



Dear NCF,

As part of your most blessed and fantastic summer, we want to offer to you a way to keep connected with the rest of the campus Body. We encourage you to read through these devotionals and mediate on the material through the week, that our Lord may continue to work in all of us as one.

It is our hope that the included prayer calendar will also help us all to be mindful of our brothers and sisters during our momentary separation and take time out of each day to pray for the members of NCF, a few at a time.

Included also is a list of recommended reading for the summer that we encourage you to browse and a compilation of fun suggested activities to keep you out of worse trouble.

Please continue to pray for one another and the the Lord's direction of this fellowship. Devote yourselves to the Word, which gives life. Devote yourselves to one another and the salvation of the lost. Devote yourselves to Christ. Have the best summer of your life to date.

In deepest affections,  
Brian, Gabe, Jamie, Jonathan, Kevin, Megan, Sean, Stephanie, Summer,  
Zach, Dr. Keas, and Dr. Rorabaugh

# Week #ONE

Let's start off looking at a pretty powerful Scripture that might be a little too familiar for most of us. **Genesis 1:1** says, "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth." Too simple? Then you're not getting it. Maybe some other Scriptures will help reinforce the weight of this better. **John 1:3** says that "Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made." If we shoot over to **Colossians**, Paul reminds the church that "by Him all things were created: things in heaven *and* on earth, visible *and* invisible. Whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all* things were created *by* Him and *for* Him" (**1:16**).

We can so easily miss this, so let's look again at that fist verse of all Scripture, the beginning of the whole history of G-d and His people: "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth." What does that exclude? Nothing! Before everything else, before matter and molecules, *He* was.

A lot of times it helps us to go out into nature and see the work of His hand and just stand in awe of its beauty and complexity. Trees, birds, streams, mountains. But as wonderful as all these things are, He is not limited to them. We don't have to go outside to see what He's made when He made *everything*. The fact is, none of this stuff is "naturally occurring." All nature and everything else occurred supernaturally by His will and continue to exist because of it. Paul goes on in **Colossians** to say that in Christ all things are held together (**1:17**).

Look at yourself; He knit you together and engineered every part Himself. Look at the chair you're sitting on; He designed the matter that composes it, the force that keeps you in it, and the electrons that keep you from falling through it. Close your eyes and *think* of a tree; He gave you your mind's eye and authored the reality in which a tree can even exist!

This is all pretty foundational – in fact, the whole Book begins this way – but this should really affect our perception of G-d. If we really understood what all of this meant, it should make us more fearful of Him, more in love with Him, and more worshipful toward Him. Imagine everything around you, every atom and every thought (remember the mind's eye?) was labeled "Property of G-d." After all, if He made it all, if He's in charge, what is there that isn't His? **Psalms 24:1** says, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." We should have one response to that, and that should be to recognize that all is His and submit to Him in worship.

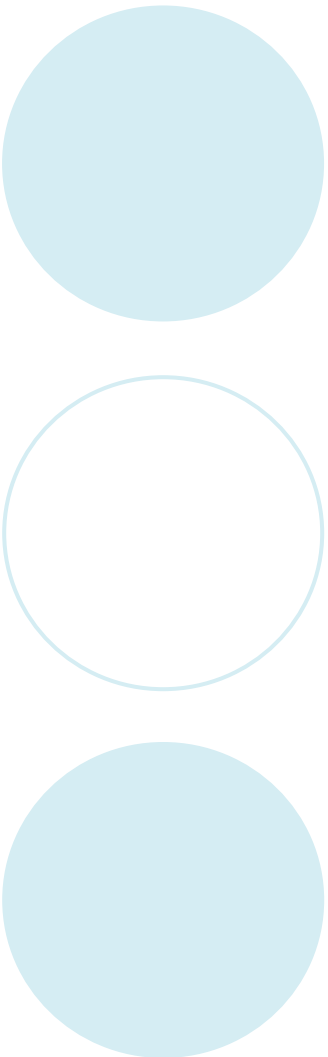
I hope you can see that there's a lot to unpack here, and I pray that the Lord begins to do that with you as you pray.

Meditate on these verses, but I'll leave you with this: J Vernon McGee said, "This is G-d's universe and He does things His way. You may have a better way, but you don't have a universe."

**PRAY.**

# Week #TWO

A lot of times, I have heard people ask and wonder if all the effort that Christians put towards reading their Bible, praying, discipling, and seeking after God really has



meaning or if it is all in vain. I think sometimes we can even begin to doubt it too. But really, that is completely the wrong way of looking at. In reality, everything that we do that is *not* for God is in vain. A good analogy of this is when you get an Easter bunny. It looks so deliciously full of chocolate, but then when you take a bite, it is completely empty and hollow on the inside. It may give us happiness for a second or two while we eat though the outside layer, but soon that chocolate is gone and we are left empty. That is how the things of the world are. Anything that is not done for God is going to leave us filling empty, hopeless and in despair.

A good book of the Bible that talks all about this issue is **Ecclesiastes**. It's not that long and covers this topic thoroughly. It's only 12 chapters so if you read 2 chapters a day you could read it in one week with a day to spare. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, one of the wisest men to live on this earth. About 3,000 years ago, he wrote the book all about this dilemma that we still have today. At the end of his life, he looked back on all the things that he did and found that everything he did apart from God was completely meaningless. Instead of facing the bitterness from learning through our own experiences, Solomon writes to spare us from that pain. Read about what Solomon, the wisest man in the world, has to say this week and learn about what really matters in life.

One other question that might arise from this topic is: how can we do everything for God? What steps should I take or what should I do to live for God? This definitely is the challenge that every Christian faces, living every moment of their day for God. It is not easy to do, especially since we are human and have no good in us. Therefore, we really can't live for God without his help. We need to completely submit to him and His goodness will then be able to work in us. Of course, we need to constantly be seeking him like we would any other regular relationship. Anyone that you truly love, you want to talk to and learn more about. So do that with God. Pray to him and read his word. This does not just mean that you do it one time and then you check that off the list. If you love someone, you are constantly trying to talk to them again. If you talked to them once that day, you wouldn't avoid talking to them again since you already talked to them. Nor would you not learn another thing about them once you already learned a fact about them that day. Finally, we need to be giving God credit for everything! We should not be doing things to make a name for ourselves or to impress people, but we should be doing everything to shine God's glory to everyone so that they may come to know him.

In **Isaiah 43:7** it says that our purpose and the reason that we were created is to give glory to God. It is not always easy to give him Glory in everything we do, and it can even cost us friends, family, jobs, etc., but it is what we are called to do. By giving God glory, we will be filled with his fullness of life.

Where has God put you today? Where do you need to give God Glory this week that someone may come to know Christ because of it? How are you reflecting God's Glory in everything that you do? Are you living every part of your life for God?

**PRAY.**

## Week #THREE

You must do the Lord's will in order to do anything of significance. (Read **John 15:5**)

The only problem is you can't do God's will – not alone, anyway. The Israelites already tried that. They were given the Law, were spoken to by prophets, and still did not obey

God even though they might have wanted to. They all became evil and selfish. (Read [Ezekiel 22:1-12](#))

So what hope is there for us? We want to do God's will but can't because we are imperfect, selfish humans. Is there any way out of this cycle? Paul expresses this frustration in [Romans 8:21-25](#). Notice how it ends: "Thank God! The answer is in Christ Jesus Christ our Lord." Had Jesus not died for us and rose again to set us free from sin, we would still be as hopeless as the Israelites were. But since Jesus did die and rise again, we can be set free from the cycle. When Jesus went back to heaven, he was able to send the Holy Spirit to guide all believers. So it was really a good thing that Jesus left the earth. One holy man can only be in one place at a time on earth, but the Holy Spirit can live in all believers' hearts. It's like having millions of Jesuses all on earth at once.

So back to the original discussion. If we accept the gift of forgiveness from Jesus, the Holy Spirit can dwell in us and guide us. So God himself is helping us to do His will. That's how we can do God's will: with His help. If you let the Holy Spirit dwell in you and guide you, your evil half will be immobilized and defeated. That way God can do things of significance through you.

**PRAY.**

## Week #FOUR

### **Psalms 46**

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup>Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

<sup>3</sup>Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

<sup>4</sup>There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

<sup>6</sup>The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

<sup>8</sup>Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

<sup>9</sup>He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.


<sup>10</sup>Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

### **Isaiah 43:2**

When thou passest through the waters, **I will be with thee**; and through the rivers, **they shall not overflow thee**: when thou walkest through the fire, **thou shalt not be burned**; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Every one of us goes through tough times. We all have days/weeks/months and some of us years where we do not know how we are going to make it through. We feel as though we are head under water, drowning. In Psalms 46, it says even when the earth is removed and when the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, when it feels as though the whole world is coming down around you and you don't know what to do, that God is our



refuge; God is our shelter and protection from danger and distress. In Psalms 46, verse 10, God tells us to do nothing in these times... don't panic, don't worry, don't get stressed out. He tells us to just "BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD." Know that God is with you. Know that the God of the universe, the almighty King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the creator of the heavens and the earth, the Prince of Peace, the Great I AM, is with YOU, caring about YOU, loving YOU. The next time you go through a storm, know that you are safe because the Lord is with you and everything is going to be just fine. Do not worry about tests, jobs, payments, or other earthly things, but rather trust in the Lord and He will protect you. If you are going through a tough time, meditate on scripture, and thank God for being there for you even when you cannot feel him. Here are some scriptures to meditate on, along with the above scriptures, just to get started.

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

<sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

<sup>6</sup>In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

**Proverbs 29:25**

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

**Psalms 18:2**

The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

**Psalms 18:30**

As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

(Buckle r = shield/armor which is about four feet long and covers the entire body)


**PRAY.**

## Week #FIVE

**Grace.** This is something that has been on my heart a lot recently. I don't necessarily understand it, and I don't know if we, as humans, will ever be able to fully comprehend the true meaning of grace. I know that I struggle daily with accepting and giving grace to those around me. If I don't really understand grace then how do I know how to give it or when I am supposed to receive it?

Let's look at the basics.

The definition of grace can take on many forms. The definition that I believe encompasses the true nature of grace and what it means to me is "the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God." This definition shows the different levels and complexity of the undeserved gift that we were given upon our birth. We have been given this original grace: our freedom to choose. This freedom can possibly lead us down the path of poor decisions and sin, but this also allows us to be in the position to grow closer to God. We have the ability to call out for help at the times of our deepest trials when the amazing grace of God comes to our rescue. This amazing grace that we experience is the grace that allows us to come back to faith after turning astray. It gives us the desire to repent, to ask forgiveness, and to turn our life back to Jesus Christ. This grace allows us to become whole again. Finally, there is the redemptive form a grace that was given to us through the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This



“category” of grace gives us the spiritual strength and power, free of charge, to become aware of our purpose and become the disciples of His good works.

I'm a literal person and definitions can only go so far. I like to “see” the results or something physical to prove this unending love. This quote from Wishful Thinking by Fredrick Buechner helped simplify and break down the overall concept of grace to an easier form to understand.

“The grace of God means something like: Here is your life. You might never have been, but you are because the party wouldn't have been complete without you. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Nothing can ever separate us. It's for you I created the universe. I love you. There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you'll reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift too.”

God has given and continues to give us everything we could need or want despite the fact that we are sinful and really don't deserve what we are given. It is always there for our taking. It is our choice whether to reach out and accept this grace that is given so freely. As human beings, this unconditional, forgive-and-forget love is hard to comprehend and even harder to receive and yet even harder to be Christ-like in being graceful toward other people.

I challenge you to remember the grace that has been given to you and the sacrifices made to give you that grace. Reach out and take the grace that is given to you. Dig deep and share that grace, compassion and love to those around you.

“From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” **-John 1: 16-18**

Verses in reference to Grace and Mercy:

**John 3:16**  
**Romans 3:21-26**  
**Romans 6:11-14**  
**2 Corinthians 9:7-8**  
**2 Corinthians 12:9**  
**Ephesians 1:3-10**  
**Ephesians 2:3-9**  
**\*Titus 2:11-14**  
**\*Titus 3:3-7**

**PRAY.**

## Week #SIX

### **A Shocking Revelation**

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus made some unbelievable claims. In fact, these claims were the main reason for His persecution and crucifixion. One of the most amazing, comforting and inspiring statements He made, however, is seen in **John 14:12-14**. Jesus is speaking to His disciples at the Last Supper, just moments before His arrest

by the Jewish officials. He tells them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” What is particularly amazing about this statement is that in John’s Gospel alone, Jesus had performed no less than seven miracles, including raising Lazarus from the dead, prior to this declaration. And yet, Jesus says not only will we do the same works, but also GREATER works!

Of course, we know now Jesus is not referring strictly to miracles, but rather to the gathering of believers through witnessing. While Jesus inspired many people to believe on Him, His ministry was confined mainly to the areas surrounding Jerusalem, whereas we are free to preach the Truth throughout the world. Nevertheless, it is extremely comforting and uplifting to know that Jesus can and will do anything we ask of Him. He can and will provide for us and bless us in countless ways countless times. He can and will perform miracles through us to glorify God through us and harvest His lost children. He can and will empower us to be the fishers of men He called His disciples to be. And He can and will allow us to perform works even greater than His in His name. Whenever you feel down, alone, scared, or helpless, remember Christ’s shocking revelation and His promise; remember these words and you will find comfort and peace.

**PRAY.**

## Week #SEVEN

### **Conviction**

“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” -**Hebrews 12:5-11** (NIV)

This is a passage that really brings me to my knees before the Lord. How often do we grumble or complain about discipline from our Heavenly Father? Or perhaps not accept conviction because we let our pride in the way of us and the Lord? I know that for me, at least, it is simply too often.

I believe that the first step to accepting discipline and conviction from God is humbling ourselves enough to accept it, to remember that we are the fallen ones and the Lord is the one who stands in all perfection and knowledge. Here are some verses that remind me of this:

“When pride comes, then disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”  
-**Proverbs 11:2**

“God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” -**Proverbs 3:34**

Laying aside the pride that the world builds up in us and coming before God with a humble heart is utterly imperative for growing in our relationship with the Father.

Seeking guidance from our brothers and sisters is, I believe, necessary in the practice of discipline and conviction. As **Proverbs 27:17** says, “**As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.**” This includes being open to the suggestions and constructive criticism that comes from our fellow believers in Christ. We should not be afraid of what they will think of us but thankful that they care enough to keep us on the path of God and his discipline. Subsequently, confession to God and to others is a helpful practice to be sure we are open to conviction from the Law of God. “**Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.**” -**James 5:16**

Conviction from the Word and discipline from God are not something that we should dread but rather something we should be of utmost thankfulness for. Through these the Lord shows us the way to Him and His kingdom. **Proverbs 6:23** says “**For these commands and this teaching are a lamp to light the way ahead of you. The correction of discipline is the way to Life.**”

**PRAY.**

## Week #EIGHT

### **Effective Outreach**

Evangelism is one of the most basic functions of our faith; it is also one of the most difficult and overlooked. Jesus called us to outreach in His Great Commission: “**Go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**” (**Matt. 28:19**). Despite this clear message, however, a disturbing trend has developed: people aren’t preaching the Gospel as they should. The Good News has become so hard to preach in the midst of this corrupted world that many Christians have become hesitant to even try. It is essential to our growth as Christians that we put an end to this trend. But how, when it seems the non-believing world is so turned off by the thought of our faith?

It’s simple, really; we must heal the Body. The apostle Paul wrote of a wholly interdependent body unified by love for one another (see **1 Corinthians 12**). This love is not the kind of affection we ascribe to it today but the kind which Jesus had for us. Jesus states in **John 15:12-13** that “**This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.**” If we can love one another in a self-sacrificial manner such as this and unite as a Body, hypocrisy will disappear and we will become blameless. Then outreach will no longer require a forced, deliberate effort; rather, people will witness God’s love for them perfected in us and our interactions.

In order to fix the problem of evangelism (or lack thereof) and fulfill Christ’s calling, we must look inward before we reach outward. It will take time and commitment, but if we can at least set the wheels of this love movement in motion, we and our descendants have the ability to change the world. An ancient Chinese proverb says, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” My prayer and challenge for you is to take that first step today. Love your brothers and sisters with the same love God showed us, and the world will see and know Him who dwells in you.

**PRAY.**

# Week #NINE

## Community

Community is a concept that has been discussed much this year in the body of NCF. In his letters to the churches, Paul discusses the importance of community and brotherly love multiple times:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” -**Ephesians 2:13**

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love.” -**Romans 12:10**

“Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.” -**1 Peter 4:8**

The list could continue, but you get the point. The concepts of community, unity and love are all important in the Christian Church. What do you think of when you hear ‘Christian community’? Probably fellowship, worship, Bible studies, discipleship, and of course the fun social times outside of this. I would like to talk about a few different aspects of a Christian community that sometimes we don’t necessarily think of right away when we hear ‘community’ but are vital in the foundation of any community: building up our brothers and sisters *while* looking out for the best interests of *all* of our Christian family and seeking out intentional spiritual conversation and fellowship in our relationships.

It is natural for us to try to encourage our friends that are closest to us, but sometimes this is almost overlooked with the brothers and sisters that we are not necessarily as close with. In **Hebrews 10:24-25** it says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” In this passage the writer of Hebrews is referring to all of his brothers, they should all meet, love, and encourage each other. As humans sinful by nature, we are inherently selfish. This can oftentimes hinder relationships from forming and growing, both with fellow Christians and with the Father. We are commanded to “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (**Philippians 2:3**). Along with this concept comes the command for us to refrain from hurting our brothers and sisters with our words: “Brothers do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it but sitting in judgment on it” (**James 4:11**). In order for us to have a true Christ-following body of believers it is necessary for us to place our selfishness behind us and to refrain from hurting our Christian family with our words (this does not mean to overlook flaws and avoid constructive criticism).

I would also like to encourage everyone to seek out spiritual conversation within the body. This is one way we stay spiritually fed. Look at your conversations in the past week. How many have been centered around Christ? These types of conversations take intentionality and are easy to simply avoid but are so important in building a deeper spiritual relationship within the body. This can come through prayer partners, discipleship, or any number of other ways. These spiritual relationships help strengthen the Christian community. Also, being open to letting the spirit flow between fellow believers makes it more natural when spreading the Gospel. (If you want some help with starting spiritual conversations, see the list that is an attachment in the summer packet.)

As David said in reference to his relationship with Jonathan, “How good it is when brothers live together in unity!” -Psalm 133:1

**PRAY.**

## Week #TEN

### **The War that Rages On**

Read **1 Peter 5:8-9**.

A very wise man once said, “The world ain't all sunshine and rainbows. It is a very mean and nasty place It will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me or nobody is going to hit as hard as life. But it ain't about how hard you hit, it is about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward, how much can you take and keep moving forward.”—Rocky Balboa

Now this guy took some beatings in his day. He got knocked down but kept getting back up round after round. He always found a way to rise above everything that was against him and he never gave up. In the same way, we as Christians face a similar battle every day. Satan throws temptations at us, feelings of insecurity, lust, envy, and the list goes on. Our souls are up for grabs. God has them, but Satan wants them. Satan will make your life here on earth the toughest battle you'll ever fight. We must find a way to rise above everything Satan throws at us and remain in a right relationship with Jesus. If we have Christ in our lives, He can fight these battles for us. We don't have to do it alone, and in fact, we can't. We are weak without Him.

To rise above, we must put on “The Full Armor of God” (**Ephesians 6:10-20**) so that we can stand against the Devil's schemes. It won't be easy, but if we draw on God's grace and God's power, we too, can keep getting up round after round. Whatever you do, don't give up!

As you enter each day, do you make it a point to put on your spiritual armor?

What are the “weak links” in your armor where Satan attacks you the most?

What can you do to strengthen your weak links?

Read **Proverbs 4:14-15**    **Colossians 3:1-5**    **James 4:7**

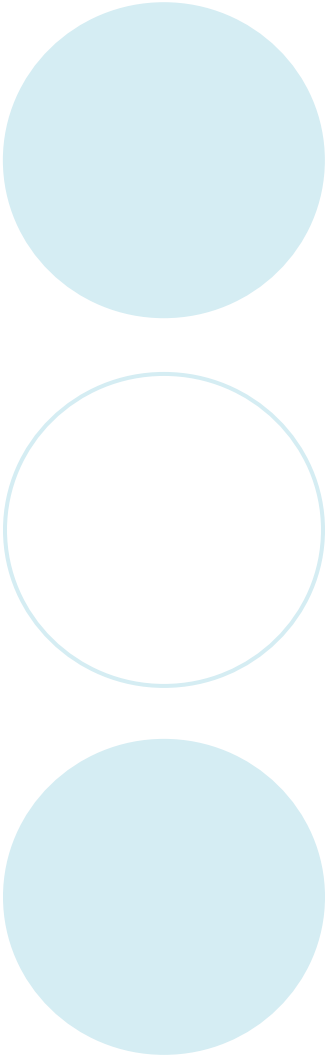
Pray that the Lord would help you rely on Him alone for the strength and wisdom you need. And that He would help you resist temptations and anything the Devil throws your way.

**PRAY.**

## Week #ELEVEN

### **Encouragement**

Encouragement has always been something that has kept me moving forward when I don't seem to want to. Earlier this month, my grandfather passed away. He was as



missionary who loved to travel and preach the word of God to anyone who would listen. His ministry was to feed, clothe, and provide beds for the children of Peru. His mission was to bring hope to them and show them a new life within Jesus Christ. So it was very hard on my entire family when he passed on because he had been suffering for these last 5 years.

Aside from the fact that he had diabetes, he had heart problems for quite some time. His two main problems were his stubbornness and the fact that he was unable to control himself. Being the typical Peruvian, he loved to eat food. The greasier, the better! Even though everyone would recommend to him that he should abstain from consuming such garbage, he continued to do it. He didn't really care (don't get me wrong... I love my grandfather). He also never wanted to see a doctor until it was too late. Because he waited too long, he ended up having one of his legs amputated because his sugar was so bad. He waited until his toes became black before he made the move to do something about it. For some reason, it wasn't enough for him to lose his leg to get it through his head that something was wrong. A little more than a year later, he lost his other leg as well. Year after year he would begin to get worse and worse with his health. Many of us began to pray that he would just be taken to heaven, but that wouldn't be the case.

It was the beginning of my senior year of high school (marching band season) and I received a call from my mom. It was abnormal for her to call me when she did (in the middle of school). "Your grandfather just had a heart attack and was admitted to the hospital." She told me that the doctors said that he wasn't going to make it home from the hospital. Immediately, I broke down into tears. I began to do the only thing I could — pray. I called everyone on my phone and told them to pray for him. Even though some of the unchristian people I had in my phone were a little uneasy to pray, they said they would anyway. That right there was an amazing way that I got to see the Lord move. I even called Radio U in Columbus, Ohio. They prayed for him as well. It turned out that after several weeks of being in the hospital, they couldn't find out what was wrong with him or what caused his heart attack. They claimed his returning health to be a miracle and sent him home. Prayer really can move mountains.

Over the next 2 year, he would be in and out of the hospital.

During this year of school, my dad said that he was going to go down to Peru to see his father because he wasn't doing very well. He planned on flying to Peru in the middle of May to spend all the time he could with his father. This past April, my grandfather was admitted to the hospital (again) for congestive heart failure and kidney failure. We would later find out that he accumulated lung cancer as well somehow. Thankfully, my father was able to fly down to Peru when he got the news about my grandfather returning to the hospital. After spending a week and a half down in Peru with his father, my dad returned to the states knowing that it would be the last time he would hear his father's voice. On Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, I got a call from my dad telling me that he passed on. There have been so many emotions going on through my head since this occurred. I hope to properly mourn for him when I return home for summer break tomorrow.

I know that I said that this devo was about encouragement, and it is! Having faith in Jesus Christ can move mountains if you have the faith to. Within a body of believers, if they have the faith to let God flow more freely within them, he can do it. God can do anything.

I have received so much encouragement from people within the body of Christ since my grandfather's passing. He taught me so much about how to be prayerful and faithful even when times are bad. Now he will be able to use his missionary feet once again to do all the things that bring him Joy.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqvI1hjqjU&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqvI1hjqjU&feature=channel_page)

--This link is to the montage that was made in honor of my grandfather. The music was written for him as well. All glory and Honor goes to Christ who died for the banishment of our evil sin. Go forth and rejoice in what Christ has done for you. ~Amen.

**PRAY.**

## Week #TWELVE

### **I'll Write This Devotional Later**

About four of the friendliest reminders I've ever had and three guilt inducing e-mails later, I barely convinced myself it was time to pen this devotional. But first, whilst performing my a.m. grooming rituals, I took some time to beat myself up a bit about my procrastination habit and how it makes me feel super inadequate, unreliable, and a lot like crap. In fact, lately, I've noticed myself experiencing an increased number of procrastination 'hangovers' as I like to call them. I just can't help it. It's like I've lost control. Putting things off to catch the latest episode of House, throw French fries at carp, or whip my significant other at mini golf is great, euphoric even — except for the morning after. I wake to be overwhelmed by regret, and as I consider responsibilities I've shirked, I feel a bit nauseated.

So maybe procrastination really does cause a hangover.

In an effort to shake off any negative feelings generated by my lack of productivity I drowned out the world around me with the help of a band popular circa the 1990's. Toby McKeehan, Kevin Max, and Michael Tait (collectively known as dc Talk) rapped clever lyrics about large guys with tattoos & race while I applied mascara. But these guys aren't all about rap. A song that begins with a cute guitar riff that reeks of '95 echoed throughout the bathroom. The lyrics however, were less cute. They were relevant. They were truth. They cut right past my prejudice of 90's music and read my heart like a book.

*I keep trying to find a life,  
on my own, apart from you.  
I am the king of excuses.  
I've got one for every selfish thing I do.*

*What's going on inside of me?  
I despise my own behavior.  
This only serves to confirm my suspicions,  
that I'm still a man in need of a savior.*

This isn't the first time God and I have had an encounter in the bathroom, so it came as no surprise that He chose this moment and this song to articulate my own problems back to me. He couldn't have picked a better moment.

I have never been more fed up with myself for procrastination. (READ: laziness, lack of priorities, or outright irresponsibility — all qualities I would ascribe to a lot of high schoolers but surely not myself, a seasoned college student.) I despise this, my own behavior, and as I look in the mirror I just want to scream, "What's going on in me, God!? All I do is make excuses, to justify everything I do. Especially everything that isn't for you and your glory."

I keep trying to separate everything I do into categories that have nothing to do with Him, when really everything should fall under His proverbial umbrella. See **1 Corinthians 10:31**. *Supplemental Reading: Praise Habit: Finding God in Sunsets & Sushi-David Crowder*

But that's the beauty of God. His ability to hold up a mirror and show us how ridiculous we are when we try to be independent sends us running back to Him.

I am still in need of a savior if I want to change my lifestyle. If I ever want to sober up, if I ever want to be through with feeling behind, inadequate & nauseated, I have to know I can't cure my addiction to procrastination on my own; beating myself up as I apply makeup only has a track record of ineffectiveness.

The type of life changing motivation we need to overcome any addiction can only come from living what we claim, which is walking in the light, with God, not chilling in the dark, making excuses, telling God, "I'll do it later." See **1 John 1:6-7**. *Supplemental Music: In The Light-dc Talk*.

**PRAY.**

## Week # THIRTEEN

### **We Need His Glory** Repentance.

It is what tugs at our hearts when we know something isn't right.  
It is the sinking feeling within our stomach when we realize how guilty we really are.  
It is when we return to Christ and his loving arms.  
Repentance involves a transformation within the heart and a realization of the higher standard that we are called to – God's holy Word.

Sin.

We all do it.

It is pretty much in the paperwork when we are born. **Romans 3:23** states that "everyone has sinned and we all fall short of the glory of God."

He is a God who detests sin. He desires for us to be walking images of his Son. Without confession of our sin, we begin to spiral down the slide to eternal death and destruction.

Throughout the bible there are many occasions that different sins are presented to a reader. Leviticus is a collection of God's laws concerning ceremonial purity and personal holiness. For example, the Lord states what should be done and what shouldn't be. Just like in Genesis, our loving Father tells us what we should be doing (and... what we shouldn't be doing). When we are able to meditate on His instructions and follow them accordingly, He begins to open up his blessings on us. This is a promise that He gave to us! **Proverbs 4:10-13** states, "My child, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life. I will teach you wisdom's ways and lead you in straight paths. When you walk, you won't be held back, when you run, you won't stumble. Take hold of my instructions; don't let them go. Guard them, for they are the key to life."

We all fall short of His glory, but we NEED His glory!

So what are you waiting for? God is waiting for us to return to him! In Luke 15:10 it states that there is joy in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents. That means you! That means me! Everyone can be saved because of the sacrifice that Jesus made. Everyone sins. I do, but because of His promise on to me, I am able to find a new life within Him when I lay everything out before Him. Go forth and do the same.  
~Amen

**PRAY.**

## Week #FOURTEEN

We continually told things that we do not want to hear. Advice we don't like, criticism, rules, expectations. Personally, I'm quite inclined to stubbornness, and these things can give me the hardest time. To recognize authority is not only difficult at this stage of life as we begin to come into our own; it's a human difficulty. We're born with rebellious spirit. It's in our blood, the inheritance of Adam.

This doesn't make the problem go away, though. G-d has placed multiple authorities over us, delegated authorities that we must answer to and obey. The government, our parents, our pastors are all delegated authorities as all power and authority comes from G-d (**Romans 13:1, John 19:11**). Granted, there are complications when these authorities remove themselves from the authority of G-d and begin to operate on their own – our primary allegiance is always to our Maker – but all must be done in a discerning spirit of obedience. But how? I know I sometimes run low on patience with myself because of the spirit of rebellion itching in me, but a few passages offer encouragement to me in this:

“Then He [12-year-old Jesus] went down to Nazareth with them [Mary and Joseph] and was obedient to them” (**Luke 2:51a**).

“Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered.” (**Hebrews 5:8**).

How difficult would it seem to be for Jesus, though being G-d, to submit to earthly parents, teachers, authorities! Stop and think about it. Clearly, the Spirit was with Jesus, and He had to have known better at least *some* of the time, but He had to *learn obedience*. And it was this process of listening to mortals tell Him what to do for thirty years that He was able to submit in ultimate obedience, to death on a cross. He could obey because He learned and had all His life. This reminds me that it's a learning process, it's an experiential process, and in the end there's grace.

Indeed there is hope for a stiff necked people (like myself). Now let us follow in the footsteps of our Master. Amen?

**PRAY.**

# Week #FIFTEEN

According to the Scriptures, there are two places that G-d dwells. Traditionally, we sometimes think of church as “G-d’s house,” and we know from the Old Testament that He took up residence in the Tabernacle and then the Temple, but we learn in **Hebrews 8** that this is only “a copy and a shadow.” The Temple only *attempted* to recreate on Earth the glory in which He dwells in Heaven. So we have a holy place for a holy god, but where else does He live? **Isaiah 57:15** says:

For this is what the high and lofty One says—  
he who lives forever, whose name is holy:  
"I live in a high and holy place,  
but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the lowly  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.

We also have a humble place for a *humble* god. Christ lived in all the glory of the Father but submitted Himself to the hands of men, to earthly authorities over which he had – by all right – all authority! (See **Philippians 2:6-11**). Christ humbled Himself to a point of brokenness to become the lowest of the low, living in poverty, serving the worst of sinners, dying the death of a criminal. If this is all true, where else would we expect G-d to be?

So if we take this passage in Isaiah seriously, we’re left with two options to approach the glory of our Creator: up or down. First, we always want to go up. Somehow we think we can walk up a set of stairs and enter into a place of such holiness and perfection that only one priest a year was allowed to enter into the copy of it! (And they had to tie a rope around his waist because they would sometimes die). We’re not born for that type of altitude. We’re like Icarus; our wings would melt. The bottom line is: G-d is light, we are darkness, and darkness cannot dwell with light. So what’s to do?

Second option – and this is where Christ comes in: because no man has ever been able to approach the high and holy dwelling place of G-d, Christ was sent down to us. Not so that we can now elevate ourselves through righteousness and goodness – there’s not a good thing we do! (see **Isaiah 64:6**) – but if we lower ourselves to where Christ humbled Himself, the design is that we might be raised up and exalted with Him (**Luke 14:11**, **James 4:10**, **1 Peter 5:6**). The whole idea of the Gospel, the mixed-up, backwards world of the Kingdom, is that the only way to get to G-d is to go down.

This is difficult. It requires to pray for G-d to remove our pride and humble us. Andrew Murray says that the self cannot remove the self.; that’s the Lord’s work. Moreover, it requires us to *mean it*, to desire humiliating experiences, to welcome the death of our pride and anything that He brings into our lives that helps to accomplish that. Please pray with me that in a culture where the importance ideas of humility, submission, obedience, have been so lost, our Lord continues to steer His Church in this way. Pray that in all ways, *whatever* the cost, we might be made like Christ – even in His humility.

**PRAY.**

# Recommended READING

## **Can You Handle the Truth?: 50 In-Your-Face Devotions for Teens by Phil Chalmers**

Aside from the Bible, this is the ultimate handbook for teens, college students, and young adults. Chalmers fearlessly addresses the most taboo subjects (rape, abortion, suicide, homosexuality), as well as introduces several overlooked topics (Christian music, video games, dieting, movies) and fundamental aspects of our faith (forgiveness, missions, humility, witnessing). Each devotional contains a gripping testimony, a claim on the subject, and Scriptural support and commentary. Able to be flexibly used as a 50-day devotional or a topical reference guide, Can You Handle the Truth? is a remarkable book that I find myself going back to all the time.

## **God's Smuggler by Brother Andrew**

This is the true story about a young man who comes to know God and finds himself being drawn to missionary work behind the Iron Curtain. He faces many challenges to get to that point and faces many struggles afterwards. It is absolutely amazing to see how God works out each of his problems and to see how faithful God is. If you are struggling in trusting in God with everything, you definitely should read this book.

## **Living the Cross Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing by C.J. Mahaney**

In this relatively short book, C.J. Mahaney reminds the reader of the true center of faith – the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is based on heavily on scripture and is applicable to everyday life. Although it is short, it is extremely powerful.

## **One Thing You Can't Do In Heaven by Mark Cahill**

You know people who do not know where they will be spending eternity. If you don't tell them about Christ, then who will? This book not only encourages you to share your faith, but teaches you. By reading this book, you will be reminded daily the importance of sharing your faith. Mark Cahill gives you easy ways to start spiritual conversations and prepares you for some of the responses you will receive when sharing your faith.

## **Passion and Purity: Learning to Bring Your Love Life Under Christ's Control by Elisabeth Elliot**

Elliot uses her own love life and personal experiences to examine and guide singles in giving their love life to the authority of Jesus Christ. She shows the importance of committing your life daily to walking with Jesus with the issues of the heart including temptations, complications, victories, and sacrifices that a person might face as a Christian single or a partner in a relationship.

## **Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, & Priorities of a Winning Life by Tony Dungy**

Leading the Indianapolis Colts to win Super Bowl XLI, Tony Dungy made history as the first African American coach to take home the Super Bowl trophy. He has overcome many obstacles to achieve success in life, both on and off the football field. In his memoir, Dungy shares the secrets to his unique leadership style. Find out the principles, practices, and priorities Dungy lives by in *Quiet Strength*.

## **The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis**

A fantasy series with the allegory of Christ and Christian lives.

## **Touching Godliness Through Submission by K.P. Yohannan**

An intensely convicting book about an easily forgotten subject in Christian teachings: obedience and submission. K.P. Yohannan, an Indian missionary, outlines the importance of humble submission to authorities as the foundation for holiness with Christ as our model.

# FunZIES

- ❖ Make swords out of PVC pipes wrapped in foam and fight with them
- ❖ Learn martial arts
- ❖ Make a Rube Goldberg Machine
- ❖ Pick a bouquet of dandelions and give them to someone
- ❖ Skip a rock on a pond or lake and think of a blessing for every time it skips
- ❖ Drive with your windows down today instead of using air conditioning
- ❖ Take extra bread and feed the fish
- ❖ Order something new at your favorite restaurant
- ❖ Set up a sprinkler and run through it
- ❖ Take a nap in a hammock
- ❖ Go to a baseball game
- ❖ Set up a lawn chair in your yard and watch the sunset
- ❖ Get together with a group of friends and learn a new card game
- ❖ Make up a new game
- ❖ Have a bonfire and roast some marshmallows
- ❖ Pick a random creek and follow it for awhile to see where it leads you
- ❖ Try eating at a new restaurant
- ❖ Go camping
- ❖ Have a water balloon fight
- ❖ Get a group together and go to a drive-in movie
- ❖ Take your mom on a date
- ❖ Take a road trip
- ❖ Have a cookout
- ❖ Send a letter snail mail to one of your friends
- ❖ Buy an entire gallon of ice cream and eat it at one sitting with some of your friends
- ❖ On a nice, sunny, warm day, take a skip around the block
- ❖ Go to the store for a half hour and hold the door for everyone who comes in
- ❖ If warm enough, try frying an egg on the sidewalk
- ❖ Put a basket of flowers on a neighbor's doorstep, ring the doorbell, and run away
- ❖ Go whitewater rafting
- ❖ Shave your head
- ❖ Watch all of the rocky movies
- ❖ Catch a squirrel
- ❖ Go fishing
- ❖ Read the Prophets