others or supported by others. Yet, we must remember that none of this is the reason why we do good in the first place. We do good because God has been good to us, is being good to us and will continue to be good to us forevermore. It is His image that we show to the world when we let our lights shine, so that He might be glorified. What a wonderful reminder for today: God is good, and we get to make Him look good, when we do good in His Name.

September 19

What is going on? Why is this happening? When will it be over? Where is God in all of this? Life may not be working out the way we hoped it would or wanted it to, but God is doing a thousand things for us today even if we don't have our spiritual eyes locked in on any of them. Our experience may seem pointless and be painful, but we can be confident that He is walking with us and working for us. We don't have to make sense out of everything that is going on or that we are going through; but we do need to trust that God is tirelessly at work in ways that would make sense if we knew all that He knows.

September 20

So often we don't know what is right to do, haven't got the desire to do what we know, and can't do what we know and want to do that is right. We need a power from outside of us to come inside of us so we can live in such a way that God is honored and we are happy. That is exactly what God gives us: the powerful Holy Spirit living in each of us who trust in Jesus. He guides us on the way. He encourages us on the way. He helps us on the way. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to go to good places to do good things as we share good news about a good God. Ask Him to help you decide, desire and do what is right today.

September 21

There are two basic kinds of help. First, there is help for things I can do without you. Second, there is help for things I cannot do without you. I can lift a cumbersome box by myself, but your help would make it easier. I cannot lift a couch by myself, so your help would make it possible. As branches to the vine, we only receive the second kind of help from Jesus. He helps us do things that we could not do apart from Him (John 15:5): bear fruit, do good, live rightly, have faith, glorify God, persevere, experience His joy, everything. His help doesn't just make these things easier. His help makes these things possible.

September 22

The world wants us to make small things big and big things small. It wants small fears to rule our hearts, petty disagreements to sabotage our relationships, and trivial matters to dominate our schedules. It wants the seriousness of sin to be downplayed, the importance of living for eternity to be minimized, and the amazing availability and role of God's grace in our everyday lives to be underestimated. But, praise God, we don't have to live like that! Jesus has redeemed us from a life of smallness and sinfulness so we can live for bigger and better things. Today, by grace, let us keep big things big and small things small.

September 23

Freedom is always from something and to something else. If you are trusting in Jesus, He has set you free from a life of shame, regret, joylessness, emptiness, addictions, fear, pride, doubt, lusts, sin and eternal death at the end. And He has set you free to a life of honor, joy, contentment, victory, humility, security, faith, peace, hope, love and eternal life at the end. You are free from sin's cruel rule to be happy in Jesus now and forever! To experience His freedom, simply abide in His words, depend upon His Spirit and feel His presence with you. Today, don't live as if you are still in chains. You have been set free.

September 24

A heart that worships God strives by grace to put God at the heart of everything else. We increasingly, though imperfectly, want Him to become the center of what, when, where, why and how we do what we do. Our adoration of Him overflows into allegiance to Him. Our gladness in Him leads us to do what will glorify Him. Our love for Him compels us to live for Him. Worship changes how we think about our time, money, relationships, priorities and life purpose, and how we carry out the plans of God for us concerning these things. May God produce in us today both a delight to praise Him and a desire to please Him.

September 25

There are days when our biggest battle is against unbelief. We start to doubt that God cares about what is happening to us and that He is going to do anything about it. To battle unbelief, we must remember God's faithfulness in the past and remember God's promises for the future. He has always taken care of us, He is taking care of us, and He will continue to take care of us. Defeat your doubts by remembering today that He has a good reason for what He has allowed into your life and that He is actively working it out for your good. God cares about what is happening to you, and God will show His care for you.

September 26

There is a heavenly scene that should run through our minds often as we run the race of life. When we grow weary from serving, we should think of it. When the good we do doesn't seem to be doing much good, we should think of it. When the risk or sacrifice of living out our faith is high, we should think of it. Here's the scene: We cross the finish line. We see the smiling face of Jesus. We fall down before Him. And we hear Him say "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master." Know this... Every long day. Every hard day. Every costly day. In that moment, it will all be worth it.

September 27

There is nothing that I have which was not given to me. Everything about who I am and what I do that is good is a gift from God at work in me, for me and through me. Every ability I possess. Every resource I use. Every opportunity I take. Every person I serve. Every task I complete. I am what I am by the grace of God. I do what I do by the grace of God. It is the provision and power and presence of Jesus with me that makes everything possible. Here is the one thing I know to be true, the one thing I count on every single day, the one thing I will say about any good that comes from my life: Not I, but Christ in me.

September 28

Day after day He says it. Day after day He shows it. God lets us know He loves us in countless ways if we will listen and look for it. Sometimes it sounds like a plea for repentance or a call to faith or an invitation to serve or a warning of danger or a word of encouragement. Sometimes it looks like a timely-met need or a quiet moment to rest or a special time with loved ones or a normal day with food, clothing and shelter. But most verbally and visibly... It sounds like "A Savior is born," "It is finished," and "He is risen." It looks like a manger, a cross and an empty tomb. God speaks and shows His love best through Jesus.

September 29

Many people feel like their prayer isn't "working" so they barely or rarely pray at all. Prayer, as with all of life, should be about God being honored in us and us being happy in Him. This is why we are to pray for... The hallowing of His Name. The coming of His kingdom. The doing of His will. This results in His glory and our good! Know this... Prayer isn't about filling up our kingdoms with what we think will make us happy; it is about being filled up by all He offers in His kingdom so we can actually be happy. You can be sure of this: the prayer that "works" is the prayer that "wants" all that God has for us in Jesus.

September 30

People often reject the gospel because they would rather rely on good advice for what they need to do rather than receive good news about what Jesus will do for them. Humans love self-help strategies that promise you can fix yourself until they inevitably find that these strategies don't actually help self. Well-meaning sayings like toughen up, lighten up, buck up and cheer up are just a set up that make us want to give up. Real, lasting change will only come when we ask God to begin and complete His good work in us so we can live by His power. He's ready, willing and able to do it if we'll stop trying to do it ourselves.



October

October 1

Christians should know two feelings better than anyone else: conviction and celebration. We must never lose sight of this: our sin is great. We must never lose hope in this: our Savior is greater. A right response to our unfolding transformation as we follow Jesus in faith is the ongoing rhythm of repenting of our sin and rejoicing in our salvation. We were guilty, yet acquitted. We were undeserving, yet rewarded. We were trapped, yet freed. May we know the humbling, exalting experience of knowing both our sinfulness and our Savior. Let us be glad in this: Our sin may have begun our story, but the grace of God will end it.

October 2

Loving others includes being happy that they are happy ... unless the source of their happiness is sin. People can find happiness in things ranging from cheating on a test to cheating on a spouse, hurting themselves through addictions to hurting others through mistreatment, and ignoring family needs to ignoring God. This is not the time to be happy for them; it is the time to help them. We should support: Godly ambitions, but not selfish ones. Godly affections, but not sinful ones. Godly actions, but not senseless ones. Let us encourage each other to be happy in ways that will not be regretted in the end.

October 3

Know this: everyone is a believer. There is no one who is not a believer. We all believe in something. Even to disbelieve in one thing is to believe in another. All of life's desires, decisions, and deeds flow from one of two basic beliefs: we believe that we need Jesus, or we believe that we do not need Him. Want to know what you believe in? Look at your life. You will pin your hopes upon your beliefs, devote your time and resources to your beliefs, look for happiness in your beliefs, find your sense of well-being in your beliefs, and stake your life on your beliefs. The question is: do you believe in Jesus in that way?

October 4

One of the ways that God changes us to become like Jesus is through hardships. We struggle to find answers on our own, we worry and doubt and fear often, we fall short over and over again, and we feel like many tasks in front of us are impossible. But, in time we learn to turn to and trust in the wisdom, strength, and grace of God as He transforms us into people of faith through our struggles. Hardships can be like hard workouts, strengthening us and shaping us for the better. As we face struggles, let us not forget this: sometimes God will change the situation; sometimes God will use the situation to change us.

October 5

Every Christian faces the ever-present danger of distraction, frustration, and temptation to become preoccupied with things that don't matter, things that don't satisfy and things that don't last. That's why Christian community is so important in helping each other keep the faith and keep our focus. Let us... Spur each other on to good works for Jesus. Strengthen each other with good news about Jesus. Support each other with good deeds like Jesus. By His grace and in His love... We must continually encourage each other to follow Jesus because the world is continually encouraging us not to follow Him.

October 6

Jesus is our security... He laid down His life on the cross so we can be forgiven and freed from the one thing that can truly threaten us, our sin. He rose from the dead to defeat the one thing that we could never safeguard against, our mortality. He sits in the position of power and authority to rule for good the one thing that we struggle to control, our lives. He prepares for us a place and an inheritance to be enjoyed forever by ensuring the one thing that we cannot, our eternity. He promises to provide all we need until He brings us safely to the one thing in our future that we long for most, our home with Him.

October 7

People who love Jesus repent by making war against their sin instead of making excuses for it. Because His pardon is given to us, and His power is with us, and His presence is in us, we can be honest about our sin, and we can be victorious over it. We have been forgiven. We are free. We can be faithful. Therefore, let us strive for holy living while resting in the grace of God, remembering and rejoicing over this truth: what Jesus has done for us on the cross is sufficient to both cleanse and correct our transgressions. Because of grace we don't give up in our fight against our sinfulness; by grace we get up and fight on.

October 8

The most rewarding thing we can ever do is admit our lostness, helplessness and unworthiness to enter God's kingdom, and depend completely on His mercy and grace. When we acknowledge our need for God and turn to Him in faith, we are given access to His kingdom and all of its benefits for us in Christ. The kingdom of heaven has a King ... and it's not you or me. It's an infinitely wiser, stronger, kinder King who rules over the lives of His people for their good and unleashes so many blessings on them that it will take an eternity to experience them all. We get a foretaste for now and a feast forever. All hail King Jesus!

October 9

When we are moved by the mercy of God shown to us in Christ, we will move to show it to others. The merciful extend forgiveness for sin and kindness in suffering to the people around them because they have experienced it themselves. They have soft hearts, not hard ones. They have reaching hands, not folded ones. They have loving mouths, not condemning ones. This is only possible when the God of mercy takes our natural inclination to be intolerant or indifferent and supernaturally infuses us with His delight to do good to the needy. Today, let us ask Him to help us deal with others like He deals with us.

October 10

When was the last time you gave up something for the sake of someone else? In other words, their gain required your loss because in order to help them you had to... Sacrifice money. Sacrifice time. Sacrifice sleep. Sacrifice comfort. Sacrifice plans. While it's good to do good at any time, there are many times that in order to be the hands and feet of Jesus, we will also need to have the self-giving heart and mind of Jesus too. We are to show up and speak up for others not just when it's easy, convenient and fun, but also when it's hard, troublesome and unpleasant. This is how we are loved. This is how we are to love.

October 11

There are many things that God requires us to do as followers of Jesus. But it's important we understand that it is grace-driven effort and not human effort that enables and encourages all of our obedience, service and every form of performance as Christians. We do everything secure in grace, by faith in grace, through reliance on grace and in gratitude for grace. His work saves us before we do our work. His work guides us to do our work. His work gives us power to do our work. His work makes us happy to do our work. Let us remember... Whatever the will of God calls us to do, the grace of God will cause us to do.

October 12

To be a peace-maker, we must first be a peace-experiencer. When we put our faith in Jesus, we immediately experience peace with God and increasingly experience the peace of God. With our sin no longer separating us from Him, we are then able to be instruments of peace in the lives of other sinners around us. We do this by proclaiming the gospel message and reminding those in conflict of the precious promises made to those who let His peace rule in their hearts instead of being ruled by their sin. Today, let us strive to bring people together with each other and people together with God.

October 13

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are meant to bear each other's burdens so that the heavy load of hardship is lightened. This could be to use our ears to listen to a confession or a cry. This could be to use our mouths to speak a word of encouragement. This could be to use our hands to meet a physical need. But none of this will happen if we don't let each other know about burdens or if we don't let each other help with burdens. God means for us to be dependent, not independent. Firstly, on Him. Secondly, on Him through each other. Today, share your burdens with others and bear the burdens of others.

October 14

One reason why we are told to "rejoice in the Lord always" is because all other things we might rejoice in will change. Circumstances change. People change. Interests change. When we look for our ultimate joy in something that isn't steady and reliable, neither will our joy be. Circumstances can become unfavorable, people can become unpleasant and interests can become unfulfilling. But God doesn't change! He never goes from good to bad. So, let us enjoy the gifts of God as a means of deeper joy in Him, remembering... We can have unending joy when we look for it in our unchanging God.

October 15

We don't know what it means. We don't know what is coming. We don't know what to do. In times when the diagnosis is unknown, the situation is unresolved, the path is unfamiliar or the outcome is uncertain, what should we do? Sometimes the thing we are to do is to do nothing. We wait. We wait on the Lord. We wait in hope on the Lord. We wait in hope on the Lord to guide us, help us and deliver us. While it's not easy to wait, it's comforting to know that grace is on its way and that God will make a way. As our lives are on hold, let us remember with joy this beautiful truth: God is working while we wait.

October 16

There are three questions we should regularly ask in an honest-as-we-can-be evaluation of our spiritual journey with Jesus. First, how am I relating to God through my daily prayer and Bible time? Second, how regular and authentic is my corporate worship with others? Third, how am I stewarding my time and resources for the kingdom of God? These are essential parts of us knowing Jesus and making Him known so that God is honored in us and we are happy in Him. When we have been less-than-faithful in these areas, let us ask God for grace to begin again, rejoicing that He will never stop being fully faithful to us.

October 17

It may not be the easy way. It may not be the popular way. It may not be the crowded way. But following Jesus is always the right way. As it has been said, when the whole world is running towards the cliff, he who is running in the opposite direction appears to have lost his mind. But he is actually the only one in his right mind headed the right way no matter how hard, unaccepted or lonely it may be. So, let us follow Jesus confident that He will always lead us to the right place at the right time. We'll often be heading in the opposite direction of the crowd, but we'll always be headed right to where we need to be.

October 18

What is going on in your life today? If something good is happening, it's by grace. If something bad is being handled, it's by grace. That sunset, steak and surprise text. That's by grace. The trial you're getting through and the trouble you got through. Yep, grace. Your ability, opportunity and community ... grace, grace, grace. The tears wiped away and the smiles of the day. Grace on top of grace. Beating hearts, peaceful sleep, acts of service, growing pains, caring friends, strength to continue, paid bills, lessons learned, fresh water, hugs. You can't look in any direction without seeing the evidence of God's grace.

October 19

Every good thing about who we are, what we do or what we have is the result of God's grace. It is all undeserved and unmerited. Yes... We may live wisely. We may be highly motivated. We may work hard. But none of this originates with us because God freely supplied the ability, opportunity, voracity and community to make these things possible. He's been working on our behalf our entire lives! Because God is gracious, we do not have the fear, frustration, or futility that comes from depending on ourselves when we depend on Him. Rest in this today: grace has gotten us this far; grace will get us all the way home.

October 20

Grace is the forgiveness, freedom and favor of God given freely to us. It is forgiveness... God is just and cannot simply ignore our sin; He is also the Justifier Who sent Jesus to be punished in our place in order to pardon us. It is freedom... Sin's controlling, enslaving influence in us has been broken, and we are empowered not to sin as we live by God's indwelling Spirit. It is favor ... Every good thing in our lives is a gift from heaven that would not be ours apart from Him. This grace is unlimited and unending, so even as we stumble in our faith, there will always be... More forgiveness. More freedom. More favor.

October 21

By grace, God serves up an endless feast of soul-nourishing, soul-delighting blessings for those who trust in Jesus. This includes: forgiveness, friendship, freedom, wisdom, power, peace, purpose, joy, hope, security, rest, justice, thankfulness, assurance, deliverance, guidance, significance, endurance, comfort, companionship, care, courage, transformation, satisfaction, love and life. And this is not a complete list! The countless implications and applications of the benefits that are ours by grace are staggering and extend from now until eternity. It's a buffet, not a bite. In Jesus, we have the life we've always wanted.

October 22

We can define grace without really recognizing it. We know grace is God's "unmerited favor" toward us, but that's very generalized. What does it specifically look like in everyday life? It looks like: forgiveness during failures, peace during storms, hope during trials, comfort during heartaches, joy during suffering, guidance during uncertainty, rest during busyness, strength during temptation, blessing during good times, help during bad times, and so much more. But even that is not as pin-point accurate as grace really is, for it shows up in countless minutiae within each of those categories. Grace is all around us.

October 23

The biblical story is about a God of grace sending His Son to people in need of grace to rescue them from sin by grace so we can be welcomed into His family to live by grace and serve as ambassadors who tell others about His grace so they might also experience His grace. This beautiful narrative is one in which God repeatedly reaches down to and out for an undeserving people who repeatedly push against and away from Him. Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more! When you trust in Jesus, you can know this: Your chapter in the story is unfolding, and its end has already been written. Grace has the final word.

October 24

Nothing and everything. If you don't understand both of these aspects of grace, you don't understand grace. As sinful people, we can do nothing to meet God's standards, avoid God's wrath, deserve God's blessing, earn God's forgiveness, or enter God's heaven. But God did everything by sending Jesus to forgive us, free us and favor us so we can enjoy a rich and restored relationship with Him forever. We don't buy from, bargain with or bribe God for what He does for us; we receive it freely by faith. The reality of grace is... God doesn't help those who help themselves. He helps those who cannot help themselves.

October 25

Nothing is free. When a gift is received, someone had to first secure it. Someone had to cover the cost. Someone had to pay. You and I are grace recipients who are gifted divine blessings. These are... Gifts, not wages. Free to us, not earned by us. Heaven-sent, not earth-generated. But let's never, no never, lose sight of this truth: they came at a staggeringly high cost. Someone had to pay, and that Someone was Jesus. Except for what He did on the cross, sinners like you and me would get nothing but judgment. Instead, we get every good thing God has purposed for us. We get it all because Jesus paid for it all.

October 26

If you think you can simply be a "good person" to get into heaven when you die, then you have grossly underestimated what God requires for entrance. Something we need to understand is this: our standards may be low enough that we can meet them, but God's are high enough that we never will. As sinners, the best we can do does not measure up. The good news is this: We don't have to because Jesus already did on behalf of all who put their trust in Him. Jesus lived for us. Jesus died for us. Someday we will be accepted into heaven by grace through faith in this: He exchanged His perfect life for our imperfect ones.

October 27

What does it mean to be "saved" by grace? It means to be rescued from something for something. From sin, for righteousness. From Satan, for God. From punishment, for reward. From death, for life. From hell, for heaven. From wrath, for joy. From brokenness, for glory. We must be rescued because we are incapable of reversing the curse on mankind caused by our sin. God is undoing all of the horrible things that sin has done and replacing them all with good things, beautiful things, joyful things, perfect things, eternal things. This is all by grace, which means...The only requirement for salvation is receiving it by faith.

October 28

Salvation is received, not achieved. We cannot do anything to deserve it or earn it, not even acts of obedience or righteousness. God does it all... The Father wills it. The Son secures it. The Holy Spirit administers it. What a gift! What a God! He doesn't help those who help themselves; He helps those who cannot help themselves. From start to finish, it's all by grace... Chosen. Called. Converted. Completed. Someday every genuine believer will be fully and forever delivered from the presence of sin into the presence of God. Not because we are able to keep the law, but because Jesus is able to keep us.

October 29

Grace has two sides, a giving side and a receiving side. God gives. We receive. How do we receive God's grace? By faith. Faith is the only appropriate response to the grace of God for it is the only response that appropriates the grace of God. We must believe in order to receive. The gracious pardon, power and provision that God freely offers us must be received by faith in order for us to personally experience it. It is only ours by trusting in Jesus. By grace, through faith, our sins are forgiven and our future is secured. Day by day, we look to Jesus in faith for all that we need, confident that His grace will deliver it.

October 30

It's not just about your past and your future. It's also about your present. Our sinful separation from God is behind us, and our face-to-face fellowship with Him is ahead of us. In between the two is the oneness of everyday life. And grace is there. The way that God works in our lives is very practical for the right here, right now moments of our lives. You will not face a single situation today, good or bad, self-induced or involuntary, hard or easy, quick or lasting, anticipated or unexpected, that God has not provided for. No matter what is happening on the inside or the outside, grace will always come alongside to help.

October 31

Faith in God's future grace destroys fear, frustration, anxiety, worry, jealousy, envy, vanity, idolatry, insecurity, doubt, selfishness and worldliness in the present. When we trust in all that God has promised to do for us, give to us and be for us, it rids us of what is robbing us of real joy in Jesus. Belief that God knows best, does what is best and will give us what is best every moment for the rest of our lives sustains us when we have to give up something we want or go through something we don't want. No matter what happens today, let us be sure to praise God and let us be sure of this: His grace is always enough.



November

November 1

You are not bothering God when you ask Him for more grace. He isn't too busy or too disinterested. He doesn't need to put something more important on hold to help you. Listen... There is no sin so big that God won't forgive it and no sin so small that God will ignore it. There is no stronghold so powerful that God can't break it and no stronghold so flimsy that God wants you to get free on your own. There is no problem so significant that God won't handle it and no problem so petty that God doesn't care about it. He does trillions of things in running the universe. One of His favorites is hearing from and helping you.

November 2

Sometimes God gives to us before we ask and sometimes because we ask. While God does countless gracious things for us without us requesting them or even realizing them, there are some things He does only as a response to us humbly asking Him. To be sure, we don't pray to get what we want to build our own kingdoms; we pray to get what we need to live for His. Still, God loves to be seen as generous, loves for us to appeal to His generosity, and loves to give generously to us because He loves us. So, ask Him. Pray often, celebrating the grace already given to you and requesting the grace that is yet to come.

November 3

There are two errors we often make when we consider asking Jesus for help. We either feel confident that we can ask Him for help because we've been "good," or we feel hesitant to ask Him for help because we've been "bad." Both of those ideas twist God's kingdom into a meritocracy in which we submit our requests (or not) based on our deeds. The truth is we don't deserve God's gracious help. But, because of Jesus, we can have it as a gift on the basis of His work, not ours. You can confidently ask God for His help today because... It's not what you do for Him that is worthy of His help; it's what Jesus has done for you.

November 4

While grace is available to us all the time, we do not experience its every benefit all the time. We often miss blessings that could be ours. Why? Because of sin-created barriers. We don't think we need God's help, don't remember to ask for God's help, don't believe God will send help, and/or refuse the help that He sends. But here is good news: Jesus is our great Barrier-Remover! Therefore, let us... Acknowledge our need for His help, ask for His help, anticipate His help, accept His help, act by His help, and adore Him for His help. When we do, we can be sure of this: Jesus, will not push us away; He will make us a way.

November 5

It never arrives too early. It never arrives too late. Grace is always right on time. God's unmerited favor for undeserving people is both customized to fit what we need and calculated to arrive when we need it. Neither the size of the trial nor the strength of the temptation will ever be a match for the well-timed help that God sends in the many moments that are too much for us to handle alone. When you feel like giving in to temptation or giving up in a trial, that's when you can know for certain that grace is there. In your time of need, God will ensure that you have what you need. Our timing is rarely perfect; His always is.

November 6

God's grace is always in harmony with God's will. That means although He will do for us what is good for us, it will often be in ways that are different than what we expected, desired or requested. Grace always fit two things: what we need and what God wants. It will serve both our particulars and His purposes, ensuring that our needs are cared for and His plans are carried out. God is wisely superintending the entire cosmos while intimately attending to you and me. Let us praise Him for Who He is and for what He does! We don't have to understand how God is working it all out for good; we just need to trust that He is.

November 7

God's grace will call us to submit to God's authority. From the moment we put our faith in Jesus, we will begin a lifelong journey where we yield more and more control to Him as we trust Him more fully in more areas of our lives. For genuine believers, there will be an immediate, increasing, imperfect reception of the new life of joyful obedience and rejection of the old life of sinful disobedience. We will stand by His grace when we get it right and fall into His grace when we get it wrong. Whatever happens today, let us strive to gladly obey Jesus knowing this... He rules for our good as we submit to His rule over our lives.

November 8

When we receive God's grace, every sin we have committed, are committing and will commit are all forgiven. Fully. Freely. Forever. That doesn't mean we can knowingly and willfully continue sinning with no remorse or repentance. True grace is not "All is forgiven, now you can freely wallow in sin." True grace is, "All is forgiven, now you can firmly withstand sin." Jesus did not pick us up just so we would run back to the same thing that knocked us down. He supplies both pardon for sin and power not to sin. So... We rely on His grace as we strive for holiness, and we rest in His grace when we need forgiveness.

November 9

Grace is not cruise control. Ours is not a set it and forget it relationship in which God does all the work, and we do none of it. He does all of the things that only He can do and enables us to do all of the things that He purposes for us to do. How do we respond to grace? We. Work. Hard. We work hard to be who God called us to be and do what God has called us to do in Christ, relying on His power and provision every step of the way. Grace isn't opposed to effort; it's opposed to trying to earn what we've been freely given. We don't work hard to receive God's grace; we work hard because we have already received it.

November 10

There is a daily tug-of-war for control of your thoughts, feelings, motives, attitudes, words and actions, pulling you in the opposing directions of what sin entices you into and what God invites you into. Look to Jesus for help and look for His help to arrive in your time of temptation as a way to leave it, the power to say "no" to it, a divine removal of it, the arrival of someone to help you through it, and / or a promise of something worth waiting for that is better than it. He is bigger than your biggest need! Take heart... You are never helpless against temptation as long as there is a throne of grace for you to run to for help.

November 11

One of the evidences that you have received God's pardon for your sin is that you are relying on God's power to fight against your sin. Forgiveness and freedom are two inseparable aspects of grace. You don't get one without the other. Spiritual growth will vary by person and season, but one thing every genuine Christian has in common is this: sin no longer holds the same appeal or power as it once did. We go from loving sin to hating it and from choosing sin to fighting it. Though we will not be sinless, we will sin less because of this... Our relationship with sin changes because of our relationship with Jesus.

November 12

There are certain rhythms of grace that will help us better experience the forgiveness, freedom and favor of God. These habits, disciplines and practices help us remember and rely on God's generosity toward us in Christ. While there are many of them, there are four basic steps that give birth to the rest of them: Pray. Read the Bible. Respond to what God tells you. Help others do the same. This is how we better experience all that God means for us to have in Christ: we live in step with Him as we live out His plans for us. The best way to dive into the fountainhead of grace is to walk daily with the Giver of grace.

November 13

God wants us to be happy. When He tells us in the Bible to do, say, correct, believe, feel, think or share something, it is not to take away our happiness; it is to take away the things that are in the way of our full and lasting happiness in Him. We must trust that God is after our happiness, that He knows best how to bring about our happiness, and that what He tells us in the Bible is designed to lead us into happiness. It is His grace at work when He tells us what to do, gives us power to do it, and delights us in Himself as we do it. God's way is not always easy, popular or instantly gratifying, but it always leads to real joy.

November 14

Contentment increases when your awareness of grace does. The more you recognize what God has done, is doing and will do for you as a free and undeserved gift, the more you will be grateful for what you have and not grumble over what you do not have. Praising will replace pouting. Worshipping will replace whining. Celebrating will replace complaining. So... To nurture this contentment, we should regularly look back at God's faithfulness to us in Christ and look forward to God's promises to us in Christ. Praise God! We don't have to look very hard to appreciate all that we are given; we just have to look.

November 15

Because the need for grace is great, and the supply of grace is even greater, we who have experienced it ourselves should extend it. We want others to come to trust and treasure God like we do, and there is no better way to accomplish this than by a "show and tell" demonstration of what God has done for us in Christ. We show others the same kind of undeserved forgiveness and favor that God pours out on us through acts of kindness. We tell others about the availability of the grace of God that has changed us and can change them as well. Our everyday testimony for God's grace is treating others like He treats us.

November 16

God helps us help one another by giving spiritual gifts of His grace to every person in His family. We don't earn these spiritual abilities; they are gifts. They aren't all the same; they come in various forms. We don't let them gather dust; we use them. They aren't to be used selfishly; they are to be used to bless others. We don't use them to bless others so we are praised; we do so that Jesus may receive the glory. So, let us do our part today with the resources we have been entrusted to steward for the good of those around us. One way God shows grace to us is through others; one way God shows grace to others is through us.

November 17

To receive God's grace is to be so radically changed that nothing will ever be the same. Not your past, because your sin no longer convicts you. Not your present, because your sin no longer controls you. Not your future, because your sin no longer condemns you. When you trust in Jesus, God graciously remakes everything about who you were, who you are and who you will become. You are given a new identity in Christ, a growing similarity to Christ, and a joy-filled destiny with Christ. Grace. Changes. Everything. You are not defined by who the world says you are; you are defined by who God says you are.

November 18

We were made in God's image to bring glory to Him, but we all sin and fall short of God's glory which distorts His image in us. Jesus came to display the perfect image of God and glorify Him in ways we did not, and then die in our place to atone for our sin. Then He begins restoring the image of God in us so we can bring Him glory. This is what grace does for us: It takes people who don't look and act much like God and transforms us into people who do. Undeserving sinners are remade into joy-filled, purpose-driven, difference-making, love-giving image-bearers of our glorious God. We are who we are because of grace.

November 19

We require it. We request it. We receive it. We rely on it. But let's be clear about it... Grace isn't given because we are great, but because God is. The grace of God testifies to the glory of God. When it is received and rightly understood, it results in worship for the One who gives it. It should prompt in us as receivers a celebration of Him and commendation of Him as a generous, powerful, wise, good, rich, holy and loving God. Those who think they merit what they receive have little praise for God; those who know all they have is a gift have much praise for God. Today, as He gives grace to us, let us give glory to Him.

November 20

There are no grace graduates. None of us get to the point where we no longer need God's provision. We aren't who we used to be, but our transformation isn't complete. We've been fruitful, but our good work isn't finished. We've come a long way, but our journey home isn't over. We don't move on from grace; we move on because of grace! So, let us confidently call on God for help to joyfully live out His plans, live for what matters most, live with our circumstances and live in this world, not as independent people, but as His grace-dependent people. Until the very end... We will not stop needing. God will not stop supplying.

November 21

All of God's gracious actions toward us are designed to lead us toward Him. He means for us to respond to His gifts not by seeking more gifts, but by seeking Jesus ... to know, trust, serve, obey, honor, enjoy, worship and love Him as we follow Him. Grace enables and encourages us to take steps with Jesus. When we do, we grow in our relationship with Him as we go with Him wherever He leads to do whatever He says. God woos us with His kindness along the way because He wants us to be together every step in this life until we are with Him forever in the life to come. Grace points the way to be with Jesus.

November 22

There's only one reason we persevere through trials, troubles and tragedies in this broken world: grace. God gives us the strength, encouragement and provision we need to keep going when the going gets tough. He is always graciously working in us, working behind the scenes for us, and working all things out for the good of us. When He does not give us grace to escape problems, He will give us grace to endure them. We will keep going. We will get to the other side. We will make it through. This is our hope in Jesus... When the time is right, God will bring our hurting to an end and give us happiness without end.

November 23

For all who trust in Jesus, there is a glorious eternity ahead in which bad things will be eliminated, good things will be perfected, and the best things will be unveiled. We have an eternity with Him that... Never gets stale. Never gets boring. Never gets routine. Never gets unappealing. Never gets finished. There will always be more to discover and enjoy from the immeasurable riches of God's grace towards us in Christ Jesus. Don't live for this day; live for that day. Don't be discouraged by this day; be encouraged by that day. Take hope in this every day: For those who are trusting in Jesus, the best is always yet to come.

November 24

You will either receive the grace of God or the wrath of God for your sin. There is no third option. By nature and choice, we sin against God by preferring things over Him and refusing to obey Him, which condemns us to hell. The only remedy is personally receiving the free forgiveness available by faith in Jesus, which ushers us into heaven. You get to choose between continuing in sin and continuing with Jesus. Whether you embrace this as the best news ever or dismiss it as foolishness, this is true: You need grace, and you can have grace. To reject it is to perish forever; to receive it is to have pleasure forever.

November 25

The goal of grace is to unite us to God so that He is honored in us and we are happy in Him. Grace makes it possible for us to personally know God and enjoy Him, along with all the good gifts that He purposes to give us now and forever. He doesn't give us what we think will make us happy, but rather what He knows will make us happy ... Himself. Because of the grace of God, we get the God of grace! Therefore, the point of grace is to point us to God, so that we will be satisfied by Him, and He will be glorified by us. God gets the eternal praise that He's always deserved, and we get the eternal pleasure that we've always desired.

November 26

There is a three-word description that summarizes what happens from the moment we put our faith in Jesus until the moment we come face-to-face with Him: grow in grace. We are not meant to stay the same or stand still, but to progress in our experience of grace for the rest of our lives. There are countless observations, implications and applications that flow from God's grace to us, and we have the delightful duty of discovery. Day by day, we are to prize, prioritize and pursue intimacy with Jesus. Progress does not come from fixing ourselves, but fixing our eyes on Him. This is how we grow: we set out to know.

November 27

We can be grateful for many things, and we should be. We can be grateful to many people, and we should be. We can be grateful on many occasions, and we should be. But there is One who makes every good thing, every good person and every good occasion in our lives possible by His amazing grace. God sent Jesus to be perfect for us because we aren't, absorb wrath for sin so we don't, and secure the blessings for us that we can't. Jesus paid our sin penalty and paid for our special privileges so that we might be forgiven, freed and favored. Today and every day, let us offer thanks for His giving.

November 28

The sweetest of all thankfulness isn't superficial; it goes deep. It goes past feeling happy that certain things are in our lives. It goes past naming those things so it is known that we appreciate them. It goes past even tracing their origin back to God and thanking the Giver for all of our blessings. There is a delightful, wonderful, beautiful experience when our gratitude is not merely directed toward God for His gifts, but toward God for Himself. We give thanks that among many things, He is a holy, loving, kind and gracious Father. The way to be best thankful for all that God has given us is to be most thankful for Him.

November 29

Even as Christians, one of the human weaknesses that we must continue to seek divine strength to overcome is our bent to be selfish. We need the mind and heart of Christ: a mind that regularly thinks of others rather than just ourselves, and a heart that is compassionate enough to serve and support others even at our own expense. It should be the golden rule, not the exception, to give up what we want so others can get what they need. That is when we are like Jesus. Today, go out of your way to do for others, joyfully remembering this: Jesus went out of His way from heaven to earth to the cross to do for you.

November 30

Our thoughts have the power to shape us, for better or for worse, so we must let our minds land most often on Jesus. His Good News message is full of life-changing truths and promises that will guide us into a right perspective on every life issue. It changes how we see our past so we can know real freedom from guilt and shame. It changes how we see our present so we can know real purpose and peace in the midst of busyness. It changes how we see our future so we can know real hope as we joyfully anticipate what lies ahead. The more we think about Jesus, the more it will rewire how we think about everything else.



December

December 1

Our sin prevents nearness to God because it separates us from Him with no possible way from our side to get to Him. This is why Jesus came to live, die and rise... So you and I can draw near to God. We who are trusting in Jesus for forgiveness and freedom from sin are no longer distant from real peace, real hope, real joy, real comfort, real security, real wisdom, and real love because we are no longer distant from God where these things are found. Our Immanuel made a way for us to get forgiven, get real life, get to heaven and get to God. Rejoice today over this truth: When we could not get to Him, Jesus came to us.

December 2

The sights, sounds and smells of Christmastime should cause us to pause and celebrate Christ. As we see the glow of lights, let our own hearts be merry and bright because the Light of the world has come. As we hear holiday music, let us smile because Jesus has put a new song in our hearts. As we walk past the Salvation Army worker, let us remember Jesus came to work for our salvation. It's all there: the CHORUS of praise, the WRAPPING of swaddling clothes, the TREE made into a cross, the GIFT of eternal life. May every fleck of tinsel, note of a carol and morsel of a cookie remind us: Jesus is the reason for the season.

December 3

Advent is a time of hopeful waiting. The question is: what are we waiting for? Life will frequently leave us disappointed and dissatisfied if we are waiting for the right time when the right things have come and made us feel the right way. So... We wait. And we wait. And we wait our lives away. We will never find lasting satisfaction in the people, pleasures and possessions of earth. We weren't meant to. As we wait for the second coming of Jesus, let us look to Him to be for us and give to us what this world never can: the gift of real contentedness. It's not about what we have in our lives; it's about Who we have in our hearts.

December 4

The bad news that is plastered all over the social media and news media stories will leave us disturbed and discouraged if we don't remind ourselves of the good news of the Greatest Story Ever Told. Every day we must remember who Jesus is to us and what He does for us. The more we trust in the message of joy that a Savior and Lord has arrived to rescue us from bad and rule over us for good, the more we will experience real joy in our hearts. Today, don't fill your mind with the garbage of this world but rather fix your mind on the glorious good news of Jesus. This will lead to great rejoicing for those who believe.

December 5

When was the last time you thought about eternity and what it would be like to perish forever? When was the last time you rejoiced that you have a completely different eternity awaiting because God gave His Son? When was the last time you considered the implications of receiving this gift? Everything bad is turned around and traded in for good when we trust in Jesus! Because in Jesus we are given a countless list of blessings with each entry having sub-lists of countless more benefits that we enjoy now in part and will enjoy fully throughout eternity. Rejoice today in God's Son. He's the Gift that keeps on giving.

December 6

Jesus willingly exchanged all the wealth of His deity for the poverty of His humanity when He came to dwell on earth. Why? For. Our. Sake. We couldn't live up to God's standards, so Jesus lived perfectly for us. We couldn't break free from sin, so He set us free. We couldn't atone for our transgressions, so He died in our place. We couldn't defeat death, so He conquered the grave so we too will rise. We couldn't earn an eternal retirement, so He paid for our inheritance. We have become rich through the finished work of Jesus. And long before it was finished at Calvary, it was started in Bethlehem. For our sake.

December 7

God demands we be perfect in order to go to heaven, declares none of us are perfect and therefore are condemned to hell, and then delivers us by sending Jesus to take our imperfections and be our perfection so we can have everlasting life. Here's what won't get you into heaven: your effort at trying to be good enough. Here's what will get you into heaven: Jesus. Trust Him, and everything changes! We were... Lost, but now found. Bankrupt, but now rich. Condemned, but now pardoned. Enslaved, but now free. Dead, but now alive. Rejoice! God didn't lower His standards for us; He lowered His Son for us.

December 8

It is easy to lose hope when we lose a loved one, lose a job, lose a battle, lose control, lose our health or lose our way, but there is a sure and steadfast hope that is ours if we believe. This hope isn't some self-created positive attitude that things will turn out the way you envision in your head; it is a Spirit-produced confidence in the faithfulness of Immanuel to keep His promises that is settled in your heart. He has been with you all along. He is with you even now. He will be with you always. Your hope isn't in your ability to figure out how to make it work out in the end; your hope is confidence that He already has.

December 9

This time of year is not about me. And it's not about you. Yet, it's easy to make it about us, isn't it? We can get caught up in what we enjoy about, what we receive because of, and what we get to do during Christmastime and spend very little time getting caught up with Christ. It's the most wonderful time of the year not because of the festive music, favorite movies, familiar decorations or family traditions that can rightly be a part of our holiday experience; it's a time of celebration and jubilation and exaltation of Jesus. This year, may everything that is wonderful about Christmas make us full of wonder about Christ.

December 10

Christmas is a broken string of lights for many of us. It's there, but it doesn't seem to do what it's supposed to do. It's bleak, not bright. It's melancholy, not merry. This time of year is disappointing and depressing for a lot of people for a lot of reasons. We're a broken people in a broken world where there is much that is not as it ought to be. But there is hope for us, because Jesus came for the very reason so many struggle in this season ... to fix what has been fractured in us and our world. As we wait for this to happen, let us turn to Him in our present darkness and ask Him to shine His everlasting light in our hearts.

December 11

What does it really mean for someone to receive a gift? It means that the gift has had its intended effect in the life of the one to whom it was given. The gift wasn't ignored, but rather was worn, admired, eaten, enjoyed, watched, sprayed on, driven, listened to, put to work or played with. Truly, an unused gift is an unreceived gift. That's why some people become believers and some do not. They are either changed by what is offered in Jesus, or they live as if He isn't even there. How can we know if we have received the gift of God's Son? We obey, share, trust, serve, enjoy, worship and love Jesus. We do not ignore Him.

December 12

Christmas is for stuck people. People who are stuck in the past with its haunting reminders of what they have done. People who are stuck in the present with an endless cycle of never-quite-satisfied searching for happiness. People who are stuck in fear of the future with its paralyzing grip that prevents them from doing meaningful things. But here is good news: Jesus came to free stuck people like you and me. He was born to die for our sin. He was born to bring us a better joy. He was born to secure our eternity. Praise Jesus! He has stripped sin of its power and clothed us in His perfection to the glory of His Name.

December 13

To receive the gift of God's Son is to also get countless blessings and benefits from being in a relationship with Him. But let's be clear about one thing: if you want what Jesus can do for your life but don't want Jesus in your life, you won't receive Him or His blessings. Listen... He's not just useful, He's beautiful. He's not just resourceful, He's delightful. He's not just helpful, He's wonderful. Don't you see? Jesus doesn't just give us gifts; He is the gift. Being together with Him is the most precious gift He gives to us. And the more time we spend in His presence, the more beautiful, delightful and wonderful He becomes to us.

December 14

What does Jesus want for Christmas? It's not our begrudging submission, reluctant giving, half-hearted worship, indifferent service, or lukewarm affection. These may be costly gifts, but they do not shine, and they are not sweet-smelling to our King. What Jesus wants for Christmas is for us to get what we want for Christmas: full and lasting joy that comes from a heart that worships Him. He gets the honor He deserves and we get the happiness we desire. Therefore, let us seek Him more than all other things, for He will satisfy us more than all other things. Jesus doesn't just want our treasure; He wants to be our treasure.

December 15

When Jesus took on flesh to dwell among us, He didn't insulate Himself from the ugliness, brokenness and sinfulness of this world. Life on earth for Jesus was filled with the same things we deal with: difficult people, difficult circumstances, difficult tasks and difficult experiences. What He did was suffer with us through His birth and life, and secure for us deliverance from suffering through His death and resurrection. Take heart today and trust the One who understands, cares and gives you hope. He doesn't just know what you are going through. He didn't just go through it too. He went through it for you.

December 16

Every belief, action, fact, event, spoken word, attitude and outcome has one. There is a reason for all things (a basis, cause, explanation or motive). Christmastime and Christianity are based on this one: Jesus is the reason for the season and the reason for our hope. Not favorable conditions. Not an optimistic outlook. Not our resources or connections. Simply Jesus. Let us revere Him in our hearts! Here is our hope: Jesus came to liberate us from sin and its deadly consequences and to lead us to life and its eternal pleasures. We can know that good things are in our future because of the good news of Jesus.

December 17

Christmas is a declaration of war on everything that separates us from God and the life with Him that we were meant to enjoy now and forever. God sent Jesus to disarm and defeat sin, Satan and death so we can be forgiven and freed. Then, He equips us with the armor of God, the Word of God and the Spirit of God to empower us as we fight our battles against temptation, secure in the truth that Jesus has already secured our victory. Until Jesus comes again to give us final deliverance from it, we expect, endure, hate, expose, resist and overcome evil, but we do not give up in our fight against it.

December 18

From heaven to earth. From a manger to a cross. From suffering to victory. Christmas begins an epic story of how far Jesus would travel, and how hard His journey would be, to bring us back into a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. His story births our stories where every step is assured because of His faithfulness to do the Father's will to get us safely home to be with Him, where praise and pleasure never end. Christmas reminds us Who Jesus is, why He came, and where He is taking those who trust Him. Jesus came from heaven to earth to make a way for sinners like you and me to go from earth to heaven.

December 19

How freeing it is to embrace with confidence that God has allowed some things into our lives and other things to be missing from them for a reason that is good. Even if we have no idea what that reason is. Or how it can possibly be for good. God is always doing much more in, for, around and through those who trust Him. Mary trusted. Joseph trusted. We must trust that the unexpected, unexplainable things God has for us are unbelievably good. He knew what He was doing in their lives; He knows what He is doing in our lives. Christmas reminds us that faith in what God says turns our "how can this be" into "let it be."

December 20

We try to ignore it. We try to downplay it. We try to run from it. We try to overcome it. But no matter what we do, we cannot change reality: this world is undeniably broken. What we see is the inevitable ruin that comes when we do what is right in our own eyes and do what feels good over what God says is good. We need... A Hero to save the day. A Liberator to set us free. A Healer to make us whole. A Satisfier to make us content. A Ruler to reign over us for good. A Savior to save us from our sins. Rejoice! Christmas announces that new life can be ours through faith. Jesus was born so we can be born again!

December 21

Many people celebrate Christmas without celebrating Christ. They love the gifts and the decorations and the food and the music and the sentiment and the gatherings and the movies, but they don't love Jesus. Instead of spending the season adoring Him, they spend the season ignoring Him. That's why we are sent on a mission to tell the world about Jesus, in hope that they will also see His beauty and majesty and generosity. We are to invite others into our joy and into our worship. Therefore, let us use every gift-exchange and gathering to point people to Jesus. O come let us adore Him. O come let us proclaim Him.

December 22

People have all kinds of ideas in their heads about God, and these ideas, right or wrong, shape how we view the world and influence how we live in it. When Jesus came to live in this world with us, He made it possible for us to know what God is really like. He displayed God's character, heart, authority, holiness, righteous anger, grace and love for all to see. In looking at Jesus, a few things we see are... Rebuke, authority and truth for the rebellious and self-righteous. Forgiveness, compassion and peace for the broken and repentant. Joy, hope and strength for the followers and the faithful. Love. For. Everyone.

December 23

Jewelry breaks. Toys break. Electronics break. You and I break. God made us in His image, but our sin fractured our likeness to Him and our relationship with Him. But Christmas is for the broken. God loves the broken. He sent Jesus for the broken. The Son of God came to do what we could not do, and die for what we could not do, perfectly bear the image of God. When we put our faith in Him, He puts His Spirit in us changing us forever. Rejoice today! For the Christ Child left the manger and made His way to the cross where the Christmas Gift of God's Son was broken for the broken so that we could be made whole.

December 24

The point of everything is to point to our glorious God in Whose presence there is fullness of joy and pleasure forever. The Scripture stories of Christmas are ripe with this... Great joy. Peace on earth. Light shining in darkness. Salvation from sin. A forever kingdom. Everlasting life. A Savior. A Reigning King. A Son of the Most High. Christ the Lord. Immanuel. Glory to God in the highest. Christmas shines brightly with God's ultimate purpose: that He be honored in us and we be happy in Him. Until Jesus returns, let us return to our everyday lives knowing... God is with us. God is for us. God is to be glorified through us.

December 25

We will often fail to live out our faith in Jesus and stumble in our walk with Him. We won't always love Him most, love others best, and love rightly all the rest. Instead, we will make ourselves the center of our lives, make self-serving decisions as we plan our lives, and ultimately make a mess out of our lives. That. Is. Why. There. Is. Christmas. Christmas is about a gift of God's Son, a gift of forgiveness, a gift of transformation, a gift of eternal life, a gift of happiness in God. God gave to us and gives to and will continue to give to us. Christmas is about grace. God's grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin.

December 26

God is greater. A chef prepares delicious and nutritious foods, but God made flavors and taste buds and ingredients and nutrients. An engineer builds strong and magnificent structures, but God created angles and dimensions and textures and materials. An artist paints beautiful canvases, but God invented shapes and colors and strokes and imaginations. We do whatever we do only because God does what He does. The talents to use the things we see, hear, smell, taste and touch in this world all come from God. He invents and inspires every good thing that we use, arrange, perform, create or do. God is greater.

December 27

At His first coming, Jesus took our place so we can be with God. At His second coming, Jesus will take us to a place where we can be with God. We live in the present between His two appearances: when He came to live, die and rise for us, and when He will return for us. It's hard now. It's sad now. It's messy now. Yet it's not without peace, hope and joy ... because it's not without Jesus. Jesus came to make us right with God, He is with us so we can make it through this world, and He is returning to make all things as they should be. Take heart! For though things aren't yet perfect, the day is coming when they will be.

December 28

It's never right to be angry with God. It's a sin. When we are angry at Him, it's an assault on His character. It's, in essence, saying to God regarding the circumstances that have caused such strong resentment in us: You are not right. You are not good. You are not wise. You are not loving. And none of those things are true, no matter how hard life gets. What is true is that God is unbelievably good and loving to us, and is actively working out a wise and right plan, no matter how hard life gets. He will make it all right when He makes it all new. So, be mad at sin, brokenness and Satan. But never be mad at our good, good Father.

December 29

Defeat doubt by preparing for battle in advance by filling your heart with the truth of God's Word. In advance, because doubt appears without warning. With the truth of God's Word, because doubt arrives with lies. The enemy will attack you in times of darkness because it's hard to see him coming, and it's hard to see the situation for what it really is. So, start your day in the light by saturating your heart with a good and accurate picture of God's graciousness and faithfulness so you can remember those truths and promises when darkness falls. Never forget in the dark what God has shown you in the light.

December 30

God is near us when we have broken hearts and broken spirits. Whether we are struggling with our own sin, the sin of others, or the result of sin's fracturing of our world, He is never distant even if seems that way. He hears our cries. He comforts our hearts. He meets our needs. Though the result will not always be when we want it and how we want it, we have His promise that we will lack no good thing. This is true because God did not spare even His own Son from suffering. Jesus is our ever-near Immanuel, who lived, died and rose so we can taste and see God's goodness. Mingled with tears now. Free from tears later.

December 31

God made everything in the universe, known and unknown to us. He imagined it. He created it. He rules it. He shares it. And there is not a millimeter of it that does not declare His glory and majesty! Let it be shouted from every distant star to every nearby tree, from every creature to you and me. His hands that shaped the cosmos also shapes our hearts, for He not only cares for the world but also for us. He made us. He knows us. He blesses us. He loves us. From the inner parts of us to the outer reaches of the universe, it is all covered in the fingerprints of God. Indeed, O Lord, how majestic is Your Name!

"I have kept the faith. I have finished the race." – 2 Timothy 4:7b



Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

NOTE: You can also access many of my free resources at JimmyBrown.com.

Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/
- Daily devotions: www.FinishLineFaith.com or www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): www.TheMissionAmerica.com

*If these devotions have been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*