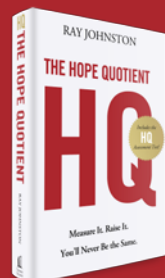


# 50 Days of UNLEASHING HOPE

A 7-Week Spiritual Growth Campaign Designed to Raise the Hope Quotient of Everyone

# DAILY DEVOTIONALS



# day1 INTRODUCTION

## Day 1 - Intro | "Unleashing Hope"

*And now these three remain: faith, **hope** and love... 1 Corinthians 13:13*

Tough circumstances are no match for the kind of inner strength fueled by hope. It's the difference between a situation destroying your future and a situation galvanizing your potential.

- ▶ A Jewish boy in Germany written off as unteachable, who has hope, changes our understanding of the universe forever -- Albert Einstein.
- ▶ A soldier tortured in Japanese prison camps for years, but who never lost hope, returns to America and lives a life inspiring millions -- Louis Zamperini. **Hope liberates.**
- ▶ A burn victim told he will never walk again, but who has hope, sets a world record running the mile -- Glenn Cunningham. **Hope motivates.**
- ▶ A virtuoso musician who goes deaf in his prime, but who has hope, composes masterpieces that stand the test of centuries -- Ludwig van Beethoven. **Hope initiates.**
- ▶ An innocent prisoner, beaten and shipwrecked, but who has hope, writes most of the New Testament -- the Apostle Paul. **Hope activates.**
- ▶ A paralyzed child who responded with hope, would later respond to "Mr. President," -- Franklin D. Roosevelt.

People truly thrive for one reason; they commit to raising their **Hope Quotient**, and hope is the beginning of everything.

*Join us on this  
seven week journey  
of unleashing hope.  
My prayer is that  
you're strengthened  
in your ability to  
recharge your  
batteries, raise your  
expectations,  
refocus on the  
future, play to your  
strengths, refuse to  
go it alone, replace  
burnout with  
balance, and play  
great defense.*

*Ray Johnson*

## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 2

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. - John 3:16*

In 1919, Babe Ruth hit a record 29 home runs for the Boston Red Sox. That December, the Red Sox sold Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees for \$125,000 and a \$350,000 loan. Ruth went on to set record after record for the Yankees, and they won numerous World Series with Ruth. The Red Sox had to wait more than 80 years to win another World Series. The Red Sox had made a very bad trade.

Every day we are offered trades, and many end up badly. They won't wind up with a nickname like "The Curse of the Bambino" and be discussed nearly a century later, but they are still bad trades.

Daily, we are enticed to trade the reality of God's goodness, in return for the satisfaction of our own desires. We are offered the temptations of lust, greed, indifference, pride and selfishness. The offer sounds like this, "Take a second look at the picture." Or, "Go ahead, fudge the numbers, and make a little more profit." Instead of trusting the Word of God, we cave "just this once" and end up in sin.

Humanity aches and grieves the ripple effect of these trades. Poverty, racism, violence, divorce, adultery, addiction, sex trafficking, gangs and corruption all spring from these trades.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus traded His life for our sinfulness. He showed His love for us by dying on the cross for our sins. If we want to stop making bad trades, the best place to start is at the cross.

**If you have never given your life to Christ but would like to, pray this prayer:**

*"Dear Jesus, I ask You to forgive my sin and take control of my life. I want to follow You and live my life for You. Thank You for dying for me and taking my sins away. I receive You now as my Savior. Amen."*

## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 3

*He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*  
- Psalm 23:3

“Will It Float?” by Ray Johnston

David Letterman used to do an ingenious shtick called “Will It Float?” One time, it inspired me to fill a huge water tank, place it at the front of an auditorium, and ask 3,000 people to vote which of a series of items would float. We collected a bunch of unusual objects: an egg, a can of Spam, a gallon of milk, a Shaq bobblehead and a five-pound bag of flour. It was pretty funny.

After everyone voted, we threw in the objects one by one and then asked everyone to stare at the tank to see what would happen.

- ▶ The egg: floated.
- ▶ Spam: sunk.
- ▶ Gallon of milk: floated.
- ▶ Shaq bobblehead: the body sank but the head floated.
- ▶ Five-pound bag of flour:  
just fell apart and turned the whole tank white.

I turned to the audience after the results came in and said, “Nobody does well in marriage, in relationships, at work, psychologically or in life in general if they’re not buoyant. Getting down is part of life. Staying down is what will kill you. If any Christian tells you he’s never been discouraged, he’s lying. All of us are going to get down.” Then I added, “You’re going to get down this year. It’s just going to happen. You may be there right now. But if you stay down, your education doesn’t matter, your theology doesn’t matter, your skill level doesn’t matter and your financial backing doesn’t matter. If you get down and stay down, you will drown.” The only thing that will keep you from drowning is hope. Hope makes you buoyant. Hope liberates. Hope motivates. Hope initiates. Hope activates. That’s why hope is so important.

**Today’s prayer:** *“Lord, by Your grace, lift me up so that I can experience the hope only found in You.”*

## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 4

*If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! - Ecclesiastes 4:10*

Who will help you up when you get down? Who will you go to when you feel run down, worn out, washed up, and hopeless?

No one who watched Eric Moussambani at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games will forget him.

The twenty-two-year-old from Equatorial Guinea learned to swim only a few months before the Games, and he practiced only in a twenty-meter pool. He had never raced more than fifty meters. Under a special program that encourages developing countries to participate even if their athletes don't meet customary standards, Eric was able to enter the one hundred meter men's freestyle. When the other two swimmers in his heat got disqualified because of false starts, he had to swim alone.

And that's when things got memorable.

An Associated Press report called his swimming style "charmingly inept." Eric never put his head under the water's surface. He flailed wildly just to stay afloat. Ten meters before the end of his race, Eric virtually came to a stop. Spectators feared he might drown. He'd already swum more than a minute too slow to move on to the next heat, yet the capacity crowd at the Olympic Aquatic Center stood to its feet and cheered, imploring Eric to finish. He finally reached the wall and clung to it. After regaining his composure, Moussambani said through an interpreter, "I want to send hugs and kisses to the crowd. It was their cheering that kept me going."

Who's in your corner? What kind of support do you have?

Strengthen the relationships you have and focus on finding the ones you need.

**Today's prayer:** *"Lord, strengthen me through those around me. Surround me with God-honoring relationships."*

## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 5

*Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.* 1 Chronicles 29:11

“Forget about Pushing” by Ray Johnston

I have a friend who once owned a 1947 Chrysler Windsor Highlander. The beast was more than a decade older than he was, but he liked the military blue with scotch plaid interior and the thick, chrome bumpers with, well, horns. Also, he thought its relatively simple engine would help him learn more about auto mechanics. Since my friend has, to put it generously, limited mechanical skills, you can probably guess how that turned out.

My friend didn't take out the behemoth very often, and he never worked under the hood. When his elderly parents came for a visit, he let his dad, Bob, drive it around town. For a week, Bob had a ball showing off. At a gas station, one older gentleman made a slow circle around the hulking monster and said, “Nice!”

“It's my son's,” Bob said.

The man said, startled, “You mean . . . he lets you drive it?”

After his parents left, my friend took it out for a spin, running an errand some miles away. When he returned to the car and turned the ignition, nothing happened. He tried again. Silence. He popped the hood. The battery was dead. Totally, completely, dead. You probably don't know much about a 1947 Chrysler Windsor Highlander, but it's not going to be pushed very far. You'd be lucky to push it downhill. My stranded friend made a long, hot, uncomfortable hike out of the countryside to find a new battery. Why?

Dead batteries don't do anyone a lot of good. They'll cause a lot of frustration and anger, and they sure won't raise anyone's Hope Quotient. No matter how great the car, if my friend wanted to move forward, he needed a new battery.

**Today's prayer:** *“Lord, give me the wisdom to know that I can't do life on my own power. Fuel me with your power today so that I can live at my best.”*

## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 6

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. - Psalm 28:7*

An experienced spelunker once invited his friend, Danny, to explore a cave with him. “Danny,” he said, “I discovered this cave, but it’s a little tough to get there. Would you like to come with me?” Danny, always open for a little adventure, agreed.

When they entered the cavern, the passageway got smaller and smaller and narrower and narrower. Pretty soon, they had to get down on all fours and crawl. To get through a small fissure in the rock, they had to lie on their backs, push with their legs, and keep their hands to their sides. To Danny’s horror, the passageway grew so narrow that they could not breathe and move at the same time. When they took a breath, their lungs expanded and filled the tiny space in the cave, causing them to get stuck. So they had to breathe out in order to move forward. Breathe in, get stuck; breathe out, push with the legs, move a tiny bit forward. How’s that for claustrophobia? Danny started to ‘lose it.’ “I am going to die in this cave!” he thought. “I can’t go forward. I can’t go back. I’m stuck!”

At that moment in the darkness, Danny’s friend called out to him, “Danny, this is really important. If you keep listening to those voices in your head—if you let your mind run wild—you will flip out. And if you flip out, you will get stuck in this cave. I want you to listen only to my voice right now. Danny, I have been through this, and I am here right now. I won’t leave you. You can trust me. Danny, you can make it. You just have to keep listening, every moment, to my voice.”

To what voice are you listening? Jesus says, “Keep listening to my voice. I know you’re in a cave. Don’t listen to the voices that tell you it’s too late for you, that you should give up hope or that you should settle. Stop listening to your doubts and fears. You can trust me. I will not leave you. I am with you always.”

Pay attention to whose voice you are listening to today and every day.

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, speak to me today. Allow me to hear your voice above all others.”*

## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 7

*Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. - Isaiah 40:31*

*"Are you the kind of person who is lighting up the radar screen by your [willingness] to do God's bidding no matter what?" - Bill Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek, Chicago, Global Leadership Summit 2008*

A pastor got a new cell phone. Before he left the store, the sales clerk said, "Charge your phone fully before you use it." The pastor wanted to try out the new phone right away, so he turned it on as he left the store. Within minutes, the phone was dead. At the office, he plugged it in but was soon called away for a meeting. Even though the phone was not charged, he took it. When his wife called, the phone went dead in the middle of their conversation.

This went on all day. Charge a little; battery dies. Charge a little; battery dies. Charge a little; battery dies.

Many people are like the pastor's phone—never being of full use to the Master because they never receive a full charge. They can get started, but then they fizzle.

If we are to be the kind of people who do God's bidding no matter what, lighting up His radar screen, we need to first fully charge our spiritual batteries. To do that, we need to wait on God. We also need to stay connected as long as possible to God, the source of power that never runs out.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, renew my strength as I wait on you."*



## WEEK 1. Recharge Your Batteries | Day 8

*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. - Matthew 20:26-28*

*“Last place is first place. Jesus was an example of what a winner looks like. Winners are servants.” - Bill Butterworth, author and speaker*

Jesus knew that His disciples were arguing behind His back about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom. James and John even sent their mom to ask Jesus if her boys could have the seats of honor in the Kingdom.

So, Jesus leveled the playing field for his disciples—and for us. He said He doesn’t measure greatness by achievement, by beauty, by wealth or by title. The only measurement is how we serve, whether we’re willing to be slaves who assist others.

Being a servant can be tough, but Jesus’ words are actually great news. He opened the door for every person alive to be great, no matter their backgrounds, no matter their gifts.

We can all serve someone. So the issue is no longer, “Can I be great?” The issue is, “Do I really want to be great?”

**Today’s prayer:** *“Dear Jesus, give me a humble heart today, so that I can be a servant of others.”*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 9

He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." - Luke 17:6

*"The people who stay steady in a storm have a real and genuine faith and know that the object of their faith is more important than the amount of their faith."*

- Les Christie, speaker and youth ministry chair at William Jessup University

How much faith is enough? Once, Jesus was teaching His disciples how to live a life of trust and obedience to God, and when He finished, His disciples said, "Increase our faith!" Jesus reminds us that faith the size of a mustard seed will do. Mustard seeds are about the size of this "o," so His words teach us that the size of our faith is not the issue.

Faith is a key part of every movement of God. Faith energizes the people of God, activates the grace and power of God, strengthens the hearts of God's people and makes the church a partner in the plans of God. Without faith, we cannot please God. With faith, nothing is impossible.

Grandpa Pearson trusted God for more than 75 years. He influenced dozens of young men to enter the ministry and countless people to follow Christ. One Sunday, he was asked, "How did you acquire such great faith?" He responded, "Great faith? I don't have great faith. In fact, I only need enough faith to see what God can do, and once I see that, a mustard seed [of faith] is all He needs to do the impossible."

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, I give You my mustard seed of faith knowing that is all You need to do the impossible."*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 10

*In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.* - James 2:17

*"Time to get up and start walking out what you believe - God desires a character of belief [who] models walking instead of sitting or standing."*  
- Todd DuBord, chaplain of Chuck Norris Enterprises, weekend services, April 2005

An entire region in West Texas was being hurt by the lack of rain, so a pastor stood in the pulpit one Sunday and asked the church, "Do you believe God can send rain? Do you believe God can make it rain at the Keith farm next week?" The congregation offered up a desperate "yes" and agreed to meet at the Keith farm the following Sunday. All week long, people talked about the coming service. When Sunday finally came, an abnormally small crowd gathered outdoors at the Keith farm. Again, the pastor asked, "Do you believe God can make it rain?" There was a unanimous "yes" from the crowd. The pastor then asked, "Where are your umbrellas?"

Our values are lived, not recited. The gap between what we say we believe and how we live can only be closed by walking out what we believe. If we believe God is love, walking out what we believe means we genuinely love others. If we believe God owns everything, walking out what we believe means we use His rules for spending and giving. If we believe God forgives, walking out what we believe means we forgive others. If we believe people need Jesus, walking out what we believe means sharing Christ with others.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me to walk out what I believe as I live for you today."*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 11

*With God, nothing is impossible.* - Luke 1:37

*"God is looking for some folks... Is God calling you to the impossible, the kind of stuff that makes you wonder who it is that takes you to the very edge?"*

- Brenda Salter McNeil, founder and president of Salter McNeil & Associates, Chicago, Thrive 2009

A sign pops up in a vacant lot: "Coming Soon." A retailer is announcing that it is building a store. After a few weeks, dirt starts to move, and the groundwork begins. The sign out front adds two words at the bottom: "Now Hiring."

This store with no walls, no roof, no floor, no merchandise, no electricity or plumbing has the audacity to say: Come here because we want to hire you. The store managers are saying that if they weren't going to finish this thing then they wouldn't have even started it. But they need workers.

They are saying: If you could see what we see, you would know that we are going to finish this project and that it will be a huge success. Come here and put your application in now. Don't be like everyone else who has to see the finished product to join. Come now.

We serve the God of the impossible, and He is hiring.

Today, we are looking to the God who does the impossible and asking for the impossible to be done—that He would take us to the very edge and show us all the things that we can, in fact, do through Him. We are asking God for a miracle in our community, our region and our world. We are asking God for a miracle in your life and in your family. God does the impossible when His kids don't wait until something is all built before they get involved. He is hiring now!

**Today's prayer:** *"Dear Jesus, I am in! Do the impossible in me and then use me as You do the impossible in others."*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 12

*One day Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee. There he saw two brothers. They were Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. They were throwing a net into the lake. They were fishermen. 'Come. Follow me,' Jesus said. 'I will make you fishers of people.'* - Matthew 4:18-20

*"Because I know what it is like to follow Jesus, my regrets in life all center on not saying 'yes' to the leadership of God. They center on ignoring the promptings of the Holy Spirit to follow the leadership of Jesus and to listen to His voice."*

- Mike Breaux, teaching pastor at Heartland Community Church, Rockford, IL, Thrive 2011

Off in the distance, Andrew and Peter saw the silhouette of a man walking along the shore as they went about their routine, mending and throwing their nets. When the man got close, they gave Him a friendly nod, expecting Him to pass by. Instead, He said, "Follow me. I will make you fishers of people." Andrew and Peter dropped their nets, went with Jesus and changed the world.

This is one of the best-known stories in the Bible. There are four words, though, in Jesus' invitation that often get overlooked. We tend to focus on "follow me" and on "fishers of people" and miss the words: "I will make you." Those words are crucial.

Andrew and Peter didn't immediately become fishers of people. It took three years of 24/7 living and waiting with Jesus for Him to remake the brothers. He taught them, trained them, sent them, scolded them, tested them, loved them, served them, touched them, walked with them and eventually died for them.

We, too, need to not only drop our nets and follow Jesus, but to wait with Him in prayer as He remakes us.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, I will listen for the invitation to follow and to fish for people, and as I wait with You, I will hold on to Your promise to remake me."*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 13

*I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*  
- Psalm 130:5-6

*"We are wired and designed to hear from God and to know His voice."*  
- Margaret Feinberg, speaker and author, Thrive 2010

We have waiting rooms in hospitals, doctors' offices and airports. People wait in lines at the movies, amusement parks and the grocery store. Kids wait for Santa. People wait for retirement. Students wait for summer. Teens wait to turn 16 so they can drive.

There should be a bumper sticker that reads: Wait Happens. Waiting is part of the human condition, but there is another kind of waiting, and it is one we choose. It is waiting in anticipation of God. We wait for His voice. We wait for His plan. We wait for His power.

Amazingly, we were made to be in a close relationship with God, a friendship that creates anticipation. We have been made to recognize Him when He speaks. But hearing God means waiting on God. We need to slow down, to set aside our routines, so we can tune into the sound of His voice.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, I will wait for You to speak; I long to hear Your voice."*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 14

*Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'"*  
- Luke 18:1-3

*"Never give away a higher eternal perspective to a temporary pain. Sometimes you have to PUSH: Pray Until Something Happens."*  
- Darren Laws, pastor of Bay City Church, San Ramon, CA

Few activities can recharge our souls like prayer, and few situations can drain our souls like waiting for a prayer to be answered. So Jesus told His disciples a story to help them understand that they should always pray and not give up. The story was about a widow who kept on coming and coming and coming until a judge finally gave in. Jesus said that, if a tough old judge can be reached by repeated requests, imagine how much more our loving Father can be reached by our requests.

One way to not lose heart is to pray with anticipation, not expectation. Expectation is like making a Christmas list, giving it to someone and waiting for it to be filled. If it isn't, we become disappointed. Anticipation is saying, "I know that you love me, know me and want to bless me this Christmas. I cannot wait to see what you will do." Expectation has its eyes on the outcome. Anticipation has its eyes on the giver of gifts.

When we pray with expectation, we have an intended outcome in mind. We know what we expect God to do. When He does what we expect, we are excited. When He doesn't, we lose heart.

Try praying with anticipation. Praying with anticipation says, "God, I know You care. I trust that You will respond from Your wisdom and grace. I anticipate Your acting."

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, today I will trust that You know the best time to answer my prayer and the best way to answer my prayers. I will anticipate Your response and not lose heart."*

## WEEK 2. Raise Your Expectations | Day 15

*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. - John 16:33*

*"I sat on my cot [after several of his men died in Mogadishu] and yelled at God, 'How could you let this happen? I quit. I am done.' And then I heard God say: 'If there is no God, there is no hope.' "*

- Retired General Gerry Boykin

On Oct. 29, 1941, U.K. Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited Harrow School to deliver one of the most inspiring speeches he ever gave. Two years into World War II, with Britain under bombardment by Nazi Germany and with many of the British at their wits' ends, Churchill told the students in that powerful, gravelly voice of his: "Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty. Never give in."

His words struck a chord of hope that resonates to this day with soldiers, athletes, missionaries, moms and dads, students and countless others facing hard times.

Someone once said, "When there is no hope for tomorrow, there is no strength for today." It is not hard times that cause people to quit; it is losing hope that causes people to quit. Churchill knew that. He gave his people hope, and the British withstood the most formidable fighting force the world had yet seen.

So, how much more hope does Jesus give us when He says that He has overcome the world? How much more hope did He give us when He was resurrected, proving His words were true.

Don't quit. Jesus has conquered death, and now we are His forever. These are words for the soul. In reading them, let the hope we receive from a risen Lord Jesus give strength for today.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, you are alive and have defeated sin, Satan and death. No matter the problem I face today, You have promised strength and a home with You forever. Help me not to give in or give up, because my hope is in You."*



## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 16

*Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law. - Proverbs 29:18*

*“God wants the rest of your life to be the very best of your life.”*  
- Ray Johnston

A herd of rhinoceroses is called a “crash.” That’s a perfect name, given that full-grown rhinos can weigh between 2,500 and 4,500 pounds and can run upwards of 35mph—yet can only see about 15 feet in front of them.

Churches can be like rhinos. Sometimes, they can be big and powerful. They can even sometimes move very fast. But they may lack vision—in which case, look out. “Crash,” here we come.

God-honoring vision is what happens when God puts what is on His heart and mind on the hearts and minds of His people. When God wanted to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He told Moses what to do. When God wanted Nehemiah to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, He put His heart on the heart of Nehemiah. When God wanted Peter to go to the Gentiles, He gave Peter a vision.

Vision means God is speaking and we are listening. Vision means God has something He wants done, and we get to join Him.

Where there is no vision, there will be a crash. But a God-honoring vision means that the rest of our lives will be the best of our lives.

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, give me vision as I look around the world, so that the things that break Your heart break my heart.”*

## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 17

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. - Proverbs 3:5-6*

*"Your destination is not so much determined by your intentions but by who gives us our directions."*

- David Nystrom, provost and senior vice president, Biola University, La Mirada, CA, weekend services, July 2008

Proverbs teaches us again and again about the value of wisdom. We are to listen to wisdom, pay attention to wisdom, use wisdom, love wisdom, hold on to wisdom and let God's wisdom be our guide.

"Trust in the Lord" means to put all our weight on God—just as, when we sit on a chair, we place our full weight on the chair. "Lean not on your own understanding" means that, when you hear from God, you don't let your mind talk you out of what God says. We often hear from God a message that fires us up. We say, "Yes!" After a time, though, our minds begin to say, "You can't do that. You're too busy. You're not good enough. You can't afford to." The more we lean on our understanding, the less we trust in the Lord.

"In all your ways acknowledge Him" means that, in each step we take, we ask God, "Will this bring You glory?" This simple question makes very clear what God desires in and for us. "He will make your paths straight" means that God will clear obstacles out of the way.

Today, as you choose your words and conversations with others, ask, "God, will this bring You glory?" As you choose your attitude and actions, ask, "God, will this bring You glory?" What you will discover is that, when you acknowledge God in this way, His pathway becomes very clear.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, remind me to ask You, 'Will this bring you glory?' as I live this day seeking to put my full weight on You."*

## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 18

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. - Acts 4:13*

*"We have been raised in a world that is risk-averse, and this is not how people who know God were meant to be. We have somehow equated the Christian life with the safe life."*

- Christine Caine, author, director and founder of The A21 Campaign, Thrive 2011

Passion comes when people find a reason to live that is larger than they are. The Bible is full of these people and the great deeds that sprang from their passion for God. Moses led his people through the wilderness. Joshua led them into the Promised Land. David stood against Goliath. Nehemiah built a wall around the city of God. Jeremiah preached. Daniel prayed. Esther rescued her people. Their lives became risky, but their impact was eternal.

Passion is the soil from which an astounding life grows because passion transforms an idea into a vision and a vision into action.

Jesus said He came to give us abundant life. He came to give us lives of passion!

That passion means we pursue lives that overflow with God's goodness. We live for something greater than ourselves. We respond to God's invitation to let what is on His heart set our hearts on fire.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, show me Your heart and set my heart on fire with what I see. Let me live a life larger than myself, fueled by passion."*

## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 19

*'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.'* - Jeremiah 29:11-12

*"People are always trying to find a will for their life, even if it is not God's."*

- Chris Brown, teaching pastor at North Coast Church, Vista, CA

He was a mercenary for his religion, arresting, beating and killing those who disagreed. One day he met Christ, and the course of human history changed. Saul became Paul, wrote 13 books in the New Testament, was the first missionary to Europe and started numerous churches.

He murdered a man and hid his body but was found out, so he ran away into the desert. After he spent 40 years in exile, trying and failing to put the past behind him, God appeared to him in a burning bush. God said he needed the man to tell the Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Then the man had to take God's people to the Promised Land. Moses wrote five books of the Bible and is one of the most prominent figures in history.

Like Paul and Moses, we often have our own plans, and they may be at cross purposes with God's. Even when we try to discern God's plans, He knows them, and, truth be told, very often we do not. God's plans are often the fruit of a relationship with us, not the sort of linear plan that we prefer.

Knowing God's will is about knowing God more than it is about knowing what the next step might be. The better we know Him, the more His will unfolds. The better we know Him, the more we find the courage and wisdom to do His will.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, You know what You have planned for my life. Help me know You so that I have the courage to live out Your plans."*

## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 20

*I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.*

- Philippians 4:13

*“Every day, Satan is going to tell you to stop the fight. The passion of Jesus was His commitment to not quit no matter how hard it got.”*

- Miles McPherson, pastor at The Rock Church, San Diego, at Thrive 2010

Heather Dorniden Kampf was in the lead of the 600-meter finals at the Big Ten indoor track and field championships with just under a lap to go, when her foot hit the runner behind her. She fell hard, landing on her hands and knees, then pitching forward onto her face. She got back to her feet as fast as she could but was in fourth place, close to 30 meters behind with only 200 meters to go. What happened next made the news, became a hit on YouTube and inspired people across the nation.

She ran!

There was no conceivable way she could catch the impressive athletes ahead of her, but she ran anyway. At the start of the final curve, she got one. Halfway down the final stretch, she passed another. At the finish, she leaned—and won!

“When you fell, what went through your mind?” an interviewer asked Dorniden Kampf. She responded, “I could only think of the words, ‘I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.’ So I kept saying them again and again in the face of my challenge. I guess He did it.”

The Bible likens life to a race, and we will face challenges along the way. Some reading these words are discouraged because the finish line is a long way off. Still others are lying flat on their faces, tripped by finance, guilt, hurt or a broken promise. Many are now finding that their training hasn’t prepared them for their race, and their hearts and souls grow weary. The most important question is: “Whose strength will I bring to the race, mine or Christ’s?” Remember, as Dorniden Kampf showed us, we can do all things through Christ.

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, help me to bring your strength to the race I am running right now, so that I do not quit, so that I might run my race and finish.”*

## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 21

*'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. - Matthew 14:28-29*

*"The way we view God has a major impact upon how we live our lives for God and others." - Dr. David Harris*

Jesus had sent the disciples ahead, but they got caught in a storm and struggled for six hours without making any progress toward the other side of the lake. At 3 a.m., they saw Him walking on the water.

Eleven guys stayed in the boat, and one got out. Why did Peter get out of the boat when everyone else stayed?

Some say it was his pride. Others say he was impetuous and didn't think about what he was doing. There could be another answer. The Gospel of Mark says Jesus intended to pass by the disciples. Jesus was not headed to their boat; He was headed to the other side of the lake. Perhaps Peter thought to himself, "The only one here who has no potential to drown tonight in this horrible storm is Jesus. I want to be where He is." So he shouted to Jesus and walked on water.

Today, storms are raging: financial storms, relationship storms, faith storms, emotional storms, personal storms, storms from our past, storms from our families and on and on. We need to be like Peter and understand that Jesus is the only one who can't drown in a storm.

Even Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink in the water before Jesus reached out a hand and restored his faith. We may take our eyes off Jesus, too. But we need to understand that Jesus is the only truly safe companion in a storm and that, even when we feel ourselves sinking, He will reach out His hand to us.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me to get out of my boat and walk to You. If I sink, save me, and then let's walk together in the storm."*

## WEEK 3. Refocus on the Future | Day 22

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. - 1 Peter 4:10-11*

*"Jesus did not come to make us a little bit nicer as a husband, a father or person. He came to radically make us different, to give us a whole new operating system and to fill us with His power."*

- Gary Gaddini, lead pastor of Peninsula Covenant Church, Redwood City, CA

After dinner was served and the disciples took their places, Jesus grabbed a towel and a basin of water. He removed his robe and began to wash their feet. The master washing the feet of his servants? Unheard of. Yet Jesus did it. When He finished, Jesus said He was serving as a model for how the disciples needed to serve others.

Jesus was not trying to make His disciples a little bit better; He was giving them an example that would transform them and the world around them. He didn't just want the disciples to think differently, He wanted them to act differently. Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

People struggle to believe Jesus' words—"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." Believing His words means we realign our lives and look for people to serve. Believing His words means we find a place in the church to serve others. Believing His words means we look for ways to serve our co-workers, our neighbors, our family and our friends.

Today, take Jesus seriously. He said, if you know it, then do it. When you do it, He says, "I will bless you." Make a plan right now to serve someone else several times this week. Jesus' promise to us is that He will bless us when we do.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, show me who You want me to serve today and give me the wisdom and humility I need to serve them well."*

## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 23

*For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- Philippians 1:6

Why would you want to live your life any other way? - Ray Johnston

The tendency around a church is to think that things get done automatically, or that we have some set of spiritual superstars who are better than everyone else, that everyone else needs to take a back seat. But that's not true. We all have gifts, and we all have to use those gifts to serve and honor God. Why would we live any other way?

"Me?" you ask. Yes, you. And you and you and you.

Jim Elliot once said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Elliot, part of a team that brought the Good News of God's great love to the Waodani people of Ecuador, knew he was putting his life at risk—and he ended up being killed. But his commitment paved the way for many of the Waodini people to come to know and follow after Christ.

Do you think Jim Elliot regretted his sacrifice? Imagine the scene in heaven when the first of the Waodani people entered into a faith relationship with Christ. Can't you just see the high fives and shouts among the angels, the tears of joy on our Savior's face? Do you think Elliot found his sacrifice on earth worthwhile in heaven?

A great question to ponder is: "What would I sacrifice?" It almost certainly won't be your life, but what would you sacrifice to:

- ▶ see the person who sells you that cup of coffee each morning come to faith in Christ?
- ▶ see teens serve the community and the world?
- ▶ reach your closest family and friends and have them discover forgiveness in Christ?

**Today's prayer:** *"Lord, help me to see what You want me to sacrifice so that I can live my life the way You want and let You continue to perfect Your work in me until the day of Christ Jesus."*



## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 24

*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.*  
- Colossians 1:16

*"Use the voice God has given you to proclaim that, because He lives, you, too, can live."* - Dr. Keith Philips, former president of World Impact

"It" has received plenty of play over the years. People say to forget "it" or to stop "it." Some people excuse their behavior by saying they can't help "it." The Eagles told us to get over "it." When playing tag, kids tell someone he's "it." A certain shoe company tells people to just do "it." Whatever "it" is, it's a big deal.

We have been made by God and for God. God had some sort of "it" in mind for us when he made our hands, our feet, our minds, our voices, our bodies, our brains, our hearts, and our legs. Our job is to discover "it" and live "it."

A sign on the door of a building in 1963 showed just how bad things can be when we fail to find "it." The sign read, "Out of Business. We didn't even know what our business was." What makes this especially sad is that the sign hung on the door of University Christian Church in New York.

When we do not know what we were made to do, it is not long before an "Out of Business" sign is posted on our life. The great news is that God will renovate and restore us if we prayerfully discover what He is already doing and then join Him. We can be sure that "it" involves being instruments of healing hope and proclaiming Jesus' Good News. We may even find ourselves saying, like some others have:

"I just turned down an offer from a Fortune 500 company after I graduated law school so I can work with inner-city kids needing my legal expertise."

"I decided to cut my living expenses by 40% so I can give more to my church and missions."

"I gave up all my vacation this year to build a house in Mexico."

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, will you help me see what you want done today so that I can join you in it?"*

## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 25

*What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? - Romans 8:31*

*"Most Christians lack the confidence they need to do what God wants them to do with their lives. It is not that they lack a purpose. What they lack is the confidence to step into that purpose." - Rene Schlaepfer, teaching pastor at Twin Lakes Church, Aptos, CA*

While we all know that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, how many of us know what he had in his pockets when he was shot at Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865? It's an interesting list.

He had a handkerchief embroidered with "A. Lincoln." He had a country boy's penknife, a spectacle case held together with string and a Confederate five-dollar bill. He also had newspaper clippings that included quotes saying he was one of the greatest men ever to live.

Lincoln deserved the accolades. His courageous leadership saved the nation. But he was a quiet man, not known for braggadocio. Why carry around newspaper clippings talking about how great he was?

Historians say he kept the clips in his pockets to bolster his confidence at a time when critics abounded.

What is in our pockets? If one of history's great figures carried tokens of confidence with him, what do we carry as we deal with feelings of guilt and inadequacy and worry about hard times?

Romans 8:31 is a great clipping for Christ followers to put in their pockets. God is for me! In fact, Romans 8 is filled with clippings that will bolster our confidence. Romans 8:1: "There is now no condemnation to those in Christ." Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." Romans 8:38-39: "For I am convinced that. . . nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These are just a few. Why not take some time today to read Romans 8 and make your own set of confidence-boosting clippings?

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, let my confidence grow today as I learn to trust the clippings of Your word."*

## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 26

*His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*  
- Matthew 25:21

*"We never look more like Christ than when we are rescuing."*  
- Francis Chan, pastor and author of Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Restless God, at Thrive 2009

At 16 years of age, a girl heard about the needs of children throughout the world. She decided she could help and sponsored a child through Compassion International. What started with one child has blossomed into 14. While other teenagers are buying themselves clothes or maybe saving for a car, that one girl, at age 16, is paying for food, clothing and schooling for 14 children. She is laying the foundation that may rescue those 14 children from poverty. And who knows what they, in turn, will do? Asked how she could afford to sponsor 14 children, the girl said, "I work three jobs so I can sponsor as many kids as possible."

That girl is choosing to live a life without regrets. She is living in a way that will have Jesus say, "Well done!" He will call her "good and faithful" and invite her to come and share in His happiness. She is using all her gifts for the One who has given them to her.

We may not be called to take every penny we have and support 14 kids through Compassion, but we are all called to sacrifice for the good of another. We are all called to invest our time, talent and treasure to rescue as many people for Christ as possible. If we answer that call, we, too, can live life without regrets.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, show me who needs to be rescued and what I can do. Help me to live a life without regrets, one that will let you say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"*

## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 27

*But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed? And how can the message be proclaimed if the messengers are not sent out? As the scripture says, 'How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!' - Romans 10:14-15*

*"God always wants to grow His church bigger than you do. God is on a mission to grow His church." - Curt Harlow, teaching pastor at Bayside Church*

Fritz Kreisler was a world-famous violinist who earned a fortune but gave most of it away. On a trip, he discovered an exquisite violin but could no longer afford to buy it. He raised enough money to purchase the violin, only to find that, in the interim, a collector had bought it. Kreisler found the new owner and offered to buy the violin but was turned down. Kreisler asked if he could play it just once. The music was so moving that the collector exclaimed, "I have no right to keep that to myself. It's yours, Mr. Kreisler. Take it into the world, and let people hear it."

There are two kinds of people in every church: collectors and musicians. Collectors love to have the instrument but are not interested in sharing the song. Musicians cannot wait to play the song for all to hear. God wants musicians.

The good news that God loves, forgives, restores and sets free is the sweetest music any Christ follower could ever play. The song of purpose and meaning, healing and wholeness and life everlasting sounds amazing every time it is played. God doesn't want us to just collect that song in our hearts, He wants us to play it all the time, for all to hear.

God is on a mission to grow His church, and He wants "musicians" who are willing to play the sweet song of God's love wherever they go.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me today to play Your sweet song of forgiveness for someone You love."*

## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 28

*For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that he may strongly support those whose hearts are completely his. - 2 Chronicles 16:9*

*“Are Jesus and I really interested in the same thing? God is passionate about making our world different.” - Gary Haugen, president and CEO of International Justice Mission, Global Leadership Summit 2008*

The Beatles wrote and sang “Revolution” in 1968. Lennon and McCartney looked at the landscape of our world and, with the simplicity of song, captured the emotions of a generation of people:

“You say you want a revolution. Well, you know, we all want to change the world...”

Were the Beatles right? Do we all really want to change the world? Someone once observed that people say they want to change the world, but what they usually mean is that they just want the world to be different.

There are so many problems out there: poverty, HIV/AIDS, human sex trafficking, corruption.... Either we attack those problems, or we resign ourselves to them. If we won't take them on, who will?

What would you do to change the world? How would you take what you have and make the most of it, to change the world? Would you take a risk? Would you live on less so you can give more? Would you learn a new language or live in a different part of the world? These kinds of questions can make us uncomfortable because they intrude on our lives, but they are important questions to ask and answer.

**Today's prayer:** *“Jesus, I want to change the world; help me start today by changing one life.”*

## WEEK 4. Play To Your Strengths | Day 29

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. - Romans 1:16*

*“Let’s make sure we are preaching, sharing and telling the Gospel. There is nothing else that can change a person.” - Franklin Graham, president and CEO of Samaritan’s Purse and Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Thrive 2009*

The word “Gospel” means good news. For the Christian, it refers to the good news that Jesus Christ came to earth, lived a sinless life, died upon a cross and, in His death, took the penalty of all our sin. He was buried and, after three days, conquered death by coming back to life again.

Because He paid the penalty for our sin and conquered death, all those who come to Him by faith, repenting of their sin and giving Him control over their lives, will be forgiven and adopted into God’s family. This really is good news!

Paul says this good news is the power of God. That is an amazing truth: The Gospel is the actual power of God. It does not contain the power or reflect or refract the power. It is the power.

This matters because of what that power can do. It is the power of God for salvation. This power is not for prosperity, not for health and beauty, not for success and material gain. You can get all that without the Gospel. This power is for salvation, which only the Gospel can provide.

Ken was a sophomore when he took his first step on his high school campus. He whispered a prayer, “Jesus, help me tell as many people about you as I can.” For the next three years, he told his friends, his classmates and his teachers that God did indeed love them. When he graduated, more than 100 of his friends had committed their lives to Jesus. This happened because Ken believed the Gospel was truly the power of God. Every time he shared it, God’s power to save was made available to someone.

What would happen if all of us truly believed the Gospel was the power of God?

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, let me live convinced by the power of Your Gospel; make me a witness to others.”*

## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 30

*I've commanded you to be strong and brave. Don't ever be afraid or discouraged! I am the LORD your God, and I will be there to help you wherever you go. - Joshua 1:9*

Terri was 15 when she committed her life to following Christ. Now that she knew Christ, she prayed that He would heal her family and bring her parents back together. Yet, two weeks later, her mom took her own life.

How could this happen? Terri was confused and in pain. She questioned God: Why didn't He stop her mom?

Terri stayed in her small group, remained connected to her youth leaders and, after countless hours of prayer, conversations and tears, came to a conclusion: "I do not know why my mom did what she did, and I kept thinking that God let me down. Now I know that my mom was going to do what she did whether I knew Jesus or not." Because of her commitment, though, she didn't have to face her tragedy alone. She had Jesus and His people alongside her.

There is a saying, "Life happens." Every person reading these words has a place where life has been happening. It might be the loss of a job or the sudden passing of a loved one. Life happens. It might be a long battle with cancer or a lonely fight with depression. Life happens. It might be a marriage going south or kids going sideways. Life happens.

The most dangerous place to be when life happens is alone. And the easiest way to find yourself alone when life is hard is to be alone when life is not hard.

When life is easy, we think we have it handled and don't need Jesus or other people. But we need to line up our support when life is good, because challenges are surely coming.

Right now is a great time to ask yourself: Who am I connected to? What group of people will God use to give me strength and courage when life happens to me?

**Today's prayer:** *"Dear Jesus, please help me reach out to at least two people today so that, when life happens, I won't have to go it alone."*

## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 31

*Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many? - John 6:9*

When Jesus fed the multitudes, Matthew, Mark and Luke record that the disciples were caught off guard. They had wanted to send the hungry horde away. When Jesus challenged the disciples—"You give them something to eat"—the disciples immediately begin to whine. "It's too costly." "There's not enough." "It's too hard to get the food here."

You can feel the frustration of the Lord coming through the pages of Scripture as He listens to the clueless disciples' lack of faith.

At this point in the narrative, John's version adds an important detail: A chubby little boy has a leftover lunch. How do we know he's chubby? Think about it. After a crowd has followed Jesus for an extended period, this boy is the only one out of 5,000 people who thought to bring an extra snack.

In spite of his love for grub, he hands what he has to Jesus: some bread and fish. Here he is, a child, the least likely person to be used in a miracle, but somehow his lunch in the hands of God becomes one of the greatest events in the life of Christ.

What happened next? The very next second? What went through this boy's head? His heart? His soul? What happened to him when Jesus broke the bread as he watched? As each scrap became miraculously larger in the hands of the Master, what happened to this boy's faith?

Anyone who has ever been used by God can tell you the answer. That boy never recovered from that moment. He was changed forever.

Too many people live their faith without ever experiencing God's incarnate grace in the way this boy did. This is sad, for it is in the moments that we give away our loaves and fish that we realize how much God really loves us. As He works with us to multiply our gifts, His grace for us becomes more than a theological idea. The fact that He uses simple, broken children changes us. In the end, the miracle of the fish and loaves is not how much food Jesus created but the partner He chose for His miracle – a humble chubby kid.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, give me faith like the chubby kid and use even me to work your miracles."*



## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 32

*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*  
- Ephesians 2:10

*"Your life is not your project; it is God's project. . . . God has the best version of you in mind."*

- John Ortberg, senior pastor, Menlo Presbyterian Church, Thrive 2010

What an amazing message: We are God's masterpieces! Read Ephesians again, but this time put your name in place of "we." It's true: You are God's masterwork. Because of your relationship with Christ Jesus, God is remaking you so you can live out God's awesome plan for your life.

One way to think about God's creative work is to remember how Michelangelo described his statues, such as the monumental David, showing the young man in the moment he has decided to trust God and face Goliath. Michelangelo said David was already in the block of marble that he worked on for years; Michelangelo's job was simply to chip away all the stone that was hiding David.

God is doing the same thing to you. He is chipping away parts of your life that are not the real you and is freeing you, so you can work with Him. God, the master artist, is working to remove impatience so you can demonstrate patience to others. He is working to remove resentment and bitterness so you can demonstrate His forgiveness and love. God already sees the best version of you, and He'll turn you into that, if you'll let Him. Remember: Your life is not your project; it is God's project.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, please work on me today. Treat me as a block of stone and chip away the parts that are keeping me from being everything that You want me to be."*

## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 33

*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* - 1 John 4:11

*“Serving and loving people opens the door to the spiritual movement of God.”*

- Luis Palau, evangelist, sometimes called Billy Graham’s successor, at Thrive 2010

The little boy stood at the window of the pastry shop, wide-eyed and hungry. He stared at food that could never be his. The American soldier entering the store saw the little boy and bought him some pastries. When the soldier handed the boy the bag of pastries, the boy asked, “Excuse me, sir, are you God?”

We are never more like God than when, in an act of love, we give to those in need.

Today, everyone reading these words will come across someone in need. That person might need a little time, maybe someone who’ll listen. She might need a prayer, encouragement or a hug. He might need lunch, a ride or \$5. She might need a friend. He might need a smile or a chance to laugh. She might need a chance to cry. He might need to know God loves him.

We live in a world of great need, and very often the greatness of the need seems so far beyond our reach that we end up doing nothing. But when we serve and love others, no matter in how small a way, we open the door to the spiritual movement of God.

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, let me see the needs of others today and then slow me down enough so that I can be part of meeting that need in the name of Christ.”*

## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 34

*By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. - John 13:35*

*“Connecting is the ability to identify with and relate to people in such a way that it increases your influence with them. This matters because Jesus said, ‘I want you to be salt, I want you to be light and I want you to be effective.’”*

- John Maxwell, author of more than 60 books, primarily on leadership, at Thrive 2010

Pastor Mike was 28 years old and ready to tell the world about Jesus. One day, as he was at an ATM retrieving \$20, he saw a 50-something-year-old man begging for food. The young pastor couldn't help overhearing the man asking passersby, “Could you please...” “I am hungry and need some...” “Excuse me, could you possibly...” The hungry man was unable to even finish a request for help.

Pastor Mike heard a different voice. It was God the Holy Spirit, asking him if he meant what he had prayed earlier that morning. The voice asked if Mike had really meant that he wanted God's help in loving others. Don't miss your first assignment, the Holy Spirit told Pastor Mike.

Mike bought the homeless gentleman breakfast that morning, gave him the change from his \$20 and headed back to his car, when God the Holy Spirit spoke again. “He doesn't know why,” Mike felt the Holy Spirit tell him. Pastor Mike went back into the restaurant and placed his hand on the homeless man's shoulder. Mike said, “I did this because of how much you mean to Jesus.”

“Finally,” the older gentleman said, “a Jesus I can see and believe in.”

Loving others in the name of Jesus can mean buying a homeless man a meal, but it could also be just an encouraging note or text or sharing some cookies. When we connect with someone at work or school or in our neighborhood, in the name of Jesus, we become salt and light.

**Today's prayer:** *“Jesus, help me to see others as You see them so that I can love others as You love them.”*

## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 35

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*  
- Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

*"Vibrant friendships are a necessity for personal and Kingdom growth. God wants us to be a people who dream a dream and build a team because we were not created to be alone."* - Bryce Jessup, retired president of William Jessup University, June 2009

In 1969, a band called Three Dog Night had a song that said, "One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do. . . ." The band's name was based on the idea of group warmth—in the north woods, loggers sometimes sleep with their dogs to generate body heat, and a super cold night is known as a three-dog night. The band's lament about loneliness went to the top of the charts, partly because it is catchy, mostly because it is true. We are just not meant to do life alone.

That is a biblical truth. God's best work has always been done when God's people come together for God's purposes. Jesus came to earth and, to start His ministry, built a team. When needs arose within the early church, the disciples chose a team. When God wanted the Gospel to go to the Gentiles, He chose Paul, who built teams.

Look at how God describes the church: a family, a nation, a priesthood, a people for God's own purposes, a body with many parts. We are all to work together for God's purposes.

When God's people refuse to go it alone, and band together, the impact a church will have is multiplied exponentially. Everyone needs to play. We all matter and have a part in God's plan. We all must bring our time, talent and treasure and add it to others' so God can multiply them for His purposes.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me make teamwork the lens through which I view living out my faith; and let teamwork shape the way I connect with others in my church."*

## WEEK 5. Refuse To Go It Alone | Day 36

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. – 1 Peter 4:8*

*“We must all remember God wants to be known; He wants His glory proclaimed. It is essential that we love one another because the beauty of God’s glory can only be seen in the relationships we have with each other.” - Darryl DelHousaye, president of Phoenix Seminary, weekend services, September 2007*

The young dad picked up his twin boys from school and made a quick stop at the grocery store on the way home. Standing in the checkout line, the four-year-old boys began to fuss. “You are touching me!” “Give me my gum.” “I don’t want to be in the back of the cart.” “I’m telling!”

Before long, a nudge became a shove. The shove led to a pinch. The pinch produced a punch. The boys burst into tears.

Imagine what the other people in line were thinking. They didn’t know that the dad was exhausted from a day at work or that other issues might be contributing to the boys’ bad behavior—they judged the dad based on his children.

Reverse the scenario: same line, same kids, but now, instead of fussing, the boys are laughing, playing and sharing. The dad still gets judged, but this time the verdict is positive.

In the same way, when people know we are followers of Christ, they will judge our Father in heaven by how we treat other people. If we are rude, always in a rush or constantly complaining, they will struggle to believe in Christ. If we are loving and kind, and our words and actions are filled with grace, others will be drawn to Christ.

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, will You help me show how great You are to other people by helping me love others as You have loved me?”*

## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 37

*God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud.*  
- James 4:6

*"When we humble ourselves before Him, we begin to understand how much we mean to Him."* - Jim Holst, outreach pastor at Bayside Church

Stiff kids are hard to hug. You can hug a dirty kid or a smelly kid. You can hug a wiggly kid or even an angry kid. But a stiff kid? The kind who does not bend? That kid is hard to hug.

Once, when God was talking about his kids, the children of Israel, He called them a stiff-necked people. Their preoccupation with themselves had caused them to resist the kindness of God and to create an idol. Their pride made them the hard-to-hug, stiff kid.

When we are prideful, our opponent is God. The impact of pride can last for generations and devastate countless lives. Pride caused the first sin and has been at the root of every sin since. No wonder God opposes the proud.

But, as the verse says, "God gives grace to the humble." When humility is chosen, grace abounds.

A person can be humble while also being dirty, smelly, wiggly and angry. A person cannot be humble and stiff-necked at the same time. When we choose humility, we place ourselves in the pathway of God's grace. Every day is filled with opportunities to decide: humility or pride? Grace from God or opponent of God?

Why not stop being the stiff kid and, by being humble, accept a hug from God?

**Today's prayer:** "Jesus, help me to choose humility in my relationships with friends, family, those I meet and those I know. When I choose humility, let your grace flow."

## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 38

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*  
- Psalm 139:13-14

*"God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet; it is not about how tall you stand, it is about who stands by you, and Jesus stands by you."*

- Nick Vujicic, president and CEO of Life Without Limbs, Thrive 2009

Judges 6 tells us about Gideon, who, by his own description, was from the weakest family, in the weakest tribe, and was the weakest in his family. One day, he found some grain. To keep it out of the hands of the enemy, he hid himself and began to prepare the grain. God appeared to him and said, "You are a mighty warrior, Gideon, and the Lord is with you."

Although Gideon was hardly the image of a mighty warrior—feeling weak and in hiding—God used him to deliver the people from cruel enemies. The story of Gideon teaches something of great importance.

God sees in us what no one else can see. Then, by His presence in our lives, He helps us become what He has seen us becoming ever since He put us together in our mothers' wombs. Far too often, we measure what God can do through us by what we see when we look at ourselves. For some, the challenge is physical. For others, it is education or background. For still others, the challenge is a past checkered with missteps.

It's been said that God is so powerful He can use even junk to accomplish His plans. But here is the real truth: God does not make junk!

He made you and, before you were born, marked out your days. As He did with Gideon, God is calling you what He sees that you are, not what you think you might be. He is saying: "Mighty man, mighty woman, mighty student, mighty parent, mighty husband or wife. . . I have a job for you, and I will be with you!"

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, thank you that You see in me what no one else sees. Help me to stay close enough to You today so that I can be what You have made me to be."*

## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 39

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. - Isaiah 43:2*

*"God is not absent in the messes of our life. God is present, and it is His nature and character to take the messes of our lives and turn them into miracles." - John Jackson, president of William Jessup University*

Joseph was ridiculed, sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused of rape, sent to prison and forgotten. He then became second in charge in the entire nation of Egypt. God used his position in Egypt to preserve and grow Israel. Two phrases from the Bible define Joseph's life. The first, "And God was with Joseph." The second was what Joseph said to his brothers when they found out he was not dead but a ruler in Egypt, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good."

God wants us to know that hard times do not mean He is absent. In fact, the most common promise of God in the Bible is the promise of His presence: "I will be with you." Over and over again, God promises that in the midst of a mess, He is there. Not only is He present, He is active. The messes of our lives are the soil from which miracles grow.

The Bible puts it this way, "God causes all things to work for the good... according to his purposes." What is His purpose? To draw people so close to Him, they become like Him.

Whatever we are facing today, God wants us to know that He is with us and that He will use the challenges and messes of our lives for His purposes.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me to be more aware of Your presence in my life today. I give You my messes. Will You use them to make me like You and then to bring others to You?"*



## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 40

*But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. - Job 23:10*

*"When life does not treat you fairly, we need to remember that God is always good, and in our difficult situations choose to ask [Him] the question, 'Is this where you want [me] to stay?'"*

- Dr. Samuel Huddleston, assistant superintendent of the Northern California and Nevada District Assemblies of God

No one knows her name, and she is mentioned in only one sentence in the Bible, but the faith of a young slave girl shaped a nation.

Naaman, general of the armies of the king of Aram, was well-respected and loved by his king and his nation. But, Naaman had the stigma of leprosy. His Israelite slave girl was an unlikely source of help. Captured by raiders from Aram and sold to Naaman, she was alone and had every reason to feel as if God had forgotten her, but this young girl kept her faith in God. She told her master that God had a prophet in Israel who could help. Naaman visited him and was healed. He came home bragging about the God of the Israelites, and his king and nation saw the power of the true God.

The slave girl could have given in to the unfairness of her situation. She could have let where she was define who she was. But she chose, instead, to trust that God had her where He wanted her and that He would use her for His best purposes. Her faith changed a nation.

When life goes differently than we plan and when hurts come faster than is fair, we have a choice. Will we choose to trust in the goodness of God?

God does not cause our pain, but He can always use our pain to influence others.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me to keep my eyes on You and to trust Your goodness when life doesn't go as I planned."*

## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 41

*'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'* - Isaiah 55:8-9

*"When godliness is your pursuit, the Spirit of God changes your thoughts and attitudes to be like His."* - Sherwood Carthen

Jon grew up in a family of 11 brothers and sisters. There was no father around, and the mom dealt drugs. When he was in high school, he got involved in gangs. He was the oldest boy in his family, and his siblings followed suit. At 15, Jon met a youth pastor and started attending a youth group. The sweetness of the love of God began to draw Jon to a different life, but he struggled to grow. Jon got arrested and sentenced to six months in jail. His youth pastor handed him a Bible and said, "Read this every day as much as possible. When you get out, I will be here."

When Jon was released, his youth pastor picked him up and found a completely different person. Jon said, "I read my Bible every day for hours, and what I found out is that my thinking was all screwed up." Holding a tattered and well-read Bible, Jon said, "I am different because I think different."

What happened next in Jon's life is miraculous. His entire family left the gangs, and they have become Christians.

Our thinking matters to God because our thinking shapes our whole life. Someone once observed the ripple effect our thoughts can create in our lives:

Watch your thoughts; they become words.  
 Watch your words; they become actions.  
 Watch your actions; they become habits.  
 Watch your habits; they become character.  
 Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, give me a passion for Your Word and use Your Word to transform my thinking."*

## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 42

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*  
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

*“Some of us are 2,000 miles from where God wants us to be, simply because we do not want to do what He asks. Surrender comes before salvation, not after.” - Chris Brown, teaching pastor at North Coast Church, Vista, CA*

Some childhood phrases are amusing to recollect: “I know you are, but what am I?” Or, “I’m rubber, you’re glue, what bounces off me sticks to you.” The dangerous one is, “You’re not the boss of me!”

The statement is fine when it’s said to a sibling who really isn’t the boss and has no business telling someone else what to do. The statement, while not fine with a parent, can sometimes be a helpful clue; if your child is saying that often enough then maybe you need to think about whether you’re being overbearing. The real problem comes when we say, “You’re not the boss of me!” to God.

Christians would never say that out loud. We just do what we want, ignoring God’s wishes. Like a five-year-old who is mad at his older brother, we pretend not to hear what God is saying, or we don’t do what He is asking us to do, or we head sort of in the direction God is steering us but then slack off. We live “You’re not the boss of me” even though we don’t say it.

We are supposed to forgive, but we hold grudges. We are supposed to be generous, but we aren’t. We are supposed to share Christ with others, but we don’t. We are told to do everything without grumbling—but just listen to us. “You’re not the *boss of me*” *lives!*

**Today’s prayer:** *“Jesus, help me to surrender my will to Your will. I belong to You; You are the boss of me.”*

## WEEK 6. Replace Burnout With Balance | Day 43

*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'* - Matthew 18:21-22

*"The longer you hold a grudge, the more power that grudge holds over you. . . . Long-term unforgiveness is toxic. . . to the heart."*

- Bob Balian, senior pastor of Bayside of Midtown, Sacramento, CA

Clinical studies have shown that a large number of issues ranging from depression to worry, fear to anger, loneliness to an inability to trust, mental illness to a variety of psychosomatic illnesses, can be directly traced back to one issue: forgiveness. In 2006, the American Psychological Association compiled a major study and concluded that forgiveness and the quality of one's life are inextricably intertwined.

Is it any wonder that the Bible teaches us to forgive? Jesus said that we must forgive seventy-seven times and must forgive even our enemies, that when we forgive others we act in the very power of God. Paul told us to forgive others like Christ has forgiven us and to let God worry about justice. Why?

Because a lack of forgiveness messes up everything God is trying to do in our lives. That lack ruins our view of God. It ruins our relationships with others. It ruins our usefulness to Christ and His mission. It robs us of worship. It steals our power to love. It keeps us tied to the past, weak in the present and hopeless about our future.

Forgiveness, on the other hand, sets us free. Free from guilt. Free from anger. Free from bitterness. When we forgive, we act most like God, who forgives us.

A pastor, after speaking on forgiveness, was greeted at the door by an angry dad. "Pastor," he said, "I can forgive, but I won't forget." The pastor responded, "The beauty of forgiveness is that it frees us of the need to remember."

**Today's prayer:** *"Dear Jesus, let me live in the reality that You have forgiven me, and give me the grace today to forgive others."*

## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 44

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? - Matthew 6:25-27*

Worry damages faith. Worry is deceptive. It can make small problems seem large and large problems seem insurmountable.

Worry is like fog. A dense fog that covers seven city blocks, one hundred feet deep, consists of less than one glass of water divided into tens of billions of droplets. There is not much there, yet it can be crippling.

Mary received the biggest honor ever given to a person, but the moment the angel announced that she would give birth to the Son of God, uncertainty and pain took front-row seats in her life. One person told Mary a sword would pierce her heart because of her calling.

Mary's response to the angelic announcement was one of humble faith. "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May Your word to me be fulfilled." Mary's trust in God wiped away the power of worry. What could have become a dense, scary fog was just a glass of water.

Faith gets the necessary strength over worry when we act in prayer. Do not worry about anything; instead pray about everything.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me to strengthen my faith. When worry attacks, help me to pray immediately about that worry."*

## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 45

*In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.*  
- 2 Corinthians 8:2-4

*The only people who genuinely enjoy life are generous people.*  
- Ray Johnston

Some words shake us to our core. These words can push past the barriers we erect in our lives to keep our faith stable and reasonable. When they do, the potential for what God wants to do in us skyrockets. Two of these words are "sacrifice" and "generosity."

Sacrifice is giving up something of value for someone of greater value. Generosity is living your life for the benefit of another. The words are inseparable: A person who sacrifices for someone becomes generous; someone who is generous is willing to sacrifice.

What makes a person generous? What turns someone from being selectively generous and selectively greedy into a person whose operating system is generosity? How does one go from being guarded to being open-hearted?

Generosity happens when people realize God meant it when He said, "Freely give." Simply put, to be obedient is to be generous. To not be generous is to disobey God. Generosity flows from people who are grateful, from people who realize that their time, talent and treasure are gifts from God.

Sacrifice is God's way of changing our world and transforming our lives. Sacrifice means breaking the hold of materialism and living in the grip of grace.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, let the words 'sacrifice' and 'generosity' break down any wall in my heart that would keep me from investing my time, my talent and my treasure in Your Kingdom work."*

## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 46

*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.*  
- Philippians 1:6

*"If we want to be at our best when circumstances are at their worst, we must develop a sky-high resistance to discouragement. I have never known God to do anything great through people who gave up because of discouragement."* - Ray Johnston, senior pastor of Bayside Church, Grand Opening of Granite Bay campus, 2004

William Ward, a missionary to India in the early 1800s, said discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present and distrust of the future. Discouragement is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. Discouragement is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our fellowman and unbelief in the promises of old. Discouragement is impatience with time, immaturity of thought and impoliteness to God.

One of Satan's most effective tools is discouragement. He is always on the prowl, trying to find a way to use it in our lives. Discouragement can block our view of how God's power and love work together in our lives. When we are discouraged, we have a hard time trusting in the goodness of God.

Jesus often taught his disciples to overcome discouragement by adjusting their sights. He said He was going away—but would come back again. They would have problems in this world—but He had overcome the world. He would leave them—but would send His Spirit. He would die—but would rise again. The world would treat them badly—but they were in His hand.

Discouragement is much less about the troubles that enter our lives and more about the way we choose to see these troubles. Will we adjust our sights and see them as Jesus taught his disciples to see them? Or will we see them as Satan wants us to see them, so that we don't feel strong enough to do what God is calling us to do?

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help me to see You more clearly. Keep discouragement from blocking my view of Your goodness and power today."*

## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 47

*Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!' - Mark 9:24*

*"The opposite of faith is not doubt but inactivity. Faith is trusting God enough to do what He says." - Chris Brown, teaching pastor at North Coast Church, Vista, CA*

A man fell off a cliff but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation ensued:

"Is anyone up there?"

"I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?"

"Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can't hang on much longer."

"That's all right. If you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch."

A pause, then:

"Is anyone else up there?"

There are a lot of people whose faith story could be told in the three words, "Help my unbelief." We pray, believe and try to do the right thing. Yet, somehow, unbelief finds just the right moment to eat away at our faith.

Unbelief can make us turn to strength that is not God. Is there anyone else up there? Can there be another plan or way? Unbelief puts us in neutral—the opposite of faith is inactivity.

Faith is trusting God enough to do what He says. We need to ask ourselves: Where has unbelief eaten away at my relationship with God? Where have I been slammed into neutral? What is God asking me to do? Is He asking me to sacrifice something? Is He asking me to act despite my doubt?

Remember, when unbelief raises the question, "Is there anyone else up there?" the answer is "no."

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, help my unbelief today. Help me act in faith and trust You enough to do exactly what You say."*



## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 48

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Eat your dinner; just think about all the starving children in the world."

"I just bought you shoes; people all over the world don't even have one pair, and you have 10."

"When I was a kid, we weren't given rides. If we wanted to go somewhere, we walked."

These statements may bring back memories, even fond memories, of our parents trying to teach us a lesson. But these kinds of statements stir a question: Why use the pain of others to justify our gratitude? Why not just be grateful for whatever we have without making any sort of comparison?

Gratefulness is such a powerful piece of Godly character that we are actually commanded to be grateful. Gratefulness fuels contentment, worship, generosity, compassion, kindness, loyalty, holiness, humility, friendship and service to God. Gratefulness is one of the primary catalysts that helps us love God with all we have and love others like ourselves. A person cannot grow to maturity without walking on the pathway of gratitude.

Only being grateful if we're better off than others is "guilt-itude," not gratitude. "Guilt-itude" is about being "grateful for what" rather than "grateful to whom." We need to be grateful whether we have 10 pairs of shoes or none. We can't be grateful only when life is easy.

A life of gratitude happens when a person decides to be grateful to God because He is God and He is gracious. The fact that He is God is worth a lifetime of gratitude. What if we decided that, no matter what, we will choose gratitude? Not because we have it better than someone else but because we have Him.

**Today's prayer:** *"Dear Jesus, help me be genuinely grateful to You, for You, today."*

## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 49

*My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming.'* - Psalm 27:8

*"Beware of the distractions that keep you from spending regular time with God. Remember to "face the Book," before going to your Facebook." - Rachel Johnston, pastor of women's ministry at Bayside Church*

Have you ever had a needy friend you've tried to avoid? You know, the one whose calls get a distinct ring, warning you not to answer. When you see the phone number pop up on your screen, you let the call go to voicemail, thinking, "If I answer that call, I'll probably have to talk to that person forever!"

Unlike us, God loves to hear from His needy people. He never tires when we call out to Him and are in desperate need of Him! It brings Him great joy to hear our voices, to spend time with us, and to have us tell Him how much we need Him in every aspect of our lives. He delights in having us talk to Him as often as possible, because He desires a close, personal relationship with us.

What should we pray about? Everything. Don't get hung up on how to pray, or what to say. Instead, adopt the Nike prayer motto, "Just Do It." There's never an issue so small, or a concern so big, that God is not interested. And, through our prayers, we form deeper friendships with God.

Just as conversation with a friend involves both talking and listening, so it is with God. He longs to speak to us and share what's on His heart - to tell us how much He loves us, that He cares about our concerns, and that He has plans to use us to make a difference in others' lives.

As you go through this day, make sure you take time to talk to God. Listen for His still, small voice and do whatever He asks.

**Today's prayer:** *"Dear Jesus, I am in desperate need of you. Help me be in tune to hear Your voice today and give me the courage to respond."*

## WEEK 7. Play Great Defense | Day 50

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*  
- Romans 15:13

*"For years, I had nightmares because of my time in a prison camp. When I came to Christ, from the moment I got off my knees, I have not had a single nightmare."* - Louis Zamperini, subject of the best-seller "Unbroken"

"Hope" is one of those words that trick us. We often miss how powerful the word really is because of its use in weaker forms: "I hope there is no school tomorrow." "I hope we win the championship." "I hope my ride comes on time." "Hope" in its weaker form is not much more than wishful thinking.

The Bible uses the word "hope" in its stronger form. "Hope" in the Bible does not refer to optimism or transitory circumstances but, rather, to a guarantee not yet realized. "Hope" is about the character and power of God. This is why God is referred to as the God of Hope.

For many in today's world, doubt is replacing hope. The danger is that, when we lack hope for tomorrow, all our strength for today exits, as well.

Biblical hope invites us to confidence in God regardless of circumstances. Biblical hope gives us joy, peace and strength. And God seeks to pour so much hope into our lives through the Holy Spirit that we will overflow with hope.

**Today's prayer:** *"Jesus, my hope is in You! Will You help me live today in the strength Your hope provides?"*

# HQ

1. RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

2. RAISE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

3. FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

4. PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

5. REFUSE TO GO IT ALONE

6. REPLACE BURNOUT

7. PLAY GREAT DEFENSE

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