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# Preface

“All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Prayer has drastically changed my mental, emotional and spiritual health. My life paradigm has been refocused onto how the Lord desires to use my life to encourage and educate others. I continue to enrich lives through my podcast, All the Wiser, however I want to complement my recorded content with a devotional book that jumpstarts your bible study habits.

I proudly serve in my roles as entrepreneur and content creator however I am most importantly a follower of Christ. The mindsets and methods that infiltrate every aspect of my life are heavily influenced by the teachings found in the Bible. My identity as a wretched sinner who was saved by grace through faith shapes the values that I hold, the content I choose to create, and the people I desire to reach with my work.

The Bible is ripe with teachings that can be learned and leveraged to improve our ability to lead and love better. I pray this devotional book reveals to you how begin operating with greater biblical wisdom.

# Why a Devotional?

*James 4:4*

*1 Kings 18:21*

*Mark 8:34-36*

*1 John 2:16*

While studying and writing this book, I came across the second law of thermodynamics. It’s sometimes referred to as the law of entropy. I’m not a physicist and don’t play one on television so I won’t overwhelm us with the details. In simplified terms it states, unless outside energy is provided, a system will find it’s entropy (disorder) or discover staying the same or increasing as time goes on. In other words, a system will never get more orderly without outside interventions.

As this law holds true in physics, it is also salient in our spiritual lives. Many of us can attest that relying on yesterday’s faith for today’s walk with Christ can lead us to drift away from a God we once grew familiar with. I have seen friends and family relax their spiritual disciplines in one season only to produce life dysfunction and relational distance from God in another. I have endured the same at times.

Biblical books like Judges, 1st and 2nd Chronicles and 1st and 2nd Kings tell compelling stories that warn us about the consequences of drifting away from the most high God and falling for the temptation to pledge allegiance to other deities and ideologies. God, in his faithfulness and mercy, sent his son Jesus to die for our sins and reconcile our relationship with him despite repeatedly turning our backs on him. You and I are included in that number. Jesus has reconciled us back to the father. We respond to this unfathomable display of love by loving him, loving each other and producing the fruits of obedience.

Ask yourself, are the rules and principles that govern my life aligned with and guided by God’s ways? Have I drifted toward a devoted allegiance to other powers and authorities of this world? If the answer is yes, acknowledgement is an integral step in making a reversal. What better way to navigate back to God than to seek him in his word? I believe that all scripture is God breathed. The stories and principles found in the scriptures remain relevant to the lives of believers today.

Do you claim Jesus to be your master and messiah? Then make daily decisions to devote time, energy and effort to acknowledge and seek him. I hope this devotional book is a useful tool to help you get started.

# Train Your Tongue

*James 3:1-12*

*Proverbs 17:28*

*Proverbs 15:1,2,4*

*Psalms 19:14*

*Proverbs 17:28*

The tongue can be used for healing or destruction. With the same tongue, we can choose to uplift those around us with encouragement and affirmation or we can tear them down with criticism and projections of doubt. It’s no wonder that the Bible is full of admonishment about the proper use of our tongue.

Not only must we monitor the content and manner in which we speak but also how much we speak. Proverbs 10:19 reminds us that “When there are many words, sin is unavoidable but the one who controls his lips is prudent.” Learn to practice restraint rather than yielding to the urge to say exactly what you feel with reckless abandon. You may be surprised to see that it often requires more strength to hold our tongue rather than lash out against those we think have done us wrong.

In the New Testament, James teaches us that the tongue is a small part of the body yet influences the trajectory of our lives in tremendous ways. He uses the metaphor of ship rudders and horse feed to illustrate how the direction of our lives can be correlated to the utterances from our mouth.

If you’re wondering how to inject more love, kindness and humility in your speech, you must search within your heart. From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. To bring lasting change to your speech speak, here are three actions items you can take.

\* Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and assist you in addressing unresolved hurt and expelling evil. Training your tongue is a long journey of being protective of what you expose your eyes and ears to for they are the gates to your mind and soul.

\* Develop a plan to gradually increase your intake of God’s word. As you study and memorize more scripture, your language will begin to mimic the text you are reading.

\* Examine the voices that come through your ears and eye-gates. Who or what has high influence on your thinking? Do those beliefs feed you life-giving words that you can repeat to yourself and others?

The heart is the reservoir from which you speak. You will not draw fresh water from an empty well; neither will an apple tree produce fresh oranges.

**Takeaway**

 Consider adopting Psalms 19:14 as a daily prayer over your life.

**Prayer**

Search my heart Lord. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you. Please walk with me every day as I take gradual steps toward reprogramming my mind and reconditioning my heart to improve my speech.

# Finding God’s Love Through His Instruction

*Deuteronomy 30:15-20*

*Ecclesiastes 12:13*

*Psalms 1:4*

*1 John 5:1-4*

*James 1:22-24*

*Hebrews 10:26-29*

In the Christian faith we acknowledge God to be a heavenly father. He self-identifies as our father and weaves evidence of his character throughout the scriptures, so we can earn more about who he is. One of notable characteristics is his God’s steadfast love. One of the ways he shows his love for us is through instruction. Many pioneers of the faith described in the Old Testament are instructed to follow God’s commandments explicitly. At the inauguration of Joshua’s ministry, God told Joshua to keep the Book of the Law on his lips, meditate on the word day and night so that he may carefully abide by all that is written in it. Joshua led the Israelites through a dramatic entry into Jericho and may other victories. As God’s chosen people obey him, they are on the favorable side of miracles, signs and wonders. This teaches us that behind obedience lies divine protection and provision.

In the book of Judges, you see God’s chosen people enter into cycles of oppression brought on by their repeated decision to reject God and worship pagan deities instead. Our omniscient God knew his people, who were called to be a kingdom of priests, would be seduced by false gods upon entering the promised land inhabited by nations who held various polytheistic belief systems.

To preemptively protect them, God gave them laws that would set them apart and preserve them among foreign nations that stood in the way of Israel’s seizure of the promised land. God called Israel to conquer these nations rather than co-mingle with them. Most Christians are familiar with the Ten Commandments documented in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, but they were not the only laws God gave. He expounded upon these and gave the nation of Israel over 600 laws to follow.

Being reconciled to God through faith in Christ under the new covenant means we are not held liable to our ability to uphold all the laws. The death and resurrection of Jesus changed the game for us. Jesus has paid our sin debt. We are no longer personally responsible for satisfying God’s wrath for sin. However, that does not mean we are free to live reckless, destructive, sinful lives. The writer of Hebrews taught that there is a harsh penalty for anyone who receives the truth of the gospel but goes on sinning deliberately.

Reorient your outlook on life to see that obeying God doesn’t earn your salvation but sets you apart, builds up the faith of other believes and brings glory to God. Submitting to God’s instructions for your life is not a burden; it yields blessings. It is not restrictive it is rewarding.

**Prayer**

God, you are a heavenly father of infinite wisdom. I am thankful that you correct me when I mess up because you love me deeply. I ask that the Holy Spirit empower me to abstain from developing destructive habits and cultivate healthy habits that stimulate my growth and bring you glory. You have plans to prosper me, not harm me. I trust that I don’t need what you tell me to decline and I will treasure what you tell me to gravitate toward.

# Forgiveness

*Matthew 18:21-35*

*Matthew 6:14-15*

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

*Luke 17:1-4*

*Romans 5:10*

Forgiveness is not about what you remember. It’s about what you release.

Forgiveness is not merely a biblical suggestion but a command. Jesus teaches his disciples that to be forgiven by God, we must first forgive others.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he gives a prayer template, which today many call The Lord’s Prayer, that includes the following phrase “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:12 CSB). After the close of the prayer, Jesus emphasizes that to be forgiven by our Heavenly Father we must forgive our brothers and sisters here on Earth.

Remember that God was gracious and merciful enough to reconcile himself to us while we were still his enemy. Every person is born into and lives in something that God detests, sin. The forgiveness of sins extended to us by God was not earned or deserved yet graciously granted to those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Since the eternal debt of sin has been paid on our behalf by Jesus, don’t you think it’s our turn to extend forgiveness to those in our lives?

The parable given by Jesus in Matthew 18 is an illustration of how foul and ridiculous it is to withhold forgiveness from someone begging us for mercy when our eternal life and restored relationship with God is a result of being the recipient of the same.

If someone offends or hurts you, it is acceptable to assert yourself by rebuking that person. Yes, Christians are encouraged to strongly warn or reprimand one another but in a loving manner. We don’t passively allow people to abuse us and say nothing. In Luke 17, Jesus warns us to pay close attention to those sinning against us and rebuke them. If they repent, forgive them with no limits.

No one is perfect. The purpose partners God brings in our lives will be imperfect people on their own journey. Put two imperfect people in relationship and offenses are bound to occur. As believers, we are commanded to bear with one another and forgive because we have been forgiven. If we are the offender, we are to repent and ask for forgiveness.

**Questions for Reflection**

Who in my life have I withheld mercy and forgiveness from although they have asked for it?

What offenses from the past do I need to release? What will forgiving that person do for you mentally, emotionally, spiritually?

**Prayer**

Lord, please search the depths of my heart and show me from whom I have withheld forgiveness. Am I still languishing in the anger and pain that person provoked? Help me see that my unwillingness to forgive has a direct, detrimental effect on my relationship with you. I need your divine discernment to help me improve how I navigate relationships, improve my capacity to extend mercy and improve my ability set boundaries that protect me from people who abuse me intentionally or unintentionally.

# Walk Like Jesus

Acts 20:19

Philippians 2:3

Colossians 3:12-14

Galatians 5:23

Scripture reveals that God has not asked those raised to life in Christ to exemplify characteristics Christ did not embody.

Jesus charged us to love God and our fellow neighbors and to be forgiving of one another. He himself showed us how to do that while walking on this earth. In Ephesians 4, Paul charges us to walk in a manner worth of our calling. He provides some criteria to clarify the best heart postures to hold as we navigate life:

Humility

Patience

Peaceable Unity

Gentleness

Bearing with one another in love

These traits are incredibly difficult to uphold if we try to exemplify these in our own strength. Thankfully God has not called us to do that. Jesus is not only our master and messiah but also the prototype for how to live. We can look at his life for examples of how to apply all of these to our lives.

When Jesus physically departed from this world and ascended into heaven, he promised to send his Holy Spirit. Believers know that the same power that raised Christ from the dead now dwells inside of us. The Holy Spirit will empower and guide us as we commit to living these out. The mistakes we make along the way will not lead us to damnation but remind us of our need for constant dependency on God. We cannot embody these traits without the example of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

**Prayer**

Lord, I desire to take off the old way of living and adorn myself with the traits and characteristics you modeled while you walked the earth. I cannot resist the temptation to drift into patterns of pride and unforgiveness without your help. As a new creation raised to life in Christ, please use my renewed life to bring you glory and equip me to serve others lovingly and faithfully.

# Store God’s Word in Your Heart

Psalms 119:10-13

Deuteronomy 30:14

Joshua 1:8

Psalm 40:8

Psalm 119:97

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Romans 12:2

The scriptures remind us to store the Lord’s words in our hearts and minds. If we delight in him and keep him as the focal point of our lives, there is a greater opportunity to position his will as regulator of our behaviors.

For those of us redeemed by Jesus Christ, we know that following God’s laws doesn’t earn right standing with him. However, storing up, meditating on and obeying his principles, precepts and truths certainly please him. The scriptures show us that following his instructions will yield positive fruit and favor in our lives. Obedience also helps us combat sin and temptation. Through this, we become a living testimony of God’s love in the world.

This is why I encourage daily study along with scripture memorization and meditation. These are good practices that help God’s word penetrate our hearts and become ingrained in our subconscious. I believe this is why God told Joshua to keep the book of the law on his lips; to meditate on it day and night. God was generous enough to lay out the guidelines within which we can live prosperous, fruitful lives.

**Prayer**

Lord, thank you for giving me this love letter we call the Bible to teach me about your unconditional, redemptive love for your creation. Your parable about a seed sower documented in Matthew 13 taught us that various internal and external forces can cause us to disallow your word in our hearts due. Please redeem my study time and enhance my ability to read, interpret and retain your word so that I be wiser, more joyful and enlightened.

# Seek the Lord’s Wisdom Part 1

Proverbs 2:1-7

James 1:5

1 Kings 3:5-9

There is a series of books in the bible some people call “Wisdom Literature”. Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes are included in this section. In it, we find that God conveys rich knowledge through stories and statements that can be applied to our daily lives.

One of the benefits of having a God who cares for our wellbeing is his willingness to give us the knowledge and truths needed to life a fulfilling life.

In James 1, it says,” If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” If we go to God seeking his wisdom, it will be granted to us.

In the early years of Solomon’s reign as king, Solomon recognized how his youth and inexperience could prove to be a disadvantage. When God told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted from him, Solomon asked for an understanding mind so that he could govern with great discernment. God graciously grants Solomon what he requests. While leveraging his wisdom, Solomon increased Israel’s wealth during his reign, led Israel to building the Lord’s temple and even wrote several books of the Bible we still glean wisdom from today.

If you ask God for wisdom, he will endow you so you can grow in greater knowledge and understanding of him, yourself and your calling in this world.

# Seek the Wisdom of the Lord Part 2

James 3

Proverbs 2

If you look hard enough there are a plethora of ideologies and belief systems that claim to be sources of true wisdom. The God of the bible is the all-knowing and infinite source of wisdom. He generously gives wisdom to those who seek him. The Bible is a rich source of it and that is one of the reasons consistent study enriches your life. If you’re like me, you enjoy reading books, perusing through articles and watching sermons that present new perspectives for me to consider. As I am sorting through the information I consume, I occasionally stop and ask myself, “How can I tell if someone is operating under “godly wisdom”? James 3 gives a very clear answer to this question.

After teaching us about the proper use of our speech, James, the brother of Jesus and author of this book of the Bible, answers our question about wisdom. James lists the traits of we should observe in believers striving to lives and behave in heavenly wisdom. He says these people are:

Pure

Peaceful

Gentle

Merciful

Agreeable to reason

Producing of good fruit

There is no coincidence that many of these traits parallel the fruits of the spirit described by Paul in the book of Galatians.

Let’s revisit our question. How can we tell if someone leverages godly wisdom in their life? The answer? Fruit inspection! In his book *Relational Intelligence,* Dr. Dharius Daniels said, ”evaluation or “fruit” inspection is an external exercise. It is an act of inspecting the fruit of the people in one’s relational circle and determining what category the fruit qualifies them for.” Inspecting someone’s fruit is not judging their character but simply combining observation and evaluation to make sounder, relational decisions.

 Pay attention to how wise people speak. Examine how wise people approach decision making and conflict. Righteous living will bear good fruit.

Finally, wisdom protects us. Wisdom leads to upright living and upright living is preserving. Seeking God’s wisdom and leaning on it will position you for favor and preserve you in this chaotic and disorderly world.

**Prayer**

Lord, your wisdom is more valuable than the most beheld currencies and treasures on Earth. You told us that we can access greater fear of you and discover deeper knowledge of you if we seek your wisdom earnestly. Thank you for revealing the riches of your wisdom through the holy scriptures. I trust you and will remind myself daily to rely on your ways rather than my own.

# Reflections from Nehemiah’s Prayer

Nehemiah 1: 4-11

Leviticus 26:33

Deuteronomy 28:64

Nehemiah was a courageous, sympathetic, prayerful leader who led a remnant of Jews to rebuild the wall of their holy city, Jerusalem, in 5th century BC. He answered the call by leveraging governmental authority he was able to access as a cupbearer and upholding God’s laws during the rebuild as the remnant of Jews endured ridicule and resistant, both internally and externally, during this immense undertaking. What is most admirable about Nehemiah is not the leadership traits his displays but the reverent devotion he holds for the God of his ancestors.

In the first chapter of the biblical book aptly named after him, the Jews have been exiled from their home by the Babylonians. They are scattered and living in destitute conditions. Nehemiah has also been displaced. He is working as the cupbearer to Babylonian king Artxerxes when he catches word that the wall of Jerusalem has been burned and the surviving Jews have been exiled. They are reported as living under “great trouble and shame.”

Nehemiah’s emotional and prayerful response to his people’s distress is a valuable lesson. His first recorded response to this sad news is one of mourning and intercessory prayer. In Nehemiah’s prayer recorded in Nehemiah 1, we see the following

* Nehemiah professes the character, faithfulness and attentiveness of God
* Nehemiah confesses the sins of his nation, his family and himself
* Nehemiah intercedes on behalf of God’s chosen people to ask for mercy
* Nehemiah asked God to provide favor before earthly authority.

Nehemiah shows us how to pray with reverence to an awe-inspiring, compassionate, covenant keeping God.

His leadership models the importance of aligning our hearts and our minds as we lead. Those of us who lead and serve others may be tempted to disregard other people’s struggles in favor of placing task completion as a higher priority. It can be easy to become hard-hearted after you’ve been disappointed and betrayed. The mocking and humiliation endured by Nehemiah and the Jews was designed to dissuade them from persevering. They do not succumb to the pressures and accomplish their objective. Nehemiah leads decisively with foresight yet grants people the freedom to express their emotions.

**Prayer**

Lord, please renew my heart so that I feel compassion for those who are struggling. Exchange my heart of stone for a heart of flesh. Your scripture teaches that it is in your nature to listen to the cries of your people and respond to our requests. I ask that you hear the supplications I submit for myself and as well as those prayers submitted on behalf of others in need.

# Final Remarks

God's word it's timeless and resonates with each of us personally. I hope this devotional book is the genesis of your new regular, rhythmic pursuit of God through the divine scriptures. I believe God’s word has the power to penetrate your heart and reconfigure your outlook on life, love and purpose. Hebrews 4:12 says,” For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

The bond of soul and spirit is analogous to the close connection between joints and marrow in your physical body. This can make it difficult to distinguish the difference between your soul and the spirit of God living inside of you. Have you ever endured a season where you were seeking God’s guidance in a specific area but struggled to discern which voice was his?

 I was in this place about four years ago. Reading the bible was a laborious chore for me. I treated reading a few short verses a day as an annoying disruption to a busy, hectic day. My motivation for reading was to check a task of my daily checklist. If I read my assigned daily passage, I had forgotten it by the time I was pulling out of the driveway heading to work. I was quick to pursue truth and wisdom through secular sources but remained reluctant to read, study and prayerfully mediate on God’s word.

I still experience what I call “seasons of static” where I perceive my open channel to God’s voice to be disconnected, distorted or delayed. Over the years, I’ve learned that building a discipline of scripture study and reflection helps me remedy or reset my perspective in these seasons so that I don’t lose all hope and drift toward other deceitful, empty doctrines the world inundates me with.

Finally, consider every moment of scripture study to be small bank deposits in an everlasting account Many financial gurus advise that it’s easier to build a robust savings balance when you make small, consistent deposits over time rather than relying on your excitement or a windfall of money to stir up your motivation to save. Studying God’s word serves us best when we spend time in it daily. When it’s time to make difficult but crucial decisions, the word of God has already been deposited and we can draw guiding principles, values and truths from our remembrance with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Allow the Lord to speak to you and lead you. The instructions, guidance, comfort and encouragement you need can all be found in his word. Make small, incremental deposits in your soul and watch the spirit of the living God transform your life.