

Daily God Walk

Promises

Volume Nine

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

(AMP) – The Amplified Bible

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## *We Are United With Christ*

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. - Philippians 2:1-2

Too many folks just think of Christ in terms of being saved from judgment and they aren't aware that receiving Christ is much more than that. Paul writes here of "being united with Christ." This passage seems to be saying that we are not just living by ourselves, but we are connected to Christ in such a way that we are united with him.

In another place Paul speaks of being hidden in Christ. That is, we are covered by his grace and it is Christ who lives through us. Being united, or connected like Siamese twins, gives us the ability to walk faithfully in his will.

Most of us who have been born into the family of God have a desire to live righteously and display the glory of God in our life, but too often we fall short of that. Why do we fall short? Could it be that we do not realize the power of the Christ in us and we try to rely on our own strength to live well?

As we realize that it is him living through us and not just ourselves trying to do the right things, then his comfort and love lead us into fellowship with the Spirit. Encouragement, love and fellowship in his Spirit produce tenderness and compassion. That is being Christ-minded.

**Prayer:** Lord, I know that we are united with Christ, but I keep trying to walk out my journey in my own strength. Grant me the grace of understanding that you are living through me and that the Holy Spirit is my constant companion. In Jesus name, amen.

## *We Are United With Christ*

**Message:** Why do we fall short of the righteousness God has for us? Could it be that we do not realize the power of the Christ in us and we try to rely on our own strength to live well? As we realize that it is him living through us and not just ourselves trying to do the right things, then his comfort and love lead us into fellowship with the Spirit.

**Affirmation:** It is because I have been united with Christ that his righteousness lives through me.

**Reflection:** If we are righteous whose righteousness is it? Ours or his? Paul uses some power words relative to being united with Christ. How do these words reflect what it is to be “in Christ”? The words are: encouragement, comfort, fellowship, compassion. Think about it.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Being Like-minded and Having One Purpose*

Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. - Philippians 2:2

Being united with Christ brings us into relationship with his entire body. Because we are connected to the body of Christ we must purpose to be of the same attitude of mind as the rest of the body.

What is the attitude that we should have? There are three clues in this verse:

1. “Having the same love:” The love of Christ is to be what motivates us and when that happens we will have the same attitude.
2. “Being one in spirit:” When we act in unison as one then harmony is the result – a oneness in what we do, what we say and how we think.
3. “Being one in... purpose:” Our purpose must be to fulfill the will of the Father and when that is true then we are functioning in concert with each other.

Being “like-minded” is similar to what happens in an orchestra. There are many instruments in an orchestra, but they all play from the same sheet of music. They each have their part and together they make beautiful music. *Let’s make music together.*

**Prayer:** Father, help me to understand the value of being united with Christ and connected to the entire body of Christ. Grant me the grace of love, unity and purpose that you desire for your body. In Jesus name, amen.



## *Think Of Others First*

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. - Philippians 2:3-4

When we are living united with Christ we will be living out of his love nature. That means we are in unity with the rest of his body because the motivation for what we do is consideration for others. Paul is telling us in this passage that it is more important to consider the interests of others than our own interests.

Nothing destroys unity like self-willed, self-centered and selfish thinking. If our mind-set is about ourselves and what we can get out of a relationship then we have missed the point.

Take the time today to make an evaluation of what motivates you to action. When you are thinking about a particular action is it in the context of how that action will affect you or is it about how it will affect others in the body of Christ? Do you serve to be served, give to receive, or in any other way expect that what you do to bring something back to you?

Looking out for the interests of others will insure unity in the body of Christ. Practice thinking of how you can bless others with the only motivation being to share the love of Christ.

Much has been said about a purpose driven life but I would encourage you to have a love driven purpose.

**Prayer:** Lord, I don't mind serving others, but I tend to serve with the idea that something will come back to me for my service. Grant me the grace to serve with no expectation for myself. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Think Of Others First*

**Message:** Nothing destroys unity like self-willed, self-centered and selfish thinking. If our mind-set is about ourselves and what we can get out of a relationship then we have missed the point. Take the time today to make an evaluation of what motivates you to action.

**Affirmation:** I serve because it is the right thing to do. I am looking out for the interests of others to help bring unity in the body of Christ.

**Reflection:** This is a good time to make an evaluation of what motivates you to action. Are you responding to a situation because of how it affects you? Is your concern to be vindicated? Or is your first concern for the benefit of others?

**My Thoughts:**

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## *The Attitude Of Christ*

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant... became obedient to death. - Philippians 2:5-8

Many years ago we used to sing a song of consecration that went something like this, "To be like Jesus, all I ask is to be like him." We were sincere in what we were singing, but I don't think we really understood what we were asking.

If we are to be like Jesus we are going to have to pour ourselves out and become committed to the purposes of God, whatever the cost. Paul said that Jesus didn't consider his position in heaven when he chose to surrender his position to become a man for the sake of all mankind and pursue his purpose, even to death. Do we really want to be like Jesus?

When we have the same attitude as Christ we will live with his purpose. We may not be called to give our life unto death, but we are certainly called to serve him with our life, and like Christ, we must be committed to make whatever sacrifice is required to fulfill the purposes of God.

Being like Jesus is more than a romantic ideal - it requires a total commitment of our time, talent and treasure. That kind of commitment is rare, but those who make it are powerful servants of God. Ask yourself the question, "Do I really want to be like Jesus?"

**Prayer:** Lord, I believe I really do want to be like Jesus, but I am not sure I am ready to make the sacrifice that involves. Father, grant me the grace of being able to be firmly committed to fulfilling your purposes for my life. In Jesus name, amen.

## *The Attitude Of Christ*

**Message:** Being like Jesus is more than a romantic ideal - it requires a total commitment of our time, talent and treasure. That kind of commitment is rare, but those who make it are powerful servants of God. Ask yourself the question, "Do I really want to be like Jesus?"

**Affirmation:** Just as Christ lived for the higher purpose of doing the will of the Father, so I too am committed to do doing the will of the Father.

**Reflection:** Here's a thought for reflection - If doing the will of the Father meant giving up everything, including his place in heaven, why should we not be willing to surrender ourselves to the Father's will regardless of the cost? Think about it.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *The Father Desires To Bless Us*

Seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. - Luke 12:31-32

The Father is pleased to give us the kingdom. Sometimes we live as though we are beggars, standing at the gate asking for crumbs, when all the time we are children being invited to sit at the table.

This passage in Luke is contrasting those who worry over their daily needs with those who are able to live in faith that God will supply their needs. For thousands of years God has been revealing himself as the *El Shaddai*, the all sufficient one, and for thousands of years man has been trying to succeed by his own efforts and when he fails he finds himself standing at the gate of blessing asking for crumbs.

We cannot trust our own resourcefulness and trust God at the same time. In the verses before these Jesus has just called their attention to the birds who do not labor, but do not go without necessities of life. Then he reminds them of the lilies in the field that do nothing to exist, yet they are more beautiful by nature than the richest among us can make themselves become. After that he simply says, "Seek [the father's] kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

Trusting God is more than expecting him to work through our own creativity. It is giving ourselves to him and trusting his creative abilities to provide for us.

**Prayer:** Father, too often I try it my way then come begging at your door for the crumbs. Forgive my doubt and grant me the grace of faith to trust you in all the circumstances of my life. In Jesus name, amen

## *The Father Desires To Bless Us*

**Message:** Sometimes we live as though we are beggars, standing at the gate asking for crumbs, when all the time we are children being invited to sit at the table. Trusting God is giving ourselves to him and trusting his creative abilities to provide for us.

**Affirmation:** I have confidence that God, El Shaddai, will provide all of my needs as I seek him first.

**Reflection:** Many of us have struggled with the tension between trusting our own initiative and trusting God to provide. How have you been able to keep a balance between trusting your own talents and resourcefulness and trusting God to be your supplier?

**My Thoughts:**

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## *God Calls Us To Diligence*

Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. - Luke 12:35-36

God has called us to be ready for service at any time. There are too many “Sunday only” Christians; those who are faithful to Sunday worship but who are not faithful to serve in the kingdom of God every day of the week. God is calling us to be prepared to serve him and his kingdom at any time.

Sometimes we forget that we are not born again just to receive eternal salvation. We are born again to be citizens of his kingdom. As citizens of his kingdom we are to be prepared to serve at his pleasure, not to seek our own pleasure.

In the verses above this one Jesus said, “Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” Then he gives a strange order, “Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” Why do you suppose he said that? Could it be that all we possess in this earth is not even worthy to be compared with what he is releasing to us through the kingdom?

When we learn to trust him and walk out our lives with the sure knowledge that we are his children and it is his good pleasure to bless us with the kingdom and all its benefits, then the things we have accumulated become as nothing compared to what he has prepared for us.

**Prayer:** Lord, grant me the grace and faith to surrender my stuff to you and trust you in all things. Grant me a heart to be diligent in my service to the kingdom of God. In Jesus name, amen.



## *Faithful Service Produces A Reward*

Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. - Luke 12:42-44

God has given us his best and we are to, in turn, give it to others. He has called men and women everywhere to serve him and he has put ministries in place to serve those who come to him. We are given the responsibility to provide spiritual necessities to those who he has placed in our care.

There is a popular teaching today that emphasizes sowing our resources into God's work and expecting that he will return to us 30, 60 and 100 fold. It seems that those who emphasize such teaching are appealing to the selfish side of people; you give to God and he will give back to you much more. That is not what God intended.

This passage teaches that those who are faithful in managing the resources of the kingdom will be given access to all the resources of the kingdom. God does not give us resources of the kingdom to squander on our own desires but to serve others. We are not to be accumulators of kingdom resources. We are to be conduits through which the resources of the kingdom flow. We should be willing to freely give what we have freely received. Think about it.

**Prayer:** Lord, you have blessed my life beyond measure. Though I do not have much as the looks at things, I am rich in spirit and kingdom truth. Thank you for your many blessings. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Faithful Service Produces A Reward*

**Message:** Those who are faithful in managing the resources of the kingdom will be given access to all the resources of the kingdom. God does not give us resources of the kingdom to squander on our own desires but to serve others. We should be willing to freely give what we have freely received. Think about it.

**Affirmation:** My goal is to faithfully serve others with the resources God has provided me.

**Reflection:** When God blesses our investment in the kingdom by giving a 30, 60, or 100 fold return, what are we to do with it? Is this harvest for our benefit or the benefit of God's Kingdom? Think about it.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Does Grace Justify Continuing In Sin?*

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!... When you offer yourselves to someone to obey him you are slaves to the one whom you obey?... Thanks be to God that... you have been set free from sin. - Romans 6:15-18

Paul is known as the apostle of grace. His gospel was consistent wherever he preached, from Judea to Rome. In a nutshell, the message of grace he preached was that faith in the finished work of Calvary is sufficient to release the righteousness of God into our lives.

A major point to his teaching is that we don't need the law today because the Christ living in us produces in us what the law could not do. The law revealed our insufficiency - grace reveals his sufficiency. When we are "in Christ" and Christ is in us, then his righteousness lives through us.

Many have misunderstood grace, thinking that it freed us from the personal responsibility to live righteously. After all, grace does cover a multitude of sins. It is true that if we sin his grace is sufficient to cover our sin, but an equally important truth is that when we live in Christ his grace becomes sufficient to keep us from sin.

Grace is not freedom to sin - it is freedom from sin. Praise God that he has enabled us to live above sin through faith in Christ and the enabling of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me understand that grace is not permission to sin but the ability to live above sin. Also, when I do sin, grant me the grace to receive your forgiveness and to forgive myself. In Jesus name, Amen.

## *Does Grace Justify Continuing In Sin?*

**Message:** Christ living in us produces in us what the law could not do. The law revealed our insufficiency - grace reveals his sufficiency. When we are “in Christ” and Christ is in us, then his righteousness lives through us

**Affirmation:** I am made righteous not by the works I have done but by the Spirit of Christ working in me to produce his righteousness.

**Reflection:** It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the righteous acts of our own volition and the righteous acts which flow from us because of the righteousness of Christ in us. How would you explain that?

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## *The One You Serve Is Your Master*

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? - Romans 6:16

It is the human condition that we are servants to something. We serve our appetites, our ambition, our fears, or our faith; but we will serve someone or something.

When we are living out of our fleshly desires we will serve sin. Serving sin leads to the inevitable - death. I find it interesting that sin, with all of its promises, can only satisfy for a season, then it craves more. Sin only feeds the appetites of the flesh which is going to die anyway, without making any preparation for what comes after this short life.

When we are serving Christ, in obedience to his revealed will, we are releasing life into ourselves. Not just life for a season, but life for eternity. The grace of God that is released to us through faith in Christ is eternal life.

Jesus said, "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

When we surrender to God, through faith in Christ, we become a slave to righteousness and that is a gift of God's grace. When we choose Christ he is our master.

*Prayer:* I have received Christ and by grace through faith I have crossed over from death to life. Grant me the grace, as I live in Christ, to live out your righteousness. In Jesus name, amen.



## *Obeying The Truth Frees From Sin*

Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

- Romans 6:17-18

Most of us want to be free from sin and its effects in our lives, but are we willing to wholeheartedly obey the teachings of God's word?

We want to be free from lust, but are we willing to keep our eyes focused on the path and bring our thoughts into captivity making them obedient to Christ? (Proverbs 4:25, 2 Corinthians 10:5).

Are we willing to simplify our lives and look at any prosperity as an opportunity to help the less fortunate? Do we see the blessing of wealth as an opportunity to make life easier for our family, or as an opportunity to help others? (2 Corinthians 9:11, Matthew 25:31-45).

Too many of us mix the teachings of the word of God with the desires of the flesh and as a result we have a lukewarm commitment to the principles Jesus and the apostles taught.

If we want to be totally free from sin then we must wholeheartedly obey the truth. When we do that the grace of God will free us from the craving of our flesh and we will be free to serve him.

***Prayer:*** Lord, grant me the grace of being freed from the desire to sin and help me to wholeheartedly obey your word. Make my life a testimony to the grace of God. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Obeying The Truth Frees From Sin*

**Message:** To be totally free from sin we must wholeheartedly obey the truth. When we do that the grace of God will free us from the craving of our flesh and we will be free to serve him

**Affirmation:** I am committed to obeying the teaching of Christ and he has set me from sin. I am no longer a slave to sin but now I am a slave to righteousness.

**Reflection:** Give some thought to the hindrances to wholeheartedly obeying God. Do you struggle with lust, yet let your eyes and your mind wander into that arena? Are you enamored by the “things” this world offers and spend much of your resources to have them? Think on these things.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Win Favor With Love And Faithfulness*

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. - Proverbs 3:3-4

I like The Message on this passage. It reads, “Don’t lose your grip on love and loyalty.” Two of the essential components in the foundation of healthy relationships is love and loyalty.

This word love in the King James is rendered “mercy.” The only way we can have love, or mercy, toward the others in our life is for our thoughts and actions to be motivated by the question, “What is best for the other?”

We have been taught by the current generation, “If it feels good, do it.” In fact, one popular song of a couple of decades ago asked, “How can it be so wrong when it feels so good?”

At the very core of broken relationships is self; what’s in it for me. When we enter any relationship, whether it is employment, friends, neighbors, or romantic, if it is about us and our needs, it will end in disappointment and disillusionment.

What is the motivating purpose in your relationships? Is it about what you can get or is it about what you can give? Think about it.

We must remember that if our focus is on what is best for ourselves then our relationships will not be fulfilling for the others in our life.

**Prayer:** OK, Lord. I think I know what causes some of my relationship problems. I’ve been thinking about what works for me. Grant me the grace of love and mercy to think of others first. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Win Favor With Love And Faithfulness*

**Message:** When we enter any relationship, whether it is employment, friends, neighbors, or romantic, if it is about us and our needs, it will end in disappointment and disillusionment.

**Affirmation:** It is God's love which motivates me in all of my relationships. I realize that relationships are not just about what I get out of them but it is also about what others get out of the relationship.

**Reflection:** What is the motivating purpose in your relationships? Is your motivation to serve or to be served? Think through the idea of what it means to let love and faithfulness be your guide in relationships.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *God Is Our Constant Supply*

I was once young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

- Psalm 37:25

I remember as a child hearing the elderly saints of God stand in the congregation and give testimony that they had been serving God 40 years and it just keeps getting sweeter. I can also remember thinking as a child, “How can something keep getting better and better?”

I am no longer a child. Now it is I who have been serving God over 50 years and I can tell you that it keeps getting better. The one message that has consistently rang clear in these many years is this; The Lord is faithful.

Sometimes people read this passage and feel like David is saying that no hardships will come upon God’s people, but that is not what he is saying. David himself had lived in caves and ran for his life as his enemies pursued him.

Yes, tough times do come to the believer, but those who hold on to the one who is faithful come through the trials and are made stronger by them. Through the good years and through the lean years we learn to trust him to be faithful.

Rest assured; God will never forsake those who trust him. Tough times will come, but those who trust in the Lord will find comfort in the one who is our faithful and constant supply.

As we mature in our faith our trust in his faithfulness becomes complete and it is because we know he is faithful that we constantly trust him to be the constant source for all that we need in our life.

***Prayer:*** Lord, grant me the faith to cling to you when hard times come and to trust you to be faithful to your promises. I know you will never forsake me or leave without comfort. In Jesus name, amen.

## *God Is Our Constant Supply*

**Message:** Tough times will come, but those who trust in the Lord will find comfort in the one who is our faithful and constant supply. As we mature in our faith our trust in his faithfulness becomes complete.

**Affirmation:** I was once young, and now I am older, but I have never been forsaken and I have never had to beg for sustenance because God is my constant supply.

**Reflection:** It is true that serving God is not always easy, but the path of faith is much easier than the path of fear and doubt. Prosperity is a mindset. You can be prosperous, as David was, living in a cave at times when you know that God is in control.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Gain Respect With Responsible Living*

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. - 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Paul says a mouthful in this passage. He writes of minding our own business, working with our hands, and conducting our lives in such a way that it impresses those who are not of the faith. Then he concludes by teaching that we should not be dependent on anybody.

The message seems to be pretty clear. The witness we are being called to be is one of taking personal responsibility for our lives and showing the world what it means to be a responsible follower of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us to work with our hands to earn the respect of those who are not believers.

Minding our own business does not mean that we are to ignore the needs of others; it means that we are to take care of our own affairs and thereby be a witness to the community of the ability of God to provide for those who trust him. Taking personal responsibility for our own lives means we will not be consistently dependent upon others.

Live in such a way that your daily life wins the respect of those who are not yet believers in Christ. When we put forth the effort to be the kind of neighbor that brings glory to God we will inspire others to respect the Christ that is in us.

**Prayer:** Lord, help to not be so caught up into the heavenlies that I forget that I am still an earthling, with responsibilities here that need my daily attention. Teach me to be a good witness to my community. Amen.



## *Don't Stand There - Do Something*

After he said this he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee, they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky?"- Acts 1:8-11

We don't know how long they stood there gazing into the sky, and we don't know how long they would have stayed there waiting for him to return had the two angels not appeared to break the spell. There is a time to gaze - and there is a time to move on and be about the masters' business.

I am reminded of the time Peter, James and John were with Jesus on the mountain and suddenly there appeared Moses and Elijah standing beside him. The disciples were awed at the scene. In fact, they wanted to build a tabernacle and just stay there.

That's the way we are. When something marvelous happens we want to enshrine it and keep coming back to it to memorialize what happened there, but Jesus had given them orders to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of power to fulfill his purposes for the kingdom of God.

The best that God has for us is only opened to us as we walk in obedience to his instructions. We must not be so awe struck from gazing at his glory that we move on to serve him.

**Prayer:** Lord, I do stand in awe of you; but I know that the work of the kingdom cannot be accomplished while I stand gawking. Grant me the grace of balance between being in awe and being at work in your kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Don't Stand There - Do Something*

**Message:** There is a time to gaze - and there is a time to move on and be about the masters' business. Jesus had given his followers orders to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of power to fulfill his purposes for the kingdom of God. Those orders still stand: Pray, get the power, do the work.

**Affirmation:** I am committed to doing the works of the kingdom. Therefore, I will pray until I am empowered to do the work I have been called to do - then I'll do it.

**Reflection:** Do you want God's best? Think on this: The best that God has for us is only opened to us as we walk in obedience to his instructions.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *We Are Strangers In This World*

I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. - 1 Peter 2:11-12

In the early church, in post-apostolic times, those who wrote to the congregations in different cities would begin their letters, “Fellow sojourners.” It is interesting that as time passed believers were no longer addressed as sojourners. Peter uses that term in this passage. He identifies believers as being aliens, or sojourners in this world.

Our citizenship is not in this world – it is in the world beyond. Have we forgotten that? A song we used to sing has this line in it, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passing through.” Can we truly say that today? Peter seems to be calling us to remember that we should conduct ourselves with that idea foremost in our minds. We can’t become entangled with the comforts of this world and maintain our sojourner status as well.

It is good to remind ourselves daily that we cannot become attached to the temporal things of this world because our home is in another world, an eternal world.

Desires of the flesh do not affect us when we remember that we are aliens and strangers in this world. Another line in the old song is, “My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.” I ask, where are your treasures?

**Prayer:** Father God, help me to remember who I am and where my citizenship lies. Keep me from the desires of the flesh by keeping my mind on the hope of another world. In Jesus name, amen.



## *He Takes Us To High Places In Him*

The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

- Habakkuk 3:19

The picture we see in this verse is that of a deer climbing to safety in the high places. In the valleys there is food for the deer, and in the mountains there is safety. The deer must spend time in the valley, it is there he gains strength so that when the time comes he will have the energy and strength to run to the hills for safety.

When I read this passage I get the sense of feeling the need to escape and needing the strength to run swiftly on sure feet across dangerous places to safety.

All of us face times when we need strength, and energy, to go to a place where there is safety and security. There are times of financial struggle, times of emotional strain, and just the times when the world seems to get too closed in and we need a refuge.

At those times the Sovereign Lord gives us strength and he makes our feet like that of a deer that are swift to run to safe places in him. Those of us who have walked with the Lord for a long time know the desperate feeling of discouraging circumstances which drive us to him. And there, in his presence, we gain strength and comfort in his high places.

Our hope is strengthened and we gain strength by trusting the Lord who alone is our source. We know that we do not have the strength to face our circumstances alone, but in Christ we have all that we need.

**Prayer:** Father God, I need you to be my strength and to give me the ability to rise to high places in you. Grant me the grace of your favor. In Jesus name, amen.

## *He Takes Us To High Places In Him*

**Message:** In his presence, we gain strength and comfort in his high places. Our hope is strengthened and we gain strength by trusting the Lord who alone is our source. We know that we do not have the strength to face our circumstances alone, but in Christ we have all that we need.

**Affirmation:** The Lord alone is my source. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer and he enables me to go on the heights.

**Reflection:** What is a believer to do when facing desperate circumstances? He must trust God to give him strength to move forward. How does a person get to the place where trusting God just comes natural?

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Religion Without Obedience Is Empty*

Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. - 1 Samuel 15:22-23

The prophet Samuel had promised that King Saul would be victorious over the Amalekites. The Lord had further ordered Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites; the people, the spoils, the livestock - all of it. They were to bring back nothing but themselves when they returned.

Saul disobeyed God. He allowed the people to bring back animals for sacrifice. The ritual of sacrifice is a noble gesture, but in this instance it was in disobedience to God's instructions. Religious ritual to please men will not produce the favor of God.

Religion is a good thing, and religious ritual is a good thing. Not only was sacrifice a good thing but it was ordained by God. But a problem arises when the ritual and tradition of religion runs counter to what is the revealed will of God.

Obedying God is much more important than following religion. There are times when our traditions run counter to God's will. God calls us to hear and obey his commands without trying to figure out a better way to do the job He has sent us to do.

To be fully effective in the kingdom of God we must be committed to obeying Him regardless of what others may think. When our tradition and God's will are in conflict we must be committed to following God.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me hear your voice and grant me the grace to obey you, even when your instruction is counter to my tradition. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Religion Without Obedience Is Empty*

**Message:** To be fully effective in the kingdom of God we must be committed to obeying Him regardless of what others may think. When our tradition and God's will are in conflict we must be committed to following God.

**Affirmation:** Following God's revealed will is more important than my religious tradition. When I must choose between the two I will choose God's revealed will.

**Reflection:** This is pretty big. God has commanded animal sacrifice. Then he ordered utter destruction. Were they really justified in saving the animals for sacrifice? Think about some similar circumstances in your own life when you had to choose between tradition or God's will.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *There Is Safety In Him*

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. - Psalm 57:1

We were awakened in the night by the sirens going off to warn people of a tornado. We got everyone up and went down to the basement. The storm was raging, the wind was horrendous, but we were in a safe place. This verse speaks of just such a time.

This psalm was written by David when king Saul had been after him and he was hiding in a cave. David had been anointed king, he knew his destiny, but he also knew that he would not become king until God was finished with Saul. He could not fight Saul he could only trust the providence of God.

There are times when we face similar circumstances. We know who we are in Christ; we know the promises of God concerning us; we know that he has ordered our life, yet there is a storm raging that we cannot handle alone. In those times we take refuge in the shadow of his wings.

We have a basement, a place of safety, in him, regardless of how the storm is raging. We can cry as David, "In you my soul takes refuge." As long as the storm endures we are safe in him.

When we know our destiny we are not anxious about our present circumstances. The storm may be raging around us, but we are safe in his promises knowing that he has plans for us that are not yet finished.

We are safe in the shadow of His wings.

**Prayer:** Sometimes the raging storm gets the best of me and I am afraid that I will be overcome by the circumstances around me. I need the grace of faith for troubling times. In Jesus name, amen.



## *Called To A Life Of Separation*

Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

- 2 Timothy 1:8-9

There have been several occasions when someone has asked the question, “Why do you do this?” They are usually referring to some ministry we are involved with that requires great commitment, and some would say sacrifice. I call it living out his purpose and grace in my life.

One reason some people do not feel comfortable with giving a witness for Christ is that they have not realized God’s purpose and gifting for their life. They will say, “Oh, I couldn’t do that,” or “I don’t have those abilities.” Paul recognized that, which is the reason he said, “join with me in suffering.”

Then he refers to being called to a holy, or separate, life. This calling is not according to our abilities, or anything we have done, but it is according to his purpose and gifting in us.

God’s purposes and gifts in us will often take us to places we wouldn’t have gone and they will put us in uncomfortable circumstances at times. Serving God isn’t always peaches and cream; sometimes it’s dealing with the pits. It is in those difficult times that we learn the value of being committed to a life of holiness.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me not to look to my abilities but to look to your purpose and gifting in my life. Grant me the grace to humbly accept your calling and walk in it. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Called To A Life Of Separation*

**Message:** God's purposes and gifts in us will often take us to places we wouldn't have gone and they will put us in uncomfortable circumstances at times. But, we are called to go where he leads and do what he says to do regardless of the personal cost.

**Affirmation:** Using the gifts God has placed in me to fulfill his purposes for me is the most important thing in my life.

**Reflection:** God only has you and me to fulfill his purposes in this world today. It is critical that we discover the gifts of service he has placed in us and that we use those gifts to fulfill his purposes for us in his kingdom. Do you know your gifts? Are you using them?

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Follow The Lord God And Him Alone*

If a prophet... says, "Let us follow other gods (gods you have not known) and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet.... It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.

- Deuteronomy 13:1-4

Most people don't literally bow down before images and worship today, at least in the Christian faith, but too many of us bow our hearts before the gods of this world.

There are many voices being heard today that teach an ethic that runs counter to what the word of God teaches, and it sounds so good that many in the faith have bought into the subtle deceptions being offered. God has called us to reject those things.

We are all too often being called to compromise the truth of God's word under the guise of pluralism and tolerance. Understand, we are taught by Christ to be tolerant and to not put ourselves in the place of judgment, but we are also warned about false teachers who would ask us to compromise our faith by turning lose of the truth of the word of God.

Israel lived in a pluralistic society. In both Egypt and their homeland they were surrounded with peoples of other faiths, just as we are today, and they were being called, just as we are, to separate ourselves to God alone.

Moses writes, "It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him."

***Prayer:*** Lord, I need discernment to determine when the gods of this world are trying to deceive me into following false ideas. Grant me the grace to stand firm in your word. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Follow The Lord God And Him Alone*

**Message:** We are taught by Christ to be tolerant and to not put ourselves in the place of judgment, but we are also warned about false teachers who would ask us to compromise our faith by turning loose of the truth of the word of God. We must keep his commands and obey him. We must serve him alone and hold fast to him.

**Affirmation:** I hold fast to the truth of God's word and I am not deceived by the comforting rhetoric of those who compromise my faith.

**Reflection:** God knew how Israel would fall prey to the religions of the lands they were to inhabit. That is why they were told to have nothing to do with them. How can you see that principle being applied today?

**My Thoughts:**

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## *We Are Salt To The World*

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. - Matthew 5:13

In the days of Christ salt was a precious commodity. In fact, the Romans used to collect salt as payment for taxes owed. The tax became so onerous that people began mixing sand with the salt to make it look like they were giving more than they were.

The Romans caught on and built large vats where they would pour the salt. The salt would dissolve and the water would become a brine that would be drained off then dehydrated to become salt crystals again. What was left at the bottom of the vats would be the sand that had no value at all. That sand would be scattered on the road and it would literally be, "trampled by men."

Too often we allow impurities to creep into our lives and pollute the salt that we are to be in the world. If we are to have the effect God has called us to have while we are sojourning in this world, we must remain pure salt.

The Holy Spirit will purge us of all impurities if we will submit to his work in our lives. When we are pure in our heart and our spirit is aligned with the Holy Spirit, then we indeed become salt to the world and they are changed by our witness.

Remember; just as salt affects what is exposed to it, so we are to affect the world. We must be submitted to the Christ in us so that His Spirit can flow through us and our life will affect the world.

***Prayer:*** Lord, purge the impurities from my life that I may be pure salt for the kingdom. Let my life be such that others are influenced and changed by the Christ in me. In Jesus Name, amen.



## *Be Crucified With Christ*

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. - Galatians 2:20

When I was in college I worked in a mortuary. That was an experience. I noticed a few things about the dead while I was there: They never responded to what was said around them, they never complained, and they never took offense at anyone. Should that describe those of us who have been crucified with Christ?

We are to live as though we are dead to this world and all its attractions. If we lived with the sure knowledge that our old nature was crucified and the life that is in us is the resurrected Christ life we would probably live a bit differently than we do. Paul said, "The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God." What did he mean by that?

If we believe that we are dead to the flesh, then all that we do is by faith in Christ. If all that we do is by faith in Christ then what we do will be at his direction. The life we do live is the life of the Christ in us.

Ask yourself, "Does my life demonstrate the life of Christ, or does it show that I am still of this world seeking fulfillment in what it has to offer."

Being crucified with Christ is more than just a profession. It is a reality we are called to live. Jesus said that if a person was to follow Him he would have to deny himself and take up his cross. Any way you cut it the cross leads to crucifixion - are you ready to be crucified?

**Prayer:** Lord, I need your grace to consider my own will and desires to be crucified with Christ. Grant me the faith to live the Christ life. In Jesus name. Amen.



## *Show Repentance By Your Fruit*

John said to the crowds...produce fruit in keeping with repentance... Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. - Luke 3:7-9

John had a good thing going. People were coming to him from all over the region to hear this new message about a coming kingdom. His message was a powerful call to repentance.

When people came wanting to join his ministry he told them to bring proof that they were ready for change. He was calling them to repentance. Repentance is more than being sorry for sin - it is a changed life.

Over these next few days we are going to take a closer look at the advice he gave three groups of people. I think we will all find an application for ourselves in what he told them to do.

The message John preached was similar to the one Jesus taught. It was simply that there was a new order beginning and this new order, or kingdom of God, was a completely new way of looking at the world.

Today, just as in the time of John and Jesus, we are being called to embrace a new order. Making a statement of faith is not proof of repentance - good fruit is proof of repentance.. This new order, the kingdom of God, requires that we make a heartfelt change.

The proof of our repentance is that we not only confess our sin but we turn away from sinning. By nature we are turned away from God and toward our own self-will. Repentance takes place when we turn away from ourselves and turn toward God. The evidence of repentance is not what we say but what we do.

**Prayer:** Lord, grant me the grace to grow in your kingdom truth. Grant me repentance toward my old self and release your Spirit in me. In Jesus name, amen.



## *Share With Those In Need*

“What should we do then?” The crowd asked. John Answered, “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.” - Luke 3:10-11

Some teachers have done a good job of teaching about God’s desire for all believers to be prosperous, but they haven’t fully explained the purpose of prosperity. I have found three principle reasons that God gives his people prosperity. Here they are in a nutshell:

1. So that we can be generous to those who minister the gospel - 2 Corinthians 9:11
2. So that we will have enough to share with those who are in need - Ephesians 4:28
3. So that our own needs may be met - 1 Corinthians 9:9-12

When we are more concerned about the needs of others than we are about our own wants we are producing good fruit. God does not give us prosperity to consume it upon luxurious living, but to provide for our needs and to share with others.

When we give to the poor the scriptures teach that we are lending to the Lord, and incidentally, he pays great dividends (Proverbs 19:17). Take a look at how you handle prosperity and see if it compares with what God’s word says to do.

Have you shared your tunic lately?

**Prayer:** Lord, like many others, I work hard for all that I get, and I tend use all that I make on my own interests. Grant me a heart to see how I can share the blessing with others. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Share With Those In Need*

***Message:*** When we are more concerned about the needs of others than we are about our own wants we are producing good fruit. God does not give us prosperity to consume it upon luxurious living, but to provide for our needs and to share with others.

***Affirmation:*** God has blessed me so that I might bless others.

***Reflection:*** This devotion lists three purposes God has for prospering believers. God prospers all believers, but the degree of prosperity a believer is blessed with will be determined by how he fulfills these purposes. Think about it.

***My Thoughts:***

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## *Do Not Treat Others Unfairly*

Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. - Luke 3:12-13

I live in an area where most of my neighbors are renters. I am amazed at how some landlords treat their properties and their tenants. They collect rents that are as high as the market will allow, but they don't use the money to improve the property or to make things better for the tenant.

The idea that John is trying to communicate in this passage is that we are to treat each other fairly and with dignity. If we are put in a position where we can "stick it to" another person, we shouldn't do it. When we provide a product or service we can't let greed be our guide; we must treat all fairly.

This attitude goes beyond money. It extends to fair treatment of people that you have been given authority over in employment and business. When God has blessed us with an opportunity to be in authority over others he has also given us the responsibility of treating them with respect and not taking advantage of them just because they are under our authority.

Not only is favor with God released to us when we treat others fairly but healthy relationships are formed as well. Treat people fairly and you will never be without friends.

***Prayer:*** Lord, give me a heart that desires to treat others fairly and with dignity. Give me the ability to think of the needs of others above my own desire to benefit. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Do Not Treat Others Unfairly*

**Message:** When God has blessed us with an opportunity to be in authority over others he has also given us the responsibility of treating them with respect and not taking advantage of them just because they are under our authority

**Affirmation:** Fair treatment of others is a core value I hold. I do not take advantage of others just because I have authority over them.

**Reflection:** Have you ever been treated unfairly by someone who had authority over you? How did that make you feel? Think about that in your relationship with others.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Don't Abuse Authority*

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay. - Luke 3:14

We've all known people who just couldn't handle authority. It seems to go to their head and they want to prove their status with everyone they can. In law enforcement we say this person is "badge heavy." In the home we say this person is "domineering." In business we say this person is "an autocrat," or dictator.

The bottom line is that these people abuse their authority. John was telling them that they couldn't do that and be a part of the kingdom of God. Don't use your authority to take advantage of others.

Don't think you are exempt from this principle just because you aren't a person in authority. He is also talking about the attitude that we should have toward our fellow man; believers and unbelievers alike. He is telling us to be honest in our dealings with others and don't use falsehoods and half-truths to get an advantage.

The intent of John's teaching in this whole passage is that we are demonstrating a true sign of repentance when we show respect for each other and treat others the way we would like to be treated if we were in their position. Whatever our station in life we are to treat others well.

If you have authority over others God has given you a sacred trust - Do not use your authority to take advantage of others.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to look at others the way I want others to look at me. Give me a heart to serve others and not to lord it over them. I need your help to do this. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Don't Abuse Authority*

**Message:** We are demonstrating a true sign of repentance when we show respect for each other and treat others the way we would like to be treated if we were in their position. Whatever our station in life we are to treat others well

**Affirmation:** I am committed to treating others the way I want to be treated.

**Reflection:** There are a number of reasons a person abuses authority. Give some thought to why they would do that then ask yourself if you have some of the same tendencies in your own life.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *The Lord Has Been So Good*

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

- Psalm 103:2-5

It's easy to get caught up in the business of life and forget what the Lord has done for us. One of the warnings God gave Israel just before they entered the promised land was to take care that they don't become so comfortable with the blessings that they forget the one who gave them the blessings.

David, in this psalm, is remembering the many ways that God has blessed him throughout his life; sins forgiven, pulled from the pit of despair, healed from diseases. And the list gets long. We like David need to take inventory of the good things the Lord has done in our life.

Sit back for a moment. Close your eyes and think through your life. Yes, there have been some tough times, we've all had them, but if you have served God very long you can remember that in the middle of those times you saw a light of hope and that light guided you into the brilliance of his glory and you made it through.

God has been good to us – but his best is yet to come. Let us daily give thanks for what God has done and let us live in anticipation of his future blessings.

**Prayer:** My Lord and my God; thank you for being there. Thank you for cleansing me of my sin; thank you for the healings; thank you for the financial help; thank you for all you have done. Amen.

## *The Lord Has Been So Good*

**Message:** There have been some tough times, we've all had them, but if you have served God very long you can remember that in the middle of those times you saw a light of hope and that light guided you into the brilliance of his glory and you made it through.

**Affirmation:** Even when I am facing difficult times I know that the Lord will carry me through.

**Reflection:** This devotion is about finding hope even in the midst of our greatest trials. Remember, as David did, that God has forgiven your sins, redeemed your life from the pit and has crowned you with love and compassion. Think about it.

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Respect And Honor The Lord Your God*

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol ... You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

- Exodus 20:1-7

The first 3 commands of the Big 10 deal with giving proper respect and honor to the Lord God and the name by which he reveals himself. The first truth of our faith is: The Lord, he is God; there is none beside him. All that means is simply this; there is no other god.

God stands alone, he has no equal. Anything or anyone that claims to be god is but a cheap imitation. The command about making idols is telling us not to deceive ourselves. We cannot fashion a god out of a substance (rock, wood, or iron) that the Lord God has created and say, "This is my god" without terribly offending the creator God. That is what we do when we allow something else in our life to take precedence over the Lord God.

When you say, "I am a Christian," you have taken his name. Be careful that you do not act in such a way that disrespects his name. You should refuse to be involved in any activity that does not show respect for the Lord God.

Give respect and honor to the Lord our God. Refuse to be involved in any activity that does not honor God and be careful that you do not act in a way that disrespects his name.

**Prayer:** Lord, I do not consciously worship other gods, but too often I let the things of this world come between you and me. Grant me the grace to always give honor to you and your name. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Respect And Honor The Lord Your God*

**Message:** When you say, “I am a Christian,” you have taken his name. Be careful that you do not act in such a way that disrespects his name. You should refuse to be involved in any activity that does not show respect for the Lord God.

God stands alone; he has no equal. Anything or anyone that claims to be god is but a cheap imitation.

**Affirmation:** I have embraced the name of Jesus. He is my Lord and I will not let anything take his place.

**Reflection:** Give some thought to these first three commands of the 10 commandments. 1) You shall have no other gods before me; 2) You shall not make for yourself an idol; 3) you shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. What do they mean to you?

**My Thoughts:**

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## *Respect And Honor The Earth*

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth... but he rested on the seventh day.

- Exodus 20:8-11

There is a story about a fisherman on a tropical island. This fisherman would go out every day and catch the food his family needed. He would work in his small garden to get the vegetables and grains his family needed. The forests were filled with trees that bore the fruit of the tropics.

One day his island was visited by a college educated type. All he could see was the potential for a very prosperous enterprise. He took pains to tell the fisherman how he could catch more fish to sell so he could buy a bigger boat to catch more fish so he could make enough to buy another boat and soon he would have a fleet of boats. The man explained how he could build an empire through hard work and long hours.

When the man was finished the fisherman asked, "And why would I do all of this?" The man replied, "Well, so you could retire to a tropical island, fish when you wanted and have time to work your little garden."

Get the point? The Sabbath brings us into harmony with God and his creation.

**Prayer:** Lord, grant me the wisdom to see the value in honoring the Sabbath that is your intended rest for man and the earth. In Jesus name, amen.



## *Respect And Honor Others*

Honor your father and your mother... You shall not murder... You shall not commit adultery... You shall not steal... You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor... You shall not covet your neighbors [property].

- Exodus 20:12-17

How important is it that we give honor to and respect the rights of others? Giving respect to, and honoring others is basic to living in harmony, and it is the basis for 5 of the Ten Commandments.

One half of the Ten Commandments have to do with our relationships with other people. Do you think that God feels it is important that we live in harmony with those with whom we live and associate?

From honoring our parents and others in authority, to not coveting, or lusting after, the property of another, God is calling us to respect and honor one another.

When we respect and honor the God of our fathers, the earth of our inheritance, and the others of humanity, we release a blessing from God upon ourselves.

Jesus summed up the entire law by calling people to love God with all their being and to love others as if they were themselves. That is a tall order, in fact, it is something we cannot do on our own.

The only way we can live up to God's expectation is to realize that we can't do it on our own. We must have his strength and his Spirit to do it.

By having his Spirit in us we can keep God, the world around us and others in proper perspective.

***Prayer:*** Father, help to look at all of your creation the way you look at it and to give honor and respect to all those around me. In Jesus name, amen.

## *Respect And Honor Others*

**Message:** From honoring our parents and others in authority, to not coveting, or lusting after, the property of another, God is calling us to respect and honor one another. When we respect and honor the God of our fathers, the earth of our inheritance, and the others of humanity, we release a blessing from God upon ourselves

**Affirmation:** Respecting, honoring and loving God is top priority in my life. Respecting, honoring and loving others is of equal importance.

**Reflection:** How important is it to respect and honor others? Jesus put it on the same level as loving God and said that doing that fulfills the entire law (Mat. 22:37-40)

**My Thoughts:**

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