

MISSIONAL CHURCH INITIATIVE

DEVOTIONAL

Resources for Personal Growth

Eurasia Region

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HOW TO HAVE A DEVOTIONAL TIME

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GETTING STARTED: How to draw closer to the heart of God by building a deeper relationship with God!

First Peter talks about humbleness, which is characterized by the willingness to grow in Christ, receive learning, and experience growth. Two of the best ways to do this is personal devotion time and being a part of a small group Bible study. Peter tells us we ought to be humble toward one another so that we can know the grace of God, and not be in opposition to God. Then secondly, he says, we had better be humble, not only toward one another, but toward God. This is so straightforward. This is so essential--to be a blessed Christian and church, to be a growing Christian and church, not in numbers, but in what is most important--discipleship, which is leaning, learning, and growing in Christ, leading to a lifestyle of worship!

How can I develop quality time with our Lord so I can become a deeper and more mature Christian?

Here are nine thoughts to get you pointed in the right direction:

A. GOAL: See where you are spiritually (Acts 22:8-10; Phil. 2:13) and determine where you need to go. Then, make a goal, and understand your GOAL. Your goal is to become complete, that is, fullness in Christ, (Col. 1: 28), or to say it another way, to become a mature Christian, a person whose attitudes and actions are like Christ's (Eph. 4: 13). Where are you spiritually and where do you need to go? Not only where do you want to go, but also where is God calling you to go?

B. PROCESS: Understand there is a PROCESS (Psalm 16:11; 73:28; Prov. 16:9; Heb. 11:1-6) at work. It does not happen overnight, and you cannot get it in a bottle, off a shelf, or by sitting in a pew. The process is one of the main growth builders. It is about the journey as well as the destination. It is an essential step toward reaching your goal to spend personal, daily time with God. Thus, the journey is as important, if not more, than the destination, because in our walk we are learning and growing! If we just arrived at the goal without the struggles of getting there, we would not have built any depth, strength, or maturity! Make sure your goals are a match to God's! We must never allow our pre-summptions and pride to cloud His way!

C. PLAN: Plan ahead (Is. 26:3; Mark 1:35). This does not automatically happen. You need to plan out your devotions to make them more effective. You can get many prepared devotional schedules at a Christian bookstore or sit down on Sunday and decide exactly what paragraphs or chapters you will be studying during each of the next seven days. Doing this will eliminate the problem of spending half of your devotion time trying to decide what you will study that day. You can use a Bible reading chart, quality devotional books, or a pre-written guide, but try not to just dive in. You will get much more out of your experience by having a plan.

D. CONTENT: Put into your devotional time variety and consistency (Psalm 16:8-11) in what you study. One month, you might study an Epistle. Then, you might spend a month or two in a narrative passage such as 1 Samuel. Then, you might go back to the N.T. to study a doctrinal passage such as Romans. Then, switch again to a minor prophet such as Joel. Try to go through the entire Bible in your devotional study within a year, or two at most. Do not stay in just one section, such as the Epistles, and do not skip the O.T., as you cannot understand the N.T. without the O.T.! Do not use the same plan year after year. Break it up, and try new ones. Do the same with your devotional books. Mix them up. If you have a good one such as *My Utmost for His Highest*, stick with it for the entire year, go to another one, and then go back to *Chambers* in the following year. When we are too consistent, it may turn into rhetoric, and then you will have a habit, not time with Christ!

E. FOCUS: Set aside time each day by focusing on the purpose for your growth and maturity (Psalm 119:130; Isa. 42:16; John 4: 23-24; 15), and then make it a priority. In doing so, you will be able to “go for it” with passion and vigor. Let Christ transform you through His Word. ATTITUDE is essential. You must start with the proper attitude! You are going before a Holy GOD!!! Usually, it is good to spend most of your devotional time closely examining a few verses, not rushing through multiple passages. This will help you keep focused. Some find it best to take notes, write down questions, and ask a mentor. In addition, you can set aside one day a week to switch from taking detailed notes on a few verses, to reading a chapter or two from a different passage without taking any notes. Whatever way you choose to go, stay focused and do not bite off more than you can chew!

F. MATERIALS: Get the best stuff you can get, and buy a good Bible (Eph. 4:1-3) in an easily understood translation such as the New Living Translation. Consider using a Study Bible. I prefer The Reformation Study Bible. For serious study use the NIV or NASB or NKJV. The best devotional books are “My Utmost for His Highest” by Chambers, and “Evening by Evening” by Spurgeon. You can also get a notebook that can be used exclusively for things to do with your relationship to God and to other believers so you can write down what you learn and any questions you may have.

G. PLACE OR LOCATION: Select a quiet place (Luke 5:16) to study where you are free from distractions. Remove all distractions. Close the drapes, shut the door, turn off the TV and radio, clear all busy work from your desk, take the phone off the hook, and lock the cat in the bathroom--whatever it takes. You will then be better able to concentrate and have better quality time with Him. Be serious about meeting God!

H. TIME: Select a quality time (Eph. 2:18). Choose a time for your devotions when you are at your best. Usually, early morning is best, because outside distractions are at a minimum during this time. If you are not a morning person, do it when you are most alert. Give God your best! Set aside “x” number of minutes to study, and “y” number of minutes to pray. Be flexible to the Spirit’s leading within this framework! If you have a short attention span as I do, then break it up throughout the day. Perhaps read from the OT in the morning, a passage from the NT at lunch, then read a devotion and practice intercessory prayer before bedtime. Remember, this time is holy, which means it is to be set apart to, and for God only. If you are just being devoted to your plan and time, then there will be little room for Christ. The plan is the tool for growth, not the growth itself.

I. SHARE: What you have leaned (Psalm 55:14; Matt. 18:20; Rom. 12; 2 Cor. 12:18). We learn also by doing and sharing. What we have been given is usually not meant for us solely, it is a gift that keeps on giving as we, in turn, help others! A willing heart, a teachable spirit, the willingness and availability to share are essential for a disciple of our Lord! From these nine precepts, we realize that from the character of Christ will come the conduct of Christ, if we choose to follow Him. Then, those values of our daily walk that drive our behaviors, will, in turn, influence others and build our character. You cannot lead where you have not

been, or when you do not know the direction to go. This is why discipleship is so essential to the aspect of being a Christian. We are called, not to just visualize discipleship, but to do it, not to just talk about it, but to do it. One cannot just think about dinner and satisfy hunger. The ingredients need to be gathered, the meal has to be prepared. Then it is eaten! The Christian who wants to become deeper and more mature, and the effective church will take Scripture and the call of our Lord seriously, and then implement it into the function of applying it into their lives!

APPLICATIONS: Here are some thoughts to consider about turning and applying your devotional time into action:

A. You will never be able to fully experience the complete value of a devotional time until you discipline yourself to apply what you have learned. Study with the determination that God will give you an application. Then, be willing and able to put it into action without fear or trepidations. Allow your trust in Christ be real and exercised!

B. Make your applications measurable. Think through the who, what, where, when, how and why, such as, “I will begin showing more love to my neighbor by asking if there is anything I can pick up for them from the store next time I go shopping.”

C. Sometimes you will see four or five specific ways the passage you have studied can be applied. It is better to select one you want to apply from the Word that day and do it. If you try to implement three or more ways, you will most likely get frustrated and fail. If you cannot decide, stick to the first one that pops up, or the area where you need the most help.

D. Make most of your applications short-range, such as things you will do within the next day or so, or within the week. Periodically, God will give you an application that you will need to work on for a longer time. When that happens, rejoice and praise God, for this will build you up. At the same time, continue to work on fresh, short-range applications. See them as baby steps that will eventually turn into a marathon. Let God do a new work in you each day, and be thankful He wants to work in you.

Conclusion

There are many ways we can do devotions and study the Bible effectively. There is no “best” way, only that we do it! Many Christians feel all they have to do for their spiritual growth is sit in a pew, turn on the television or radio, or naturally receive their knowledge for being a Christian. However, this is not the way to transform our lives. You can no better grow deeper in Christ without any effort as you can go to a grocery store and stand in the produce section and become a cucumber. To be a mature and growing Christian, we must read and get into the Word of God ourselves. We do it through prayer, hard work, discipline, concentration, application, and even more prayer!

Take this to heart: Jesus never asked anyone to do anything without enabling them with the power to do it. Let this be your encouraging motive (Matt. 28:20)!

Remember, Christ loves you, and wants the best for you. His way is the best way, and we need to have Him and the perspective of eternity in mind, not our limited feelings and desires!

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment.” (1 Cor. 2:14-15)

Some passages to consider on discipleship and mentoring which are not options, but a command: Proverbs 18:24; Matthew 7:18-24; 10:1-42; 19:28-30; 28:16-20; Mark 1:1-5; 1:35 – 2:12; Luke 9:23-25; 48; Luke 14:26-27; John. 8:31; 12:20-26; John 14; 15; 1 John: 5:3; Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 3:5-11; 12; Galatians 6:1-10; 2 Timothy 2:7; 1 Peter 3:15.

RESURRECTION POWER

EASTER TO PENTECOST DEVOTIONS

BY GARY MOORE

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RESURRECTION POWER

When you think of the resurrection, what comes to mind? For many of us it is an event that took place about 2,000 years ago. We discuss it at Easter, but how often do we use it in our everyday vernacular? Probably not very often. We might talk about an entertainer, an athlete or a politician who has “resurrected” his or her career, but for the most part, resurrection is a religious word that has little to do with our everyday life.

For the next seven weeks we will journey together to discover more about the resurrection. However, we don’t want this to be just an intellectual pursuit. We will learn what God’s Word says to us about this resurrection power, but if that’s all we do, it will not be a very profitable journey for any of us.

The resurrection power Paul describes in Philippians 3: 10-11 is life-changing. Many of you would agree, but you are only thinking about what God does for us when we encounter Christ and come to Him for forgiveness and eternal life. That is life changing. Yet the resurrection power Paul describes in the context of knowing Christ has the power to change how we live every day. That’s a bold statement. It may even be one with which you disagree.

This journey is about discovering how this resurrection power can be life-changing in every area of our lives. I am asking each of you to be open and allow God to show you how this resurrection power unlocks the key to living with victory, meaning, purpose, fulfillment, and power.

Perhaps this would be a good time to pray together.

“Lord, we know that you have blessed us, loved us, forgiven us, and chosen us. We want to live our lives in a way that pleases you. We want to know you, Jesus, and the power of your resurrection. Amen.”

WEEK ONE

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” Philippians 3:10-11.

DAY ONE

What do you think of when you hear the word “power”? Of course, it usually depends on the context. If you are talking about sports, I’m sure there are names of teams or individuals that immediately come to your mind. When you think of politics you might think of a president or a prime minister. When you think of powerful personalities you may think of Mother Teresa or Gandhi. There are a lot of other contexts in which we talk about power.

When you hear the words “spiritual power,” what comes to your mind? Many of us may think of faith, healing, deliverance, miracles, or prophecy. We certainly would not be wrong, as these things can be associated with spiritual power. So, let’s give ourselves a little test. If the things I just mentioned are expressions of spiritual power, how would you rate your own life? How much faith, healing, deliverance, miracles, and prophecy do you see at work in your life? For many of us the answer would be “not much,” or “certainly not enough.”

Let’s look at another area associated with spiritual power. Remember the words of Jesus just before He ascended to the Father in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Oh, we didn’t even want to hear that. When it comes to witnessing we know we are way behind, power or no power.

We like the idea of spiritual power, but many of us have to admit we hope we can keep plugging along and leave the power end of it to someone else, like pastors or missionaries or evangelists. Most of us are just trying to survive, to put one foot in front of the other and make it to tomorrow, only to do the same thing again.

We love God and are aware of His presence and grace, but how many of us would actually characterize our lives as powerful, at least in a spiritual context?

I believe we can live spiritually powerful lives right where we are. God has given us everything necessary through His Son, Jesus Christ. Perhaps we just need to look in the right places.

Like any other member of the human race, I sometimes misplace things around the house. I know you find that hard to believe, but it does occasionally happen. Being who I am (the male of the species), I usually start looking for it myself without asking for any help. Usually, I don't find it. Finally, swallowing my male pride, I ask my wife if she can help me find it. In what seemingly takes no time at all, she will find the missing item. Why? She knows how to look in the right places. So, let's take some time to ask the Holy Spirit to help us look in the right places.

Prayer of the day:

“Dear God, I am aware of your presence and grace. You have given me everything necessary through your son, Jesus Christ. During the next days please help me look in all the right places to live spiritually powerful lives here where I am. Amen.”

DAY TWO

So, what is this resurrection power? Let's take a closer look at the verses in Philippians 3: 10-11. Verse 10 begins with the words, “I want to know Christ.” Read Philippians 3:8-9, focusing on verse 8, “. . . I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” Wow! That is a powerful statement. Let's be honest and ask the question we really want to ask, “Did Paul really mean what he said?” How did knowing Christ mean so much to him that he could say everything else was loss compared to that?

Our tendency at this point is to say he is the Apostle Paul and I am me, so I cannot reach that level of relationship with God. I don't believe that! You can and so can I. How? By letting the resurrection power of God, through Jesus Christ, transform your life.

Let's look closely at our Scripture verse. The word "know" in verse 10 is an interesting word. When we use this word in our own cultural context, we can miss what Paul is really saying. When someone asks you if you know someone else, how do you usually respond? Often you will answer yes, even though the person is only an acquaintance. When pressed, you may further qualify by saying something like, "Well, I don't know him very well, but I know who he is."

The word Paul uses in verse 10 would have never been used in that context. The verb he uses for "to know" in the Greek language carried with it the meaning of the closest, most intimate relationship possible. In fact, this word was often used in the Greek culture as the word for sexual intercourse. To use this word in the context of "knowing Christ" meant this was the closest, most intimate relationship Paul shared. It also implies Paul was known in this relationship in the same way.

What is the closest, most intimate relationship you share right now? If you are married, I hope it is with your spouse. How did this relationship become so close and intimate? Spend a few moments thinking about how this relationship developed. As you do, you will begin to understand what Paul means by "knowing Christ." Then, ask yourself how your relationship with Christ is developing. Are you going through the same process with Christ that you have gone through with your spouse? Think about how you can begin to change your relationship with Jesus so you may begin to say with Paul, "I want to know Christ."

Prayer of the day:

"Lord, I don't want to say: 'Well, I don't really know Him very well.' But I do want to say: 'I know Him!' I can only develop this intimate relationship with you by becoming more and more like you. Help me, Lord, to know you on a moment-by-moment and day-by-day basis. Amen."

DAY THREE

We cannot experience the resurrection power apart from knowing Christ. That is why John 15:4 is such a help to us. This is the passage where Jesus declares to His disciples that He is the vine and we are the branches. He says in verse 4, "Remain (abide, dwell, live) in me, and

I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (additions mine). Bringing that into our verse in Philippians, we can see that Paul’s terminology for being in the vine is “knowing Christ.” Bearing fruit, which in this case is experiencing resurrection power, is a result of being in the vine or knowing Christ.

Just what is this resurrection power? To answer that question we need to look at our situation and understand why we often feel powerless, even though we may be Christians. For our purposes, we would define a Christian as one being “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5: 17) and an active follower of Jesus Christ. If that does not describe you, now would be a good time to stop and ask Jesus to come into your life so that you can begin to know Him. That starts with repentance and confession. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess (repent) our sins, he (Jesus Christ) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify (cleanse) us from all unrighteousness” (additions mine).

What is our condition? What is it that keeps us from living with spiritual power? We could probably list a lot of things, most of them external. By that I mean things like our circumstances, life situations, lack of biblical knowledge, church, or opportunities. Some of these may be contributing factors, but in themselves, they are not the reasons for our lack of spiritual power.

No, there are two things that keep us from spiritual power, or the resurrection power that Paul talks about and demonstrates. When we have storms that bring high winds, we often experience a power shortage and lose power for a time. In many places in the world, this is a common occurrence, with outages lasting for days.

What keeps us in a somewhat perpetual spiritual power shortage? It is sin and death. When we examine our lives, we can trace our lack of spiritual power to these two enemies. Take a few moments for reflection and prayer. What do you really think about sin and death? Be honest; do some serious thinking.

Prayer of the day:

“I pray today that I can seek you and that I can really look into my life and find what might be hindering me from the spiritual power or the power of your resurrection that Paul talks about. I want to remain in you to bear fruit. Amen.”

DAY FOUR

After thinking and reflecting, you may disagree that sin and death are what is keeping many of us from experiencing spiritual power. How can knowing Christ in the power of His resurrection really make any difference? Well, let us look at these two power killers and see how they affect our ability to live in and experience resurrection power.

What is sin and how does it affect us? The first basic statement about sin is that it is separation from God. In the first three chapters of Genesis we can see how sin separates us from God. Why is this? It is because God is holy and sin cannot be in the presence of the Holy God. Remember when Moses was in the presence of God and feared he would die? He knew man is sinful and if exposed to the holiness of God he would die. Isaiah had much the same experience when he said in Isaiah 6:5, “Woe to me.” Why was he crying woe? Isaiah was afraid he would die because he knew he was unclean, and yet he had seen the Holy God.

From the time of Adam, we have all been born with a nature of sin. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” In other words, we have been born with the disease of sin and it is fatal. Romans 3:23 says “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 adds, “The wages of sin is death.” You may be asking, “What does this all have to do with me?” The answer is: everything.

Let me ask you, how would you act and live if sin were not an issue, if it was something you knew was defeated and held no power over you? I know, some of you are thinking this is close to heresy and is dangerous. Well, it is dangerous all right, because a resurrection view of sin just might liberate some to live in a new, victorious power. When Jesus

died on the cross, what did He take with Him? Read Colossians 3: 13-15. What did Jesus take with Him to the cross? He took everything that stood in opposition to us, which is sin. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.”

I have another passage for you to look up and read. It is 1 John 3:4-10. Did you read it? I can never read that passage without saying WOW! Pay attention to the last part of verse 8, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” Our salvation, the forgiveness and cleansing of sin and eternal life, was not the primary reason Jesus came to the earth. It is a by-product of the destruction of the devil’s work. Now, according to these scriptures, if Jesus accomplished what He came to do, then what power does sin have over us?

The resurrection of Jesus completed this work of destroying what the enemy was trying to do. The resurrection validated Jesus’ death. Therefore, it validated everything His death accomplished, including power and victory over sin for those who are “in Christ.” Hallelujah and Yes!! Living in the power of the resurrection means living in freedom from sin.

Prayer of the day:

“Thank you Jesus for taking all of my sin when you were nailed and died on that tree for me! Thank you because I can live freely in you. Please help me to not forget the meaning of the power of your resurrection. Amen.”

DAY FIVE

I am sure you are still thinking over the whole discussion of sin. You might be thinking the news just can’t be that good. Well, resurrection power is that good. We will talk some more about this issue next week when we look at how we get resurrection power. Today, let us look at the second issue that keeps us from resurrection power: death.

No one wants to talk about death. Consciously, or subconsciously, we may have bought in to the philosophy that we only go around once in life, so we better grab for all that we can get. With that mindset, what

do we do when confronted with the subject of death? We ignore it. Or, in many cases, we try and cheat it by denying it. How do we do this? Oh, in many ways, not all of them bad, but lending to the notion that we have to get everything done before we die.

Why do we have to die? Well, because of sin. In Genesis 2:17, God says to Adam and Eve that they “must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” Up until this point in their relationship with God, Adam and Eve did not face the prospect of death. So, the implication is that they were created to live forever; that they were created in the very image of God (See Genesis 1:27). The reality is that Adam and Eve did die. Not right away, but they faced death from that day on. The reason: sin, their own disobedience to God. As we have already seen, Romans 5:12 says that sin and death entered the world through Adam and that we all catch the disease and experience the consequences of that disease: death (Romans 6:23).

Think of Jesus on the cross, if you will. It is not a pleasant picture. The more we look, the more disturbing it is. We should be there. That should be us hanging there. It is not right, is it, for one who is innocent to be condemned unjustly? Is there anything in our lives that can cause more righteous indignation than when an innocent person is falsely condemned? And yet, every time we look at the cross Jesus is the one hanging there, not me, not you. We are still trying to come to terms with 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Why did God do it? We have already seen the answer: to destroy the work of the devil; to remove the condemnation of death from those who are in Christ; to take us off death row and give us an eternal outlook.

Wait a minute, you say. You made a mistake. He died to give us eternal life, not an eternal outlook, whatever that is.

No, I didn't make a mistake. Neither did God. He, through Christ, restored us to the original possibility of living eternally with Him. That is why those of us who are in Christ “are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit,” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If you knew that you were going to live forever, that death was not going to be an issue, how would it change the way you live? Ah, you say, but we are going to die. Doesn't the Bible teach that "man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment," (Hebrews 9:27)? Yes, it does, but for those who have experienced the resurrection power, those words mean something different. Many of us put our bets on this life. I've got to do everything, see everything, feel everything, accomplish everything and accumulate everything, because my time is running out. Heaven? Isn't that just where I while away eternity sitting on a cloud playing a harp?

Open your Bible and read Philippians 3:18-21. Living in the power of the resurrection means that we have a different point of view. It is the kingdom of heaven/God point of view. DEATH IS NOT THE FINAL ANSWER. If that is really true, then it really does change everything. That is what this journey together is about. How does living in resurrection power change the way I live?

Prayer of the day:

"I praise God today because death is not the final answer for me. Please show me the way to live to make a difference and live in the power of resurrection. Let me be transformed into your likeness. Amen."

DAY SIX

Today I would like you to reflect on what you have read for the first five days. Write out how your life might change if sin and death were basically removed as obstacles. Even if you don't agree yet, do it anyway. Just see what you might come up with. How might your perspective on life change if you could actually live in the power of the resurrection?

Prayer of the day:

"I am reflecting on you today, Lord, on what you have showed me through the past days. Please let me see how my life can change if I actually live in the power of Your resurrection. Amen."

DAY SEVEN

Today I would like you to take some time alone and open your Bible to Psalm 103. Look at this Psalm through the eyes of resurrection power. Read it, sing it, let it speak back to you. Have a great day. See you tomorrow when we begin to answer the question, “How do I get resurrection power?”

Prayer of the day:

“Your wondrous love towards me is awesome, all these mercies that come from your hand, all these promises that are written in this Psalm, can be mine as I believe and see through the eyes of your power. Amen.”

WEEK TWO

“Remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” John 15:4.

DAY ONE

I remember hearing a story about a young man who was going to travel to England from America. He had come to America from England as a young boy with his parents and had long been planning to visit his homeland. This was before air travel was common, so he would book a cruise ship from New York to England. He saved his pennies for years until he finally could afford a ticket on the cruise liner. When the ship sailed, he was on it and he could scarcely believe his dream was actually coming true.

When dinner time came, the young man retreated to his room, took some cheese and crackers that he had brought along, for he was on a very tight budget and did not want to waste anything. The cheese and crackers tasted good and he was so excited that he didn't mind eating cheese and crackers for the 12-day trip.

As the days went by, the young man made a friend and the two would often sit on the deck and talk. One day they talked until it was time for dinner and his friend asked the young man if he would see him in the dining room. The young man thought longingly of the dining room; by now his crackers were soggy and his cheese was stale. He said to his friend, “Oh, I would give anything to be able to eat in the dining room, but I just have no extra money, so I better go to my room and eat my cheese and crackers.”

His friend looked at him with astonishment. “Don't you have a ticket to be a passenger on this ship?” he asked.

“Of course I do,” replied the young man. “How else could I be here?”

His friend gently explained, “Don't you realize that your ticket entitles

you to eat in the dining room every meal? It is included in your fare.”

This story reminds me of so many Christians I know or hear about. We are trying to make it on our journey with Jesus on cheese and crackers when He has offered us so much more. The spiritual power we have been missing, the resurrection power of which Paul speaks, is available to all of us. The question then is how do we get it?

Many of us have responded to a call, a message, or a gospel presentation of some kind. In some form or fashion, we learned that if we asked Jesus to forgive us, He would indeed forgive us of our sins and live in our heart. If we prayed that prayer, then we were “born again,” “saved,” or “became a Christian.” All of this is true. As amazing and astounding as it may seem, that is the invitation Jesus gives us. The scriptural basis usually cited is John 3:16. No truth could be greater than what is explained there.

It is important, however, to understand the word “believe” in the New Testament is always an action word. In other words, when you read the word believe in the Bible, it is coming from the viewpoint that you do what you believe and you believe what you do. (James 2:14-19) Reflect on your own experience of salvation. Can your journey with Christ be characterized by the verses in James 2?

Prayer of the day:

“Thank you Lord for inviting me to your table of salvation and power. I want to make it on my spiritual journey with you and I don’t want to be missing that spiritual power. Amen.”

DAY TWO

When we invite people to church or try to share the gospel with them, we often try to make it as easy as possible for them to believe. Remember last week when we looked at Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death?” Well, the rest of that verse says, “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Salvation is a gift and it absolutely comes through grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Let's look back at John 3:16 from yesterday. If the appeal is to "believe" in Jesus Christ so that I can receive eternal life, what do I need resurrection power for? Certainly I will need that power when I die, but not before then. If the only words on my "cruise ship's ticket" are not to perish and to have eternal life, then how do I know what I am missing? Just like the young man eating stale crackers and cheese on the ship, I need to read what else is covered by the ticket.

How did Jesus call people to become "Christians" or be "saved" or to be "born again?" Actually, He didn't. Oh, He did tell Nicodemus that he would have to be "born again" (which literally means to be born from above or born of the Spirit). But notice what Jesus also said in that verse (John 3:3). He said no man can see the kingdom of God unless he is born of the Spirit. I would like you to read John 4:18-22. What did Jesus say to Andrew, Peter, James and John? "Come, follow me." In Luke 5:27-31, Jesus calls Levi (Matthew) in the same way, "Follow me."

You may say those were His disciples; Jesus referred to them differently than just ordinary people like you and me. If you really want an insight as to how Jesus called people to this life of resurrection power, read Matthew 19:16-26. Now, contrast that with how we present the gospel to people. When the young man said he had kept the commandments Jesus listed, we would not only have baptized him, we would have put him on the church board! What was Jesus' final appeal? "Come, follow me."

The fact is we cannot follow Jesus in our own strength. That is why, when He was asked in Matthew 19:26, "Who then can be saved?" He answered, "With man this (being saved and living in resurrection power) is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (addition mine).

Reflect again on your own response to the gospel. Did you respond to become a Christian, go to heaven, have your sins forgiven or to follow Jesus?

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Lord, I do not want to follow you in my own strength; I would be foolish to do so. But, I know I can follow you as I believe and as you have written, 'with man it is impossible, but with you all things are possible.' Amen."

DAY THREE

One of my favorite passages in the entire Bible is found in Matthew 16:13-28. Turn there now and we will read it together. This moment Jesus shares with His disciples comes in the midst of some great days. Jesus had calmed a storm, cast out demons, raised a girl from the dead, healed numerous people and fed the five thousand. The disciples' heads must have been spinning at the power of God. While they were trying to digest all those things, Jesus tossed out the most important question any man ever has to answer... "Who do you say I am?"

Why is that the most important question for us? Only that all of our lives, all of the earth, all of heaven and all of eternity hang on the answer to that question.

The answer Peter gave was the correct one: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus knew anyone could say that, so He explained what this confession really means: It is the secret to living in resurrection power. In fact, Jesus says that through these "resurrection" people He is going to build His church and what a church it will be (verses 18-19). He then gives them a preview of what He is going to suffer and Peter rebukes Him. Why did Peter rebuke Jesus? Peter rebuked Jesus because Peter still had his own agenda and did not yet understand the resurrection agenda.

In verse 24, we come to the heart of the resurrection-power life. The first qualification is "he must deny himself." Admittedly, this is not as appealing as "not perishing" and gaining "eternal life." Actually, those two things are inherent in Jesus' call to deny ourselves. What is it that we are to deny? Our identity? Our personality? Our passions? Our dreams?

There has been a lot of confusion about self-denial through the ages. Really, it is not self-denial in the way many normally think of it. For many, the concept of self-denial means giving something up, like maybe for Lent or for other purposes. Those times can be useful, but that is not what Jesus is calling us to in this passage.

Until we meet Jesus, we live our lives for ourselves. Even though others may control us to some extent, we are still intent on our own agenda. It

is an agenda that fits this world, or tries to. It is an agenda that is stuffed into the few years that we have on this planet and we want to make the most of them. Often, when God enters the picture, we are hoping His presence is going to help us fulfill our agenda. That is, God will help us be happier, healthier, more successful, richer or whatever else we are trying to accomplish on our agenda. Knowing Christ may help in some or all of these areas, but Jesus' call is far more than these.

The call to deny ourselves is the call to set aside our agenda. Remember what Paul said about being a citizen of the kingdom of heaven? That citizenship is the agenda Jesus is now calling us to. It is not about us; it is about Jesus and what He is doing.

Here is another Bible section for us to read: Philippians 2:1-11. In verse 7, it says Jesus "made himself nothing," which literally means Jesus "emptied himself." What did He empty Himself of? His deity? His Sonship? No. Jesus emptied Himself of His privileges—the privileges He had at the right hand of the Father, the rights of glory. He emptied Himself of His agenda so He could be redemptive. Verses 10 and 11 of that passage could have happened without the first nine verses taking place. Jesus would have been within His rights to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess. He would not have had to come to the earth in the flesh, become a servant or die on the cross. Had He exercised those rights, there would have been no redemption for you or me.

To deny ourselves, then, is to empty ourselves of our right to our own agenda so we may join Jesus in His mission of redemption. We might easily say, "Well, I want the not perishing and eternal life, but I really don't want the mission." That is not an option according to Jesus, in light of His answer to the rich young man. You say, "I can't do it." Neither can I. But because Jesus died on the cross and rose again, we can do it by "knowing Christ." It is called resurrection power.

Prayer of the day:

"Help me today, dear Lord, to be able to see in what way I need to deny myself; to not lose focus of the things that I need to set aside to follow you. I want your dreams to be my dreams, your passion to be my passion. I don't want to walk away from this commitment to you because I want to keep seeking you, to know you more. Amen."

DAY FOUR

Yesterday we saw the first part of Jesus' call to the life of resurrection power. Today we look at the second part found in Matthew 16:24. After Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, He says we should "take up his cross." How do we do that? I thought Jesus died on the cross once and for all so we would never have to do that. How can I take up His cross?

Let's go back to our key verses for this journey, Philippians 3:10-11. "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings." What in the world does that mean?

Actually, in this world it means nothing because it doesn't make any sense at all. A call to suffering is not going to entice many people to follow God. Is that really why Jesus is calling us to take up His cross? The reason Jesus has us deny our own agenda is so we will be ready to take up His cross. Left to our own agenda, we would never do it. Remember, God's agenda is one of reconciliation and redemption. In Colossians 1:20, we read "and through him (Jesus Christ) to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (addition mine).

Remember David's cry in Psalm 51? Read verse 10. David knew the only solution was for God to create a new heart -- a heart that would beat after God's. David had been doing God's work, but on his own agenda. Now, David wanted his own heart to beat with God's. What would that heart look and feel like? David knew it would contain a right spirit (v. 10), joy (v. 12), a heart for the lost (v. 13), a heart for worship (vv. 14-15), and a humble heart (v. 17).

This is the heart of the cross of Christ that He asks us to take up. We don't have to if we don't want to, but if we don't, we will never know Christ in His resurrection power. Remember, one of the power killers was sin. This disease of sin that all of us catch when we are born (Romans 5:12) must be cleansed in order for us to have a heart for God and to take up His cross. When we are ready to identify fully with Christ, we are ready to take His cross. Resurrection power becomes possible when we read Galatians 5:24: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." Because

of their resurrection, because Jesus rose from the dead, He provided power and cleansing of our sin nature.

He cleanses our heart from the agenda of sin, which is all about me. Now, with this new heart David described in Psalm 51, we can “live by the Spirit” and “keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25). The key word in verse 24 is “belong.” I cannot belong to Christ until I have denied my own agenda and picked up His. Then I am sanctified, or set apart for sacred use, as Jesus prayed for us to be in John 17:17. Just think, through resurrection power I can have a heart that beats after God. Reflect a moment and check your heartbeat. Physically, your heartbeat should be somewhere around 72 beats per minute. Spiritually, your heart should beat with joy, for the lost, with praise and with humility. How are you doing?

Prayer of the day:

“I want the heart of the cross of Christ because He asks me to take it up. I want my heart to be filled with His spirit, full of His joy; I want to have a heart for the lost, a passion for them. But above all I want a humble heart. I want your heart, God. Amen.”

DAY FIVE

What does it mean to know the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings? Let’s look back at Matthew 16:24 for the third part of Jesus’ calling to a life of resurrection power. He calls us the same way He called Andrew, Peter, James, John and Matthew: “Follow me.” Remember how many times Peter wanted to follow Jesus, only to have Jesus tell him he wasn’t ready and he couldn’t do it yet? He was not yet completely on God’s agenda. Remember, God’s agenda is one of reconciliation and redemption. If we are going to go on that road, we will encounter suffering.

I had only been a pastor for about 18 months when I began to learn this lesson. I enjoyed preaching and leading people and doing those things, but I had yet to learn that those things are really only preparation for entering into the fellowship of sharing in the sufferings of Christ. I received a call one Sunday afternoon from a member of our church. This woman

had been teaching Sunday school in that town for a long time. She told me about a young woman she had taught some years ago who was now married for the second time.

The man she married had also been married before and between them they had seven children they were raising together. That day she and her husband had an argument. After a while, he went into the fields on the farm where they lived. She took a gun from the house and went to look for him. When she couldn't find him, she took the gun and killed herself.

The Sunday school teacher wanted to know if I would go out and visit the family. I must confess I did not want to. College and seminary had not prepared me for a situation like this and I had no idea what to do or say. When I arrived, the man's parents were there along with the seven children.

After a few awkward moments, I realized none of them were followers of Christ and probably were not thrilled I was there. Then I felt a gentle nudging of the Holy Spirit and I asked the husband if he wanted to go outside. We spent some time outside, just the two of us. I realized I didn't have any words or even Bible verses he could hear. All I could do was sit with him and try to enter into his grief and suffering with him. That was a lot more difficult than giving him some words of "wisdom" he could not have and would not have heard. At that moment it was the only path to reconciliation for that man and God.

To follow Jesus along this path means we will have to see others like He sees them. That is what Paul meant when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." He was seeing people from a new heart that was beating with an agenda of reconciliation and redemption. I must warn you, this heart will break easily. The things that break God's heart are now the same things that will break your heart. That is where the fellowship part comes in. Our fellowship with Christ becomes rich in these instances.

In no other instance that I know of do we get to know Him so well. We do not have to look for these occasions. If we are following Christ, if we have taken up His cross, if we have denied our own agenda and gotten

on His, we will experience the things that break His heart.

In our previous pastorate, we went through a time of suffering with a family in the church. Through a rare virus their 15-year-old daughter lay at death's door for 10 days. Our relationship with this family had been good, though at times we did not see eye to eye on certain things in the church. As we spent hour after hour together in that hospital, however, we began to fellowship in the sharing of the sufferings of Christ. The good news is that the daughter miraculously recovered and is a healthy young woman today. The better news is that our lives were changed by going through that together. We saw them a few months ago, nearly 10 years later, and there is a fellowship among us that remains rich and tender.

As we follow Christ our fellowship with Him grows. The resurrection power that conquers sin and death, cleanses me, and empowers me to be God's servant and "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings."

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Jesus, I ask you to make me want to be more and more like you, to see the world around me through your eyes. I want my heart to beat with an agenda of reconciliation and redemption. I want the same things that break your heart to break mine. As I follow you I want my relationship with you to grow. Amen."

DAY SIX

Take your pencil and paper again and reflect on your journey with Christ. Go through Matthew 16:13-28. How have you answered Jesus' question when He says, "Who do you say that I am?" How have you responded to the call to deny yourself, take up His cross and follow Him?

Prayer for the day:

"I praise you for letting me see who you are—the Son of the living God! Because of this I want to be the one to deny myself and take up my cross everyday and follow you. Thank you. Amen."

DAY SEVEN

Today read through and meditate on Psalm 37. God calls us to delight in Him. I believe this is part of the secret of resurrection power, of knowing Christ. Happy delighting! See you tomorrow when we begin to look at resurrection power and your calling.

Prayer of the day:

“Dear Lord, I want to delight myself in you, wait on you and keep your ways. I want you to be my strength in times of trouble because I know you will deliver me. Amen.”

WEEK THREE

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:8-10

DAY ONE

Do you feel called to something? Right about now you are probably saying I feel called to be a missionary to Hawaii or perhaps a beautiful Caribbean island. There is a lot of confusion about our calling in life. People have sometimes used and even abused the whole concept of a calling of God. And, as we know, people do all sorts of crazy and even awful things in the name of God.

What does it mean then, to be called of God? What does this have to do with living in the power of the resurrection? They do go together and our calling from God is where we really live out life in resurrection power. From all we know of God, we can have confidence that if God calls us to something, He will give us the grace and power to fulfill that calling. Let’s look again at our key verses, Philippians 3:10-11. Look at the last part of verse 10: “Becoming like him in his death.”

How do we become like Christ in His death? Are we supposed to die on a cross like he did? Well, some have, but I don’t think that is what God is calling us to. In Colossians 2:12 we read, “Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” Remember, we discovered that denying our selves and dying to sin, or being cleansed of the sin nature, is moving us from sin’s agenda to God’s agenda. Resurrection power frees us to embrace God’s agenda for our lives. And we have seen that while we are on this earth, our agenda is to join God in His redemptive, reconciling mission.

According to Philippians 2, Jesus gave up His rights at the right hand of

the Father to become redemptive. He asks us to have the same attitude and mindset as Jesus (verse 5). So, becoming like Jesus in His death is joining Him in His mission and dying to our own agenda. It is looking at life through the eternal perspective of resurrection power. This then prepares us for our calling from God. Take a few moments and reflect on what calling you believe God has given you. How have you responded?

Prayer of the day:

“I pray today you will give me the confidence that if you call me to something, you will give me the grace and power to fulfill your calling in my life. Amen.”

DAY TWO

How do we know that God has a calling for each of us? We think of the church as the “body of Christ,” and rightly so. However, the word for church in the New Testament literally means the “called out ones.” We can ask ourselves, “Called out from what?” The answer would be called out from the agenda of sin to a new calling – the mission of reconciliation. We are not only called from something but to something.

Turn with me to Hebrews 5:11-6:3. Why do we so often stay on milk rather than moving on to solid food? Why do we go round and round with the “elementary teachings” until we have discussed them, argued about them and divided ourselves over them? Why do we never seem to move on to maturity?

There are many reasons, but the major one, in my view, is we have not begun to live in resurrection power. It relates to what we talked about last week concerning John 3:16. We are more concerned with “not perishing” and having “eternal life” than with what God is up to now. We focus primarily on what we are saved from - the punishment for our sins - than what we are saved for - life in resurrection power.

Therefore, the focus of our Christian life is usually, “Are you saved?” The focus of Jesus would be, “Are you following me, denying yourself, and taking up my cross?” That may sound like we are coming close to a gospel of works, not grace. Far from it! We are saved by grace and we

walk in the Spirit by grace. The only work we really do is say “yes” to Jesus when He calls us to follow Him.

Even that yes comes by the grace of God working in us. When we are really captured by grace, we will desire to follow Christ. I have often heard people, when faced with some of their weaknesses, say, “I am under grace.” I don’t think that is really grace at all. It is saying, “Lord, I hear what you are saying, but I still have my own agenda. Give me enough grace so I can continue doing my own thing,” which is not grace at all.

A life lived in resurrection power is a response to God’s grace in my life and world. Spend some time today reflecting and meditating on God’s grace.

Prayer of the day:

“Dear Lord, I want to stay focused on my eternal life with you by denying myself and taking up my cross. I am saved by your grace and I walk in your spirit by grace. Amen.”

DAY THREE

One of my favorite songs talks about grace. Some of the words go like this:

“Your grace still amazes me. Your love is a mystery.
Each day, I fall on my knees, for your grace still amazes me.”

We are still talking about our calling. We are called by grace. God does not call us to something because He thinks we would be good at it or we deserve it. No, He calls us by His grace, then equips us to fulfill that calling. In that sense, our calling has little to do with us and everything to do with God. In fact, life in resurrection power is always about God, not about us. That is why it is so necessary to know and experience the cleansing of the sin nature. Until we experience this cleansing, we are still all about ourselves, no matter how hard we try to follow God. When we grasp that through the resurrection and death of Jesus the work of the devil has been destroyed, we can allow the blood of Jesus

to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Turn to Galatians 5:16-26. See how clearly Paul contrasts the agenda of sin and the agenda of the Spirit. There is no both/and here. It is clearly either/or. You see, when I have come to the place of denying myself (my own agenda), and picking up Christ's cross (saying yes to His agenda), I can follow Christ (live by the Spirit, verses 16, 25). This is what Jesus means when He says we are to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). Through resurrection power, the Holy Spirit can fill our lives. The original word for baptism was to be dipped in a dye and totally changed. We now are able to be totally immersed in Christ and changed from one agenda (the sin nature) to another (God's mission).

As we talked about last week, sometimes we take the power Jesus talks about in Acts 1 concerning the Holy Spirit and try to bring it into our own agenda. We relegate the power of the Holy Spirit to things like signs and wonders. Signs and wonders may very well be a part of the life lived in resurrection power. However, they will be a by-product of life in the Spirit. The power Jesus describes is power "to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1).

Paul characterized this resurrection life another way in 2 Corinthians 5:14 when he said, "For Christ's love compels us." If your life is still centered on yourself and your agenda, love will not be a compelling motivation. Verses 14-15 are a great expression of one who has been totally transformed by the grace of God. Because Christ died for us, we die to our own way. The alternative to that way is to live for others, thus a life motivated and compelled by love.

Now we are ready to look further to the calling God has for us. In preparation for tomorrow, read Ephesians 2:10.

Prayer of the day:

"My heart desires for you to equip me to fulfill your calling in my life; to live a life worthy of the calling I have received. I want to have a motivated life compelled by your love. Amen."

DAY FOUR

Ephesians 2:10 is another verse to memorize: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

What a statement. Another way to translate “workmanship” would be with the word “masterpiece.” Most of us probably do not think of ourselves as a masterpiece, but God does. Why? Because He made us. Some of you probably think you could have done a better job if God had asked your opinion first, that God could have made you better suited for the life you have lived according to your own agenda. According to this verse, though, He had something else in mind.

Look at the last phrase in that verse: “God prepared in advance.” In advance of what, you ask? Well, it literally means that before God created the world, He knew you would exist and when you would live. You are not a mistake. You have not taken God by surprise. God knew you would be on His earth right now and He has prepared both you and the earth for your life today.

You were “created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” In other words, God has specifically designed you for works, service and ministry. When we see the word “ministry,” immediately our minds go to being a pastor, evangelist or missionary. In a sense, we are all some of these things, but God’s vision is much larger than that. Try to look at the big picture for a moment. God is in the process of reconciling all things, both in the heavens and on earth, unto Himself through what Christ has done on the cross (Colossians 1:20).

Where do you fit in this picture? Some of us think of ministry as only inside the church. There are many ministries “inside” the church, to be sure. However, the church or the leaders of the church are also to equip the people to do the work of the ministry that God has called them to. It is true that a part of your calling is to be a part of the local body of Christ. We are, according to Paul in Ephesians 4, baptized into the body of Christ. Your calling is much greater; we are called to be a part of the global body of Christ.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. There's a lot of great stuff there, but focus on verses 18 to 20. Paul says that all of us who are "in Christ" are called to the message and ministry of reconciliation. We have been appointed ambassadors, as though God makes His appeal through us. Those are staggering words. An ambassador is a high calling. In most countries every ambassador is personally appointed by the president or prime minister. We have been appointed to this mission by God to be ambassadors for Christ. This is our calling.

Wait, you say. That means we all have the same calling. In the big picture, yes, we do. However, God, in His infinite wisdom has given us many ways to fulfill this calling. Think today about what kind of ambassador you are for Christ.

Prayer of the day:

"I would have never thought of myself as a masterpiece, but I am grateful you can see deeper to consider me as such. Before the foundation of the world you knew exactly how I would turn out to be, and yet you loved me. I am committed to be an ambassador for you. Amen."

DAY FIVE

Yesterday, we discovered we are called to be ambassadors for Christ who has given the message and ministry of reconciliation. Let's go back to Ephesians 2:10. God has made us in Christ for good works that He has created, called and equipped us to do. These good works are in the context of the bigger picture -- our calling as ambassadors in the ministry of reconciliation. In the resurrection life, we are on the agenda with God in His mission of redemption and reconciliation.

There are some things we need to consider as we carry out this calling: passion, opportunity and divine appointments. These are all ways God uses for each of us to fulfill what He has called us to according to Ephesians 2:10 and within the context of 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

What are you passionate about in life? What gets your motor running? What excites or challenges you? If your answer is "nothing," you might want to check with the doctor and see if you are still alive. More likely

you thought of many things you can be passionate about depending on the situation and the circumstances. What are those things? Take a piece of paper and list them. Try to bring these things into the context of your calling in Christ. At first, this may be difficult because some of your passions probably don't seem spiritual.

Remember when we looked at David in Psalm 51? We began to see what a heart passionate for God looks like. In the resurrection life, the heart beats for God and with God. We, however, have brought a number of passions from our old agenda that need to be purified and cleansed. Then, God can use them to help fulfill our calling. Let me share an example.

I grew up with a passion for sports. I loved to play sports, watch sports, talk sports, read about sports and dream about sports. That is not unusual for many boys in our country. As I got older, that passion became even stronger. What I didn't realize was this passion I had for sports was competing with God for my heart. This went on even after I began in pastoral ministry.

One Sunday afternoon I watched a sporting event and I was really into it. Tensely, I followed the action with every move. In the end, the side I identified with lost. The ending was close and controversial. I was still thinking about that game as I led the service and preached that Sunday evening, and I was still affected by the game.

When I reflected on that day, I realized my attitude was not pleasing to God. That started me on a journey in search of where my true passion really lie.

I still like to play and watch sports. However, now they are in context of the resurrection life. They are part of the bigger picture. And guess what? God is able to use our interest at times to accomplish His mission and ministry of reconciliation. If our heart really beats with God He can take other interests and lesser passions and use them as part of the "good works" He has created for us.

One of our goals in the small group ministry is to allow the passions and interests to drive the formation of some of the small groups. People can

gather around their interests and passions and fulfill some of the ministry of reconciliation.

What is the great passion of your life? Jesus wants to be there. Read Matthew 5:8 and 6:19-24. Honestly ask God where your treasure is.

Prayer of the day:

“As I have worked through these past two weeks on these devotionals I have been learning to know more about you and to know what you ask of me when you call me. I want to be more and more passionate about what I need to accomplish your mission and ministry of reconciliation. Amen.”

DAY SIX

Yesterday we looked at passion as one of the ways in which we may fulfill the calling God has given us. Again, we are all called to the message and ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors for Christ. Just as we do not all have the same passions and interests neither do we have the same opportunities.

What do I mean when I say opportunity? Well, opportunity can be the family in which we live, the place where we work, the neighborhood we live in, the school we attend, or other venues in our life that are a part of who we are. In the course of life, in each of these areas, we have opportunities to be God’s ambassadors and be a part of His mission in the ministry of reconciliation.

You might say that you have very limited opportunities in these areas. Maybe you can’t talk religion with your family; maybe you work for the government and can’t mention God. In the Scripture passage that we call the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), Jesus tells us to make disciples of all nations or people. Sometimes we read that passage with the emphasis on “go”: go to the entire world. It’s true we are to do that, but it could be translated “while going.” In other words, Jesus said, while going about the normal activities of life, carry out my mission. You are His ambassador in your family, in your job, in your neighborhood, and in your school. That is where He has you and that is where He has

prepared good works, in advance of the world, for you to do.

Opportunities are all around us, but often we are not looking. For example, when you are looking for a scooter and you have a particular model in mind, what do you suddenly see all over the road? You got it! You see the model you are looking to buy. They have been there all along but your mind and interests were just not keyed in to see them. So it is with opportunities to be God's ambassador where you are.

When you are living on your own agenda, what are you thinking about? You. All the opportunities that you see are really all about you. When we live in resurrection power, the agenda of sin (self-centeredness) is gone and we live no longer for ourselves but for Him (Christ) who died for those who receive His new life (opportunities) (2 Corinthians 5:15). We no longer see from a worldly (sin agenda, self-centered) point of view, but from a resurrection power, ministry of reconciliation, ambassador point of view.

I want to refer to the scooter again. If you have a Vespa, but now you are looking for a Honda, you are going to be looking for opportunities to see Hondas. You will see them because they are all around you. Opportunities to fulfill God's calling are all around you. We just need to look through the eyes of an ambassador of Christ.

When we live in resurrection power, it is not about us. We do not have to see where it all fits. Sometimes God allows us to, but we can trust Him that nothing is wasted. After all, if He created you before the foundation of the world as His workmanship and masterpiece and you were created in Christ Jesus to do good works, then He has some divine appointments already in His book for you.

Prayer of the day:

"Please dear Lord, let me see the world I live in through your eyes. I want to use my everyday opportunities to see you and be your ambassador wherever I am. Use me in a passionate way to make a difference for you. Amen."

DAY SEVEN

Take your Bible and read through Psalm 16. As you think about the boundary lines for you, perhaps you could write down your calling as you see it. Then list some of your passions and see how they can be used in the context of God's calling. List some opportunities that perhaps until now you have not seen as opportunities. Think about any divine appointments you may have missed or others that you now know were divine appointments from God. Tomorrow we will begin to look at resurrection power and how that affects our relationships.

Prayer of the day:

"Today I receive your word as a blessing when I can say to you: 'You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.' How can I not want to find the opportunities to serve you better? Amen."

WEEK FOUR

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

DAY ONE

We have been talking these three weeks about resurrection power. The two giant enemies of our soul -- sin and death -- have been rendered powerless by the work of Jesus on the cross. Colossians 2:15 says, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Hallelujah, amen, and yes. The power of sin and the sin nature can be broken and cleansed in our lives and the power of the Holy Spirit can set us on the agenda of God, namely His mission of redemption and reconciliation.

Relationships can be where the proverbial rubber meets the road. Most of our issues, problems, thorns, and difficulties can be traced to relationships in some way, shape, or form. It is hard to get along with people, isn't it? So, how do we bring resurrection power into our relationships?

Our best model, of course, is Jesus. But sometimes we have trouble with that because Jesus is God, and well, that gives Him an advantage. Well, that is true. Jesus was also God in the flesh, Immanuel. He was fully God and fully man. I don't know everything that means, but I do know He had parents and siblings and cousins and friends and colleagues and even enemies. So, He must know something. Maybe we should look to Him for how to handle our relationships.

We've been at this for a little while now, so have we gotten to the point where we can be somewhat honest with ourselves and with God? Let's try, ok? Here is what I want you to do. Take that piece of paper you have been working on and let's do a little exercise.

Let's list our relationships. Which ones? Well, start with your spouse, if you are married. (If you are divorced and not remarried, then start with your ex-spouse).

If you are not married, then start with a fiancé, boyfriend, girlfriend, or even hopeful. Then, go on to your parents or children, or whatever makes up your immediate family. Let's also include your colleagues at work or peers at school. Then include a neighbor and friend or two. If you have enemies, include them as well, just for fun. Now, turn to Matthew 7:12 and read the verse. Rate these relationships on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the very highest in light of the verse. See how you do. We'll check back tomorrow.

Prayer of the day:

"No one said it would be easy to have relationships with all these people, but you did. You even had enemies against you and you blessed them. Today please help me to find ways to bless others and bring resurrection power into my relationships. Amen."

DAY TWO

Most of us know the golden rule, "Do to others what you would have them do to you." We also know another version that says it this way: "Do to others before they do it to you." How did you do on the scale yesterday? Don't ask, you say. OK, I won't ask, but I think God will. Not because He wants to gloat over you, but because He wants to help you. He wants us to see that resurrection power is meant to help us where we need it the most: in our relationships.

Have you ever really asked yourself why relationships are so difficult? You scored really high on your relationships, didn't you? A marriage relationship that started out with two people so much in love with each other ends up a constant battleground of put-downs, sarcasms, and accusations. What happens? Why is it so difficult?

Let's look again at our two power killers: sin and death. Reopen the Bible to Galatians 5:16-26. Look particularly at verses 19-21. That is the sin agenda, remember? You would have to agree that the agenda of the sin nature is a self-centered one. It is all about oneself. Check it out: hatred, discord, jealousy, anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy. I mean, that is some pretty heavy duty self stuff. Now look at verse 17: "the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit." We have

established that every person is born into the world with the disease of sin -- the sin nature (Romans 5:12). Even though we may really like someone, or even love someone, guess who wins out in the end? Self.

Let's look at an example of how this works out in someone's life. Revisit David in Psalm 51. David is a great guy. God has called him to be king of Israel. He is fulfilling that calling and doing very well. He is a wonderful soldier full of courage (see his battle with Goliath). He is even a good spiritual leader and leads his people in worship. But, he begins to have trouble with relationships. His relationship with Saul goes sour, which certainly was not all his fault. Then, through envy and lust, he disdains the relationships he has with his own wives and commits adultery with Bathsheba. His relationship with her is based on sex and authority. Then his relationship with her husband, Uriah, turns to deceit and finally murder. What happened?

David finally recognized that his sin nature was leading him on the wrong agenda. He thought he was on God's agenda, but when the chips were down, or in his case, when the heat was turned up, he went for himself. That was why he said in Psalm 51:5, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." As long as our sin agenda dominates, our relationships don't really stand a chance. Remember, the sin nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit.

Praise be unto God, resurrection power can cleanse us from this sin nature and we can pray with David, "Create in me a pure heart, O God." When we begin to live in the reality that resurrection power has destroyed the devil's work (I John 3:8), we know we can have hope for our relationships. Maybe the golden rule can really become golden after all. Before you end today, read through Psalm 51 and pray for God to reveal to you what He wants you to see.

Prayer of the day:

"Create in me a pure heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.' This was David's prayer to You and it is also mine as we walk together through these weeks of growing to know You. Your resurrection power can cleanse me. Amen."

DAY THREE

God has cleansed our hearts from the sin nature. The power of sin to dominate us has been destroyed through what Jesus has done on the cross and through the resurrection. Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Had it been up to us, we would have written that differently, right? We would have said something like, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall do great things for God." Or, maybe, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall truly love their neighbor." But, "see God"? What's that about?

By now we should understand it. To see God means we are getting the right picture. We are seeing who God is, we are seeing what He is about (reconciling all things in the heavens and earth unto Himself through what Christ has done), and we are seeing our calling in the ministry of reconciliation. We cannot see these things until we first see God. To see God with a pure heart is to see God through the eyes of Christ and not ours. To see God with a pure heart is to will one thing: Him! It is not about us; it's about Him.

Now, if some of us are really honest, we might want to get off the ship right now. After all, there has to be something in it for me. If it is only about God, I don't want it. Here is the truly amazing thing about God's grace, His love and His character: In seeing God with a pure heart, everything I have really wanted is fulfilled. I can't say I truly understand this, but I have experienced it. What do you really want in life? Come on, be honest. It is just you and God. Is it happiness, success, pleasure, fun, power, material stuff, fame, meaning? Now, how many of those things have you achieved? If you have achieved some of them, even briefly, how did it make you feel? I guarantee it just created a hunger for more of whatever it was, didn't it? That is the really deceptive thing about the sin nature agenda -- you can never really achieve it. Once you think you have it, it just isn't enough.

Look at what all those things do to relationships. As long as those relationships are helping you get what you think you want on the sin agenda, then they are good, at least to you. But, if you are not getting there, what is keeping you from making it? It is probably someone else. As long as you get your way and others around you do what you think they

should, you can get along with anybody. When they have their own self-centered agendas, conflicts will happen.

Now, however, your heart has been purified by the blood of Jesus. You don't have to live that way anymore. Part of the problem is that we have developed habits and ways that we relate to people. Those habits and ways are based on the "old self" (2 Corinthians 5:17) with the self-centered sin agenda directing the show. Now we need to look at how Jesus wants us to look at relationships. Spend some time reflecting on how you treat people around you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be honest and to look with the eyes of a pure heart.

Prayer of the day:

"I believe that my heart has been purified by the blood of Jesus. Holy Spirit help me honestly look with the eyes of a pure heart, to see God through the eyes of Christ, not my own. I want to desire one thing and that is you. It's not about me; it's about you. Amen."

Day Four

Open your Bible to the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5-7. Jesus started His ministry with the same words John the Baptist began his ministry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt. 4:17). This was quite a statement then as much as it is today. The rest of Jesus' words and life were an explanation and demonstration of this kingdom. Some people through the centuries have claimed the Sermon on the Mount was not really meant for this world but was an explanation of a day to come. It is easy to get why some would see it this way. If we look at this passage through the eyes of the sin agenda and self-centeredness, there is no way the words of Jesus would make sense. However, if we look through the perspective of the resurrection power, then we can let Jesus direct us in our relationships.

Look at Matthew 5:43-48. As you read that paragraph, what do you think? It does sound a bit otherworldly, doesn't it? Love your enemies? Who can do that? Pray for those who persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you? Who could possibly follow these commands? Again, if we are looking from the point of view of the sin nature and its agenda, it

makes no sense. That agenda is about self, me first, and self-preservation. In light of that, I have to deal with my enemies accordingly, whatever that may mean. But Jesus said to love them. The word He uses for love carries with it a meaning of active good will. In other words, it is not just to tolerate my enemy, but to apply the golden rule. Now, how in the world do we do that? Well, we don't do it in the world, but in resurrection power.

Now we need to apply this resurrection power. Philippians 2:3 says, "In humility consider others better than yourselves." Does that mean our enemies? Well, I don't see any restrictions on it, so it must mean our enemies. Remember, in Philippians 2:6 we have given up rights, just like Jesus did, so we can be redemptive. In this case, what rights did we give up? We give up the right to exercise judgment even though others may have treated us wrongly, and the right to look out for ourselves. That will allow us to love our enemy with active good will and to be redemptive as ambassadors of the ministry of reconciliation.

Another place to apply this is 2 Corinthians 5:15-16. Looking through resurrection power, we can see that this enemy is one who Christ died for; therefore we can regard him this way as well, rather than an enemy according to the flesh. Is this easy? No! Is it possible? Yes, because this is the way Jesus treated us. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners (enemies), Christ died for us" (addition mine).

If Christ had seen us through a worldly agenda, no way would He have died for us. With the resurrection power of Jesus in us, we can look to him and love in the same manner. If we can do this with our enemy, imagine how we can apply this with our spouse, family, friends, and colleagues.

Read through Matthew 5-7 slowly. Let God bring some names and faces to your mind and show you how you can begin to apply the resurrection power.

Prayer of the day:

"I want to follow your example of humility, making no exception. I want to be redemptive as the ambassador of the ministry of reconciliation. You have showed me that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me. Let me see through your eyes so I can apply the resurrection power. Amen."

DAY FIVE

How was your journey through the Sermon on the Mount? Not all that easy to get through, is it? Someone said that old habits die hard. This is certainly true when it comes to relationships. Our lives have been shaped by our relationships and we have learned the mechanisms to respond to that shape. Unfortunately, most of what we have learned is destructive, but remember what God has done. In the resurrection power He has destroyed the work of the devil. Our lives can now be lived in the light of that power and not under the dominion of the sin nature. Remember, we do not have to walk according to the sin nature. We have been set free and we can walk after the Spirit in resurrection power.

Let's begin with the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15. Focus on verses 12 and 14-15. If there is anything that will void resurrection power, it is right here in these sentences from Jesus. Jesus is very serious about forgiveness and we should be, too. Our forgiveness cost a great price and Jesus does not want us to take it lightly. First of all, think about how you are forgiven. 1 John 1:9 says that through the blood of Jesus, all of our sins are forgiven. How forgiven? Remember a few days ago when you read Psalm 103. What does it say? Verse 3 says that the Lord "forgives all your sins." Verse 10 says the Lord "does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities (sin)" (addition mine).

Then verse 12 adds, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." I don't know about you, but that sounds like God is very serious about forgiveness. It cost a great deal, through the blood of Jesus, but it covers everything and then some. Get it? Actually, back in Matthew 6, Jesus says you don't get forgiveness until you give it. Read verse 15 again.

It almost sounds like the gospel of works again, doesn't it. No, our forgiveness was given when Jesus cried out from the cross, "Father forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing," it was an irrevocable offer that was validated by His resurrection. What does verse 15 mean? It means if I am not willing to forgive someone for what they have done to me, I am still on the sin nature, self-centered agenda. I am blocking the flow of Jesus' forgiving grace from reaching me and cleansing me. Jesus explains this more fully in Matthew 7:1-2.

He tells us in these verses that we are not to judge. It sounds good, but doesn't work too well, does it? We are full of judgment, and we have learned how to disguise it so well. At least we think we have. We can judge without a word, just a slight nod of the head, a knowing wink of the eye, a timely crooked smile, an almost unheard "tsk" or cluck of the tongue. So many ways we can pass judgment. Jesus says in verse 2:1, "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you." This is just like the forgiveness thing in chapter 6. The grace has been given; it is up to us to receive it.

Probably more Christians are bound up with lack of forgiveness, bitterness, resentment, and anger than any other things. These are relationship-killers. They void grace -- receiving it as well as giving it.

Why do we hold on to these things? Part of it is that we try to play God. We don't trust God to treat people fairly. Never mind that He did not treat us as our sins deserve (remember Psalm 103). We don't trust God to take care of people who have hurt us. Unforgiveness is basically the unwillingness to release someone from our judgment. Remember, with the measure we use it will be measured back to us. According to Jesus, we will not receive any more grace or forgiveness than we are willing to give.

Another reason these things block the flow of grace is that we still react in the old way of life, the sin nature agenda. When we truly discover the depths of God's love and the incredible depth of the resurrection power, we can come to the place where it is not about us. If it is not about us, we can refrain from judging others. We can release others from our judgment and forgive them. Remember, your heart has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus and your life in the resurrection power is no longer about you. Don't live like it any longer; go ahead and forgive. Release someone from your judgment and let God's grace flood in.

Prayer of the day:

"Oh, this feels so good to hear! I have been cleansed by Jesus' blood. There is no reason to keep on living any differently than the way Jesus did! I want to release someone from my judgment and let God's grace flood in! How awesome is He; He is the only one who can do this for us. I want to live my life in the light of that power! Amen."

DAY SIX

Of all the places that the resurrection power needs to be applied, it is certainly in the marriage relationship. Now, if you do not happen to be married, hang with us. I am sure you do have a close relationship with someone and you can live in resurrection power in that relationship.

If you are married, just stop for a moment and think about your marriage. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, what would you give your marriage? Now, it may not be a good idea to write it down, because your spouse might ask to see it and that might cause more problems, so just keep it to yourself. How has your marriage relationship lived up to its expectations? That is usually a no win question because many cultures set unrealistic expectations on what marriage should be and there usually is no way to live up to it.

We have to set the marriage relationship in the context of what we have learned so far. The old sin agenda of me-first self-centeredness has been destroyed by the death and resurrection of Christ. Our sin nature has been cleansed; our life has been refocused around Christ, and the cross of His agenda and His calling in our life - the ministry of reconciliation. How do we bring this into our marriage? A better question might be, "How do we not bring this into our marriage?"

One of the clearest teachings on the marriage relationship in the Bible is found in Ephesians 5. In verse 25 we read, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her." I don't think this admonition was exclusively for husbands, but also for wives loving their husbands.

From what we have already learned, we realize it would be impossible to love our spouse in this manner while following the dictates of our sin nature. The old sin nature agenda does not give itself up for anyone. It may make sacrifices of some sort, but those are always with an eye to how those sacrifices may benefit self in the end.

Now, with the resurrection power of Jesus setting our agenda, we approach the marriage relationship differently. It is not about us, but about Christ. Just think what a difference this makes. We are free to release

our spouse from our expectations. Why? Because God's grace was offered without expectations from us. (Remember Jesus on the cross.) We are free to release our spouse from our judgment. We are completely forgiven; we completely forgive. Jeremiah 31:34 declares that the Lord said, "I will remember their sins no more." So, when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that love "keeps no record of wrongs," he gives us a pattern for applying resurrection power. We don't keep score in the marriage relationship, or in any other relationship, for that matter.

The marriage relationship is truly a test lab for living life in resurrection power. The good news is that God is rooting for us, He is cheering us on. No one is more interested in our marriage being immersed in resurrection power than God Himself. Read Ephesians 5:26-27 again. Remember our calling in the resurrection power life, the redemptive ministry of reconciliation. Our ultimate goal in marriage is for it to be the showcase for this redemptive mission that God is on in the universe. Just as one day Christ will totally redeem His bride, the church, so are we to live redemptively in our marriage relationship.

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Lord, I want to love my spouse just as you loved the Church and gave yourself for her. I want to freely release my spouse from my expectations, because your grace was offered without expectations of me. Amen."

DAY SEVEN

Sit down with your pen and paper again and begin to reflect about your relationships. Look at these relationships through the lens of resurrection power. What kind of things can you change? Where do you need to give the grace of forgiveness and release others from your judgment? Go through your marriage relationship. If your spouse is doing this study, spend some time together discussing your marriage from the resurrection point of view in Matthew 5-7, Ephesians 5:21-33, and 1 Corinthians 13.

When you are willing to allow the truth of these scriptures to come alive in your life, then you have discovered resurrection power.

Prayer of the day:

“I want to find your grace for my life. I need to give grace of forgiveness and release others from my judgment. I’m forgiven because of your love for me, because you died and rose again. Thank you for the privilege you have given me to make this promise mine once again. Amen.”

WEEK FIVE

What does the Word look like with spiritual vision?

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:7,9

DAY ONE

In Acts 1:8 we read, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” These were the words of Jesus just before He ascended to the Father. In verse 11 we hear the pronouncement of the angels who had appeared to the disciples, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” In between those two verses is where we are. That is where we live.

Jesus outlines our mission. He says that by this resurrection power, which His disciples were about to experience on the day of Pentecost, we would become His witnesses, or as Paul put it, His ambassadors. Jesus would make His appeal through us. We would deliver the message of reconciliation, the fact that God does not hold mens sins against them. God is in the process of reconciling all things in the heavens and on the earth to Himself through what Christ has done on the cross (Colossians 1:20).

To accomplish this mission, God created the church -- the “called out ones” -- to carry out the ministry of reconciliation. I guess we should ask ourselves, “How well is the church doing?” If we look at the world and all of its problems, we probably would come up with the conclusion that we are not doing very well. Only God can determine that. But I would agree that the church of Jesus Christ could be having a greater effect in the world. We need to ask ourselves why we are not seeing

God's mission accomplished in the way we expect.

Some of you may think to yourselves that you are not really interested in how the church is doing in the world. You are just trying to put one foot in front of the other and make it from day to day. You will leave the church to the pastors. You feel you need to focus on just making it through the day. You have just uncovered the greatest obstacle to living in resurrection power.

Let's review for a moment. Resurrection power is living in the applied reality of what Jesus has done with the two great enemies of spiritual power, sin and death. According to 1 John 3:8, Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. By His death and resurrection, He accomplished that very thing. We can live free from the tyranny of sin. We can live and walk after the Spirit. As we have discussed before, the life in resurrection power is not about me, but about God. We probably agree with all of that, we just don't live like it.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. Read those two verses. If Christ's love compels me, where does it compel me to? The answer is what we saw in Acts 1:8. His love compels me to the world He has come to reconcile to Himself. All of the power, love, and grace is given for that purpose. That is why Paul can say in verse 14, "we are convinced that one died for all" and we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

What are you convinced of? What convictions direct the energy and focus of your life? Spend some time with the Lord and ask Him to show you His world.

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Father, thank you for not holding my sins against me. I don't want to live for myself but for you who died for my sins and rose again. Your love compels me to see through your eyes a world in need of reconciliation. Amen."

DAY TWO

If we review the Scripture verses we looked at yesterday, we will discover that living in resurrection power is not possible if we are not on God's mission of reconciliation. Remember when we talked about our calling? Being on God's reconciling mission does not mean I have to go to Africa or become a pastor. Remember the key elements of the calling: passion, opportunity, and divine appointment? All of those elements are present right now, wherever you are and whatever your situation and circumstances.

Many of us may feel like God cannot use us. If we think this way, we have just missed the secret of resurrection power. Sometimes we have nothing to give, all we can do is show up and let God do the rest; there are other times when we may be more actively involved. Once we are living in resurrection power, we are carrying out the mission and ministry of reconciliation no matter what is going on and no matter where we are.

2 Corinthians 5:16 says, "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view." How can we do this? Because our life does not revolve around us any more (remember the old sin nature agenda); it is all about God. Remember that new heart David prayed for in Psalm 51, the one that beats with joy, a passion for the lost, and a passion to sing God's praises? By the blood of Jesus and by His resurrection, the sin nature can be cleansed and our heart can be filled and saturated with the Holy Spirit of Christ. One of the problems we experience is that we have been living according to the flesh for so long that we have a lot of old patterns we live by. We go back to the same old beliefs and habits that we are used to.

In order for us to move on in the life of resurrection power, we need to allow God to help us develop new default mechanisms that are consistent with life in resurrection power. Perhaps you could spend a few moments thinking about passion, opportunity, and divine appointments and how you can make room for them in your life.

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Lord, let my heart be filled and saturated with the Holy Spirit. I want to have the new heart that David prayed for when he prayed for repentance. The one that beats with joy, has a passion for the lost and a passion to sing God's praises. Amen."

DAY THREE

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” Most of us probably read that as “our sins have been forgiven and they are gone.” That’s true and it’s part of the meaning. But there is more to it than that. This “new creation” is the creation in the image of God that Genesis talks about when God made Adam and Eve. This is also where 2 Corinthians 3:18 is going when it says we “are being transformed into his (Jesus Christ’s) likeness with ever-increasing glory” (addition mine). Our citizenship has been changed and we are now citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Why do many of us not experience this transformation in the measure God has intended? Even though we have the possibility of life in resurrection power, our “mind is (still) on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19 – addition mine). Look what we find in 1 John 2:15-16, “Do not love the world or anything in the world... For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.” We have lived according to these worldly principles for a long time and they have become our default settings.

One of the areas that keeps us from really entering the life in resurrection power is money. How we use money, what we want from money and what we think of money is vitally important in the transformation process God is taking us through in order for us to experience life in resurrection power. What does God have to say about how we should view and use money as His followers?

A good place to start is in Matthew 6:19-24. It is probably not the first time you have read this passage, but let us look at it as we are now followers of Jesus in resurrection power. It is not about us, it is about God, who He is, and what He is doing. You might ask if we even have to look at money this way? I’m afraid so. There are some key phrases in the passage: “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven;” “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also;” and “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and money.”

I don’t think we can deny that money is a god in much of the world.

Most people would not come out and say so, but we certainly act like it. So, one question to ask ourselves: Where is our treasure? Usually, money follows its way to where our treasure is. Think about that. One way or the other, you find a way to make money available for where your treasure lies. If you are having trouble locating just where your treasure is, follow the money trail. What do you spend money on, whether you can afford it or not?

One of the most disturbing statistics I read recently is that less than 10 percent of people who attend church regularly tithe. You might ask, "Why should I tithe?" A tithe literally means "a tenth." As God made a covenant with the people of Israel, tithing became a part of that covenant. In Leviticus 27:30 God calls the people of Israel to bring "A tithe of every thing from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD." Tithing is bringing the first fruits to the storehouse of the Lord (Malachi 3:10).

Some have argued that tithing is an Old Testament law and that in the New Testament we are under grace. Jesus said two things that indicate tithing is still for us. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about paying taxes, He looked at the coin and replied, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." What belongs to God, according to Leviticus 27:30? The tithe. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Spend a few moments thinking about where your treasure is. If you don't know, ask God to help you locate it. Remember, in the life of resurrection power, the life of the pure in heart, Jesus is our treasure. How many habits do I need to change? We will continue the discussion of money tomorrow.

Prayer of the day:

"Today as we talked about where my treasure is I ask you to please help me to not forget where my blessings come from. I don't want money to be an obstacle to being with you; to have my decisions in life revolve around it. But I want to give freely to you because it all comes from you. Amen."

DAY FOUR

We saw in Matthew 6 that we cannot serve two masters; we cannot serve both God and money. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:10, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” Most of us throw up a quick disclaimer, “Oh, I don’t love money.” Some would go on to add, “I just love what money does and buys.” One of the most amazing and insightful statements about money comes from the richest man the world has ever known, Solomon. Here is what he had to say in Ecclesiastes 5:10, “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied...” Those are powerful words. Unfortunately, the pervasive love of money in our world has affected us and we are not sure whether we believe those words or not.

Yesterday we began talking about tithing. One of the things we established from the Word of God is that the tithe is holy and it belongs to God. In other words, the first tenth of what I earn and what I make does not even belong to me. It belongs to God. Did you ever hear a pastor say in a church service, “We will now collect the tithes and offerings”? The tithes are not an offering. They belong to God already. Anything we give to God over and above the tithe is an offering. We do offer the tithe to God as a part of our worship, but it is not an offering in the way we culturally think of offerings.

Take your Bibles and turn to Malachi 3:6-12. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. Our first reaction after reading this passage is probably, “ouch!” Many of us probably thought -- and maybe have been taught -- that giving to God is optional. If I am really committed and if I can afford it, maybe I will give something. After all, I am saved by grace, so what does it matter if I give or not? Obviously it means a great deal to God. If Christians don’t tithe, then guess what is happening? We are being disobedient and we are robbing God! Will God’s blessing be upon us and our land? According to His Word, absolutely not. Pretty sobering stuff, isn’t it?

Don’t just stop there. Go back through verses 10-12 again. God has a great blessing in store for His people and their land if they will be obedient in tithing. Storehouse tithing is how most churches who follow Je-

sus operate. We do not have any endowments, investments, or money coming from denominational sources. The only way we operate is by the faithfulness and obedience of God's people each week.

I don't know where you are in the matter of tithing. If you have been faithful and obedient, then you know the blessing and you are on the way of allowing God to bless you and give you the biblical mindset of money. If you have not been tithing regularly or at all, then I would encourage you to begin immediately. "Oh," you say, "we could never afford it." No, you cannot afford not to. God takes it seriously and so must we.

Here is something we need to remember about the life in resurrection power. When we come to a place of disobedience, we have just short-circuited the power. When we are cleansed of the sin nature and filled with the Holy Spirit, there is now a higher standard we are held accountable for. Listen to what James has to say in James 4:17, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do (obedience) and doesn't do it, sins" (addition mine). What we need to do from there is repent, which means a change of mind and a change of direction, then be obedient to what we already know.

Take a few moments alone with God. Ask Him to show you if there are any areas of disobedience in your life. If tithing is one of those, ask God to help you have the courage and determination to begin or to be consistent.

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Lord, I don't ever want tithing to be an issue between us. I want to give you what you ask of me and more. I know that obedience is a great part of our relationship, and that I can only do this with you. Amen."

DAY FIVE

Let's go back to Acts 1:8. It would also be a good one to memorize. The power that God gives us in the life of resurrection power is to be His witnesses and ambassadors in the world. How do you feel about that? You may be thinking it is enough to answer the calling that God has given you through Ephesians 2:10; that you are not really concerned about

the world. Why should we be involved in reaching the world?

Let us reflect on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. We are commanded in those verses to make disciples of all nations, of all peoples. That was also the impetus of Acts 1:8. I don't think Jesus' disciples had any clue what that meant when Jesus said it to them. They too were just concerned with survival. At least at that point, they were. When they were filled with resurrection power on the day of Pentecost, everything changed. God began to take them to places and peoples they did not even know existed.

We live in a wonderful land. We are allowed to taste and experience much of the bounty of our planet. I know it is easy to take that for granted. In fact, as we follow the agenda of the sin nature, like Solomon says, we are never satisfied. Now however, we are on another agenda; we are compelled by God's love. We are convinced that Christ died for all and He has given us the message and ministry of reconciliation. We are looking through different eyes now than we were on our old agenda (2 Corinthians 5:16).

If life is truly not about us, but about God, who He is and what He is doing, then it does not really matter how much we have, does it? Oh, now wait a minute. That's a little radical, don't you think? Yes, I suppose it is. You see, it does matter to God how much of this world you have. His concern is how you use it. Now, if the treasure of your heart is Christ, and your resurrection power heart beats with His, then guess where these things will flow? Take a moment and slowly read the following words of Jesus in Luke 12:48, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and for the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Contained in those verses is the essence of how we are to view money and material things in our world. Our mission is to join God in His reconciling all things in the heavens and on the earth to Himself through what Jesus has done through His death and resurrection. We must be involved, through prayer, money, going, giving our children, or any other way in the global mission of God. We must because we can. God will expect and demand no less. Yes, that is a responsibility. It is also a great privilege and blessing. I have seen it with my own eyes and there

is nothing like it. Let's all get on board and let the river flow.

Prayer of the day:

"Please Father, make me a good steward of what you have entrusted to me. As a human being maybe I feel like I can't do this, but now that I can see through different eyes than I used to, I know that you will always guide me and let the river flow. Amen."

DAYS SIX & SEVEN

I hope you can carve out some time today to be quiet before the Lord. Take your Bible and read slowly through Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Read through some of the other passages we have highlighted this week. Write down what you think God has been saying to you. What kind of changes is He calling you to make? What areas of disobedience may be blocking the flow of resurrection power?

Prayer of the day:

"Dear Lord, there is so much to look into, so much to change, but I know that your blessing is overflowing for me. Thank you for the way you have taught me through these weeks to see what changes I need to make to be closer to you and to be obedient to you. Amen."

WEEK SIX

How Do I Keep Focused?

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2.

DAY ONE

What comes to your mind when you think of the future? For some of us it may cause us to think of taking a few days to relax; for others, the next flood, cyclone or earthquake. How do you think God wants us to look to the future? Does it matter? After all, didn’t Jesus say in Matthew 6:34, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

I am sure Jesus does want us to live one day at a time. Let’s look at the big picture for a moment. Last week we looked at Acts chapter one. We saw that we are living between verse 8 and verse 11. We are living between the coming of the Holy Spirit with the resurrection power and when Jesus will return in the same manner in which He left.

We are in a time between the two comings. We live from the reality of what took place in His first coming and we live in the hope and certainty of His second coming. Those two events frame our existence, our purpose, and our hope. That is why it is so important for us to live as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. We know the old line, “We are to live in the world, but not of the world.” Easy to say, but as we have been journeying together these last few weeks, we see it’s not so easy to do.

We have been learning what this life in resurrection power is all about, but we also know how far from that we may be. Actually, we may not be far at all. Listen to the words of Paul in Philippians 1:6, “being confident

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

Again, this life is by grace, and God has enough grace to finish the good work in us that He has already started. He does need our cooperation, however. That comes through our obedience. Look what Acts 5:32 says, “...the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” In other words, the secret to maintaining the life of resurrection power is simply to obey God. As we do, His power continues to fill us and move us on His mission.

Conversely, we can see what happens when we disobey God. Power is short-circuited and we have to take care of the problem before we can continue our journey. The Apostle John described this ongoing power life in the following terms: “But if we walk in the light, as he (Jesus) is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies (cleanses) us from all sin” (1 John 1:7 – additions mine).

Walking in the light is obedience to God. That was the light Jesus walked in. We know that when Jesus prayed He said He had done everything the Father had asked Him (John 17). Interestingly enough, John says that when we walk in this light, we have fellowship with each other. What does that mean? Simply that we are living out our relationships according to this resurrection power. (See week 4.) As we walk in this light through obedience, Jesus’ blood continues to flow through us with its cleansing power. What is it cleansing us of? The sin nature, or all unrighteousness, as John says in 1 John 1:9.

So, how do we make this work? Well, actually we don’t make it work; God does. We can mess it up though, if we do not allow God to do what He wants us to do. We want to spend the rest of this week looking at some ways to grow in this resurrection power.

Prayer of the day:

“As you bring your work to completion in me, I want to walk in your light; to be obedient to whatever you have for me. I want to live out my relationships according to the resurrection power. Let your blood flow through me with its cleansing power. Amen.”

DAY TWO

Turn to Romans 12:1-2 (this is another one that you should consider memorizing). How do these verses help us grow in the life of resurrection power? We want to take a closer look at these two power-packed verses and see what God is saying to us.

Verse 1 begins with the word “therefore.” Now, that’s an amazing insight. Why is it important? When that word appears, it means we should look at which sentence preceded it. In the previous 11 chapters, Paul has been describing the great work of grace God has accomplished in and through Jesus Christ. Paul describes how desperately hopeless (he even calls us dead) our situation is without God and how deeply steeped in sin we really are. He gives us good news, though, and says that God’s grace is greater than our sin and our hopeless situation. He goes on to say that we can be freed from the condemnation of death row and we can actually follow after the Spirit of Christ.

Now, he says in verse 1, look through the wonderful eyes of God’s mercy and grace. OK, we hope we can do that, but what are we supposed to look for? Well, according to the rest of verse 1, Paul says God is calling us to worship. A call to worship? Wait a minute, we have spent weeks on the life of resurrection power, clarifying our mission and our calling. We’re ready to get to our work of worship. You may say you did not notice a call to worship. Let’s look a little closer.

Paul says we are “to offer our bodies as living sacrifices.” When we see the words “offer(ing)” and “sacrifice” in the Bible, it usually has to do with worship. In the Old Testament, the people would bring a sacrifice, usually an animal, as an offering to God. This animal would be killed and offered to God that He might hear their prayers, receive their sacrifice and forgive their sins. Now, we are called to bring our bodies as a living sacrifice. Isn’t that a contradiction? In biblical terms, how can it be a sacrifice if it is still living? Jesus made the true sacrifice. We read these words in Hebrews 10:10, “And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was perfect and does not have to be repeated again. Think about this, though: In the life of resurrection pow-

er, where is Jesus? 2 Corinthians 4:10 says, “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” So, the living body we are presenting in worship is a body in which Jesus lives. That is why the next phrase can be true in verse 1, “holy and pleasing to God.” Our presentation of worship can only be holy and pleasing to God because of Christ in us.

Take a few minutes to think about worship. How would you define worship? How important do you think worship is in the life of resurrection power? We will continue our discussion of worship tomorrow.

Prayer of the day:

“I want my life to be holy and pleasing to you. I want to worship you in truth. I want to live out the life of resurrection power, presenting myself in worship to you all day. I want to look through the wonderful eyes of God’s mercy and grace. Amen.”

DAY THREE

We are looking at ways to grow in the life of resurrection power. Our key verses for today are Romans 12: 1-2. Maybe you have even memorized these.

Yesterday, we saw we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God in worship. Because Christ made the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), and we carry the life and death of Christ in our body, we can make an offering to God that is holy and pleasing to Him. Paul then goes on to say this is a spiritual act of worship. Some version may say a spiritual act of service. In a sense, the sacrifice that we are bringing is a reminder that we died to the old way of life (the agenda of the sin nature). We have been cleansed and set free from the domination of that old way of life and now we have entered into the life of resurrection power. The ministry or service that God has called us to is the mission and ministry of reconciliation. We are the ambassadors of Christ. We are bringing our bodies, powered and compelled by the love of and the person of Jesus Christ, to God in worship. A part of that worship is offering ourselves to the mission and ministry God has called us to. This is our living sacrifice.

To come before God in worship with no interest in His mission and ministry would be unacceptable worship to Him. Worship is not about us, it is about God. It would not be holy and pleasing to Him, nor would it be a spiritual act of worship if it were about us. In the same manner, if we come to God in worship, but are disobedient in tithing, how can that be pleasing to Him? Think about the mistaken ways we sometimes think about worship.

When we are used to following the sin nature agenda, which is all about us, then we get the audience confused. We perform worship and think we are the audience and that maybe God will show up and bless it. In the life of resurrection power, God is the audience. He will always show up, that is not the question. The only question is if He will be pleased.

When we have corporate worship, which is when the body of Christ comes together expressly for the purpose of worshipping God, it can be a wonderful experience. One of the ways of growing in this resurrection power is to be an active participant of corporate worship. Jesus says in John 4:24, "God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." To worship God in spirit means to worship Him with my heart, with my emotions, with my affections, with my desires, and with my passions. Anything less than that, according to Jesus, will not be acceptable to God. We also must worship in truth. God is forming us and transforming us by His Word and we must allow His Word to shape us. To worship God in spirit without regard to the truth will lead us to be emotional, unstable, sentimental people. To worship God in truth without spirit will lead us to be sterile, unfruitful people.

Worship, be it corporate or personal, must take us to the cross of Jesus. It is there we really begin to see what God is like and who He is. It is there, in worship at the cross, we see enough of grace to truly make us humble. All other humility is false. It is only through worship at the cross that the light becomes bright enough to truly deal with our pride. It is at the cross in worship where the conviction that Christ died for all of us can really take root. It is at the cross in worship and communion that I can truly sense community in the body of Christ. It is there I begin to see others from a resurrection point of view rather than a worldly perspective.

If I neglect worship, if I do not enter into worship, if I do not engage my very innermost self in worship, if I do not worship in spirit and truth, if I do not come to worship as a living sacrifice -- then I have no hope of knowing and experiencing the life of resurrection power.

Now, take your favorite worship music and your Bible and get by yourself to spend time worshipping Christ at the cross.

Prayer of the day:

“You know my heart and you know my being; this is my favorite part of the day. This is when worship comes alive for me, when I know that you speak to my heart. I want to worship you with my heart, emotions, with my affections, my desires and my passions. I want to keep on experiencing the life of resurrection power. Amen.”

DAY FOUR

Let's keep looking at Romans 12:1-2. We have seen and, I hope, responded to the call to worship in verse 1. Verse 2 moves us from worship to the everyday journey of walking in the life of resurrection power. Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil by His coming, death, and resurrection. The two great enemies that cause power shortages -- sin and death -- have been defeated and conquered through the resurrection. We no longer have to live under the domination of the sin nature agenda, which is all about me. We no longer have to live under the condemnation of death; we are citizens of heaven. Life takes on an eternal perspective. This life is not all there is. We have a calling; we are God's workmanship; we have been commissioned as ambassadors in God's mission of reconciling all things in the heavens and on earth to Himself.

We have also recognized that since we were born into the condition of sin and its agenda, we have developed bad habits and responses to most of life and life's situations. The good news is WE DON'T HAVE TO STAY THERE! That is what verse 2 is all about. “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.” JB Phillips, in his translation of the New Testament, put it this way: “Do not let the world squeeze you into its mold.” In fact, that is where all of us have been. But now, we are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). How then do we pro-

ceed to not be conformed any longer to the world's values, goals, passions, and pleasures? It's right there in the second part of the sentence: Rather than being conformed, we are to be transformed. Transformed into what? 2 Corinthians 3:18 clearly explains, "And we (new creations in Christ Jesus), who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his (Christ's) likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (additions mine).

A few days ago we read that we are being reshaped into the image in which we were originally created -- the image of God. That transformation will be complete when we leave this world and receive our new body (I Corinthians 15). Our journey takes us into glory as Christ increases while we decrease. Christ has completed this work on the cross by which He creates a new, clean, pure heart in us (Matthew 5:8), but now we must become transformed into His likeness. That is what life in the power of the resurrection is all about.

How does this transformation take place? Paul tells us it is by the renewing of our minds. What does that mean? How is our mind to be renewed?

Learning another language is difficult. Not only do you have to learn vocabulary, but the syntax is different; word order is sometimes different. In short, everything is different. So, when you hear someone say something or you read something in the other language, you run it through your language filter and figure it out. That is what we often do with God: Through our filter we try to figure out His ways, His words, His commandments, even His promises. They are given to us in another language, the kingdom of God language, the resurrection power language. Yet we filter them all through the patterns of this world, the sin nature agenda world. When you do that with another language, you can experience confusion, to say the least.

However, if you persevere and use the language enough, there comes a day when you realize you are no longer mentally translating everything through your own language filter. Your mind, at least in terms of language, has been renewed. That is where God wants to take us in the life of resurrection power. We will continue looking at verse 2 tomorrow.

Prayer of the day:

“Dear Lord, help me be transformed into your likeness; renew my mind, make me a new creation. I don’t want to be conformed but transformed. Thank you because you will do this in my life so I can live out the life of resurrection power. Amen.”

DAY FIVE

How do we keep from being conformed, instead becoming transformed by the renewing of our minds? Let’s go back to the example of learning a language. The first thing you need to learn a language is motivation. Many high school and college students take a year or two of a foreign language, but most of them never learn to speak the language for two reasons. First, it is just one class among many, so their goal is to receive a grade, not to learn the language. Second, they are not put in a position to use the language. How about you? What language did you take in school? Can you use it today?

Many Christians are just like these students. God speaks with the values, character, purposes, and passions of the kingdom of God. Yet, we often approach the Bible like it is a class at school. We read just enough of it to get by (we hope) and all we really want is credit (God, did you see that I read a Bible chapter today in my busy life?) and a grade (Is that enough to get me to heaven?). But the things we read and hear do not make much sense. We get confused and often come out with the wrong conclusions. We have made a few attempts, but we certainly have not been transformed.

We do much the same with prayer. Let’s be honest. What are most of your prayers about? You? Where do you think that came from? Remember that old sin nature agenda that is self-centered and all about you? Do your prayers sound like that? The language of prayer is not about learning certain words or phrases that sound right or speaking in tongues or any of those things. The language of prayer is the heart of God -- who He is, what He is about, and what He is doing in the world. Remember David in Psalm 51? He realized he had not been talking God’s language all those years. He believed that if he could have a clean heart, he could speak the language of joy, mission, and praise.

God could give him a clean heart in an instant, but his mind had to be renewed for him to speak God's language.

In verse 2 Paul writes, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is." In school it is common to take a test to show how much you have learned. One of the most often asked questions is, "How can I know the will of God?" You and God need to be speaking the same language. You need to get to the point where you are not running every Bible verse, every prayer, every teaching, and every impression through the lens of the old sin nature agenda.

Another necessary ingredient to learning a language is perseverance. You've got to hang in there. There is no shortcut to learning a language. It is a one-day, one-line-at-a-time experience. There is no shortcut to learning the language of the life of resurrection power. Listen to what Paul adds: "His good, pleasing, and perfect will." Isn't that amazing? It's not that God's will isn't perfect. It is that our understanding is less than perfect as we are being renewed in our mind and being transformed. As we grow in our life of resurrection power, the clarity, vision, power, and perfection of God's will grows in us.

Now, you might think this sounds too difficult for you. Just like learning another language, you have to persevere and you will eventually enjoy communicating with another group of people. If this sounds too difficult for you, then you should go back to week three and look at your calling again. Being transformed by the renewing of your mind is not optional for life lived in resurrection power. The good news is you can do it. God has called you to it. He has graced you for it. He has equipped you for it. He will see you through it.

I want you to have some liberating moments in your journey. You can be transformed. In fact, God has already done all of the work through Christ and His death and resurrection. We just have to intentionally say "yes" to Him every day and we will begin to know His good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Prayer of the day:

"I am so sorry, Lord, because sometimes I have treated the Bible as if it were a subject from school, reading it just to barely make it with a pass-

ing grade. I want to learn your language and be able to communicate with you. I want to persevere in you to learn it well. Please renew my mind and transform it. Amen.”

DAY SIX

As a way of review, go back through the pages of this notebook and review the Scripture passages we have discussed together. Read them, think about them, pray about them. Mark the ones you think God wants you to memorize. Make a commitment to do that. This can be one of the first steps toward the renewing of your mind. Then for the next week in your prayer time, do not pray about yourself. Don't ask for anything. Just talk to God and listen. Talk about Him and listen to Him.

Prayer of the day:

“Lord, today I am excited to be able to listen to you speak through your Word, your creation, family, friends and music. Thank you for letting me praise you in every way. It's all about you in my life. Amen.”

DAY SEVEN

It has been such a joy to journey with you these weeks. Take the space below and in your own words write your picture of the life in resurrection power. After you have written it, then make a covenant with God that with His help you are going to live this resurrection life. One thing I know is that God will keep that covenant. There is nothing He wants more than for you to live in resurrection power.

Prayer of the day:

“Today, Father, I want to thank you for helping me as we worked together these past weeks to understand the resurrection power. I want to live a transformed life to do your will and to follow your way. I love you and pray that I am fervent to find you and see everything and everyone around me through your eyes. Amen.”

