

SEMP

16-Day
^ Devotional



Creation



Fall



Rescue



Restoration

“ . . . give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18

I want to express my thanks to God, the Creator of all things, for allowing me to be part of His story and for allowing me to share His story with you. I still remember when I first fully understood the story of God; I was 17 years old when His story changed my life. I will never forget how excited and nervous I was to share the story with my friends.

I also want to recognize the power and work of God the Holy Spirit in both the creation and development of this study. Without His encouragement, guidance, leading, and direction this study would have never come into existence. All the glory to God alone!

-Mark Edwards

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Before You Begin

Have you ever had something so awesome happen to you that you could not wait to tell a friend about it? Of course you have. We have those moments in life that are so breathtaking and incredible that we feel like we will explode if we do not tell someone.

That something happened to me. One day someone shared a story with me. It changed my life and started me on a journey that has literally led me all over the world. I want to share this story with you, because if I don't, I will just explode. But be warned — this story is a life changer. If you like your life the way it is, don't read any further because I guarantee this story will change your life. I have seen it transform the lives of people over and over again in front of my eyes.

This story is a story unlike any other. In fact, everyone in the world is part of this story. It does not matter where you live or who you are. This story encompasses everyone and everything. No one is left out of this story. I like that. It is also a living story. It is a story that has been written, is being written and will continue to be written. It is a story that is not bound by the limits of time and space. It is the story of how it all began, how it fell apart, how it was made right, and how it will never end. It is a story of good, evil, rescue, and restoration - a story of faith, hope, and love.

Come, discover the story that will transform your life. It will ignite your passion to live and to share the story with others. I want to invite you on an adventure that is sure to change you and those around you. Like any great adventure in life, this adventure has a cost. This adventure demands that you make a commitment

Chapter 1



Creation



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Day 1: How It All Began

Welcome to “The Story.” I am excited to share with you what someone else shared with me many years ago. This is a true story, not a fable or fairytale. The further you go in this devotional, the more you will realize that this is not just another story but is in fact THE story. The story begins long ago, before earth was created, before any animals or human beings ever existed. So let’s go way back to the beginning, before time itself.

Take your Bible and open it to the first verse of the first book: **Genesis 1:1**. Take a moment and write down in large letters below the first four words of the first verse as they appear in your Bible.

The story begins with GOD. The existence of God is fundamental in understanding the story. It all begins with God. The story starts before there was even one single mountain. Read **Psalm 90:2**. Take a moment and write down this verse below, word for word.

This verse tells us that God is from everlasting to everlasting. God is eternal and pre-existent, which means He has always existed. Without Him there would be no story. In reality, all of history is “His-story.”

Now open your Bible to **Psalm 19:1-6**. These are some great verses that talk about how God chose to communicate His story to us. Make a list of all the words that describe how God is still revealing His story to us.

God is sharing His story day and night. Did you get those great verbs? God is declaring, proclaiming, pouring, and rejoicing. God made everything we see and hear around us, the visible and the invisible, all to communicate some part of His story. I want to challenge you to take some time today to look up at the heavens: the sky, the sun, the moon and stars. Look and listen. Make a mental (or written) note of what you see or hear and I will ask you about it during the next day’s devotional.



In **John 1:18** Jesus says, *“No one has ever seen God...”* It is tough for us to believe in someone we have never seen. To believe in someone you have never seen requires faith. Faith is something we exercise every day in life. Every day when you wake up you take in a deep breath before you begin your day. You probably do not even think about it, you just do it. You open your mouth and believe by faith that there will be this invisible thing called air, which will enter your lungs and allow you to continue to live and function. You cannot see the air around you because it is invisible. But you believe it is there so you breathe. Jesus gives this great example of faith and the wind in **John 3:8**. *“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.”* Do you believe that wind exists? Where does it come from?

Although we cannot see the wind, we can see the effects of the wind. We see the trees sway and the leaves blow, and hear the whistle of the wind in our ears. Thus, we believe in the wind, not because we can see it, but because we can see its effects. The evidence is all around us. The same is true of God. Although we cannot see God with our eyes, just as we cannot see the wind, we know God exists because of the overwhelming evidence around us. Do you believe that God exists? Look around you. What evidence do you see around you of Him?

When we look around us we see God's fingerprints everywhere. God does exist. Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* **John 20:29** It takes faith to believe that God exists.



Key Truth:

It is by faith that we believe that God exists. Although we have never seen Him we see evidence all around us that He is truly here. The existence of God is fundamental in understanding the story. You must first believe that there is a God.

Key Verse:

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” **Psalm 90:2 (ESV)**



Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it several times during the day to yourself. Then place it in the front of your Bible so you will see it each day!

Day 2: How Everything Came Into Existence

Hebrews 11:6 says, *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”* In Day 1 we saw that we need to first believe by faith that God exists. We believe God exists because of the overwhelming evidence all around us. We believe by faith that God is real and He does exist.

The story begins with GOD. *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”* **Psalm 90:2 (ESV)**. He has always existed and is the one who is telling the story. He is communicating with us day and night. You can hear Him if you will only stop, be still and listen. He is sharing the story 24/7. Did you take some time to look up and listen? I hope so. What did you hear?

Let’s go back to the first book of the Bible again. Go to **Genesis 1:2-25** and read these verses. As you read make a list of what God created on each of the first 5 days.

Day 1:

Day 2:

Day 3:

Day 4:

Day 5:



God spoke and everything came into existence - the sun, moon, every star, the water, every fish, every bird, every plant and every living creature. Notice that on every day God spoke (verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24 and 26) and when He spoke new things were created.

Colossians 1:16 says, *“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.”*

Everything was created by God and for God. God is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. God created the things we can see and the things like the wind, which we cannot see. God loves to create. Every hour of every day God is still creating. Every plant, every fish, every animal, every bird, and every human being is a new creation of God.

Read **Hebrews 11:3**. Write this verse in your own words.

What do you believe this verse is saying to you?

We see that faith is a huge key in understanding the story of God. In fact, without faith one can never understand the story God is telling day and night in all of His creation. You must first believe by faith that God exists, and then you must believe by faith that God made the universe and everything in it. Creation demands a creator.

Key Truth:

It is by faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what we see with our human eyes came from what we cannot see. God spoke and everything came into existence. By His command the entire universe was created and filled with galaxies, stars, and planets, including earth. He created it all.

Key Verse:

“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” **Hebrews 11:3**



Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it as you look outside of God’s beautiful creation.



Day 3: Why We Were Created

“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Hebrews 11:3

The story begins with God and His creation. We have seen that in order to understand the story of God we must first believe by faith that God exists and that He created everything. We believe that God exists because of what we see all around us in the universe that He has made. Creation demands a creator. Our faith is not a blind leap but a strong belief based on the overwhelming visible and invisible evidence all around us, just like we believe in the wind because we see the undeniable effects of its power. We believe that God exists and created everything because we cannot deny the overwhelming evidence that confronts us daily. God’s beautiful creation shouts to us day and night that He is real and that He is actively involved in what is happening here on earth.

So far we have God, a universe, a planet, light, water, dry ground, planets, trees, a sun, a moon, stars, birds, fish, and all kinds of land animals. But God is not done yet. The creation is not complete. The crown of God’s creation has yet to be formed.

Let’s look at Day 6, in which we see the crown of God’s creation, the first human beings, Adam and Eve. Read **Genesis 1:26-31**. What grabs your attention as you read the account of God making man?

One of the things that grabs my attention in the story is the phrase, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” God is telling His story in a plural form, “Let us,” “our image,” and “our likeness.” Interesting! God is one person yet He is speaking in plural form (“us” or “our”).

What does this mean? The simple truth is that God is three in one: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are not three gods, but one God in three expressions. A great example of this is water, which can express itself as a liquid, gas, or solid. When you heat up water it takes the form of a gas, and when you freeze water it takes the form of ice. In the phases: “Let us”, “our image”, and “our likeness”, we see that all three expressions of God were involved in the creation of the world. Also, in **Genesis 1:1-2**, we see God the Father, *“In the beginning God created...”* and we see God the Holy Spirit: *“the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”* **Colossians 1:16** speaks of Jesus—God the Son – *“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.”*



God has always existed and lived in perfect harmony with Himself. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in community with one another. One day They decided They wanted to create a being with which to share their love, their world, and their community. So They created a universe and then it was time to create a being that They could share this all with; a being that would live in harmony and community with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God created mankind to be in relationship with Him. He created us to converse with Him, to share His world with Him, and to live in community with Him. This is the big difference between human beings and animals. God crowned His creation with a being that could relate to Him and interact with Him, and one with which He could share a relationship.

Read **Genesis 1:27** over again. How does it say God created human beings?

God made us in "His image". God created a being that is not on the same level as God but a being in His image with the ability to reason, converse, make choices and decisions on their own. We are all made in the image of God. We bear the mark of our Creator. We were born to be in relationship with Him. At first everything was perfect. The first human beings, Adam and Eve, lived with God in community. They walked with God in the cool of the day and conversed with Him. God named Adam and God brought the animals to him and allowed him to name each one.

God created a being that could know the satisfaction of a good hard day's work, a being that could taste the fruit of his work and enjoy eating it, a being that could feel love and live in community with God. God made the human race in "His image."

Key Truths:

God created human beings to be different from all other creatures. He created us in His own image with the express purpose of having a deeply personal relationship with us and to live in community, working alongside Him.

Key Verse:

"What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet."

Psalms 8:4-6



Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. As you read it ponder how God created you different from His other creations.



Day 4: Harmony

Key Truths:

Take a moment and go back through the first three days and jot down the key thoughts so far.

Day 1:

Day 2:

Day 3:

The story starts with God, who has always existed. One day God exercised His creativity and created a vast universe. He then created light, water, dry ground, planets, trees, a sun, a moon, stars, birds, fish, and all kinds of land animals. He then crowns all of His creation by creating the first human being, Adam. He places him in a perfect garden and he lives there together in community. He lives in harmony with his Creator and develops a deep love relationship. God shares with him everything that He has made.

Think that sounds awesome? I agree. That must have been some place to live. Can you imagine? The perfect place: Adam living in perfect relationship with God in the most beautiful place in the world, a garden prepared by God. The relationship between God and the first man displayed itself in an environment of working, eating and creating.

Read **Genesis 1:26-31**. As you read make a list of why God created man (us).

God created us to rule over the rest of His creation (26), to be fruitful (28), to multiply and fill the earth (28), to subdue the earth (28), to eat from what the plants and trees produced (29). But there is more.

Read **Genesis 2:4-20**. As you read, add to your list some more reasons why God created us.



God placed the first human beings in a perfect garden on planet earth because He wanted them to work in the garden (15). Yes, work is a good thing, are you surprised? We were created to work. God wanted Adam to take care of the garden (15). He wanted him to enjoy eating the fruit of his work (16). He also wanted Adam to work at naming all the animals (19-20).

So in short, God made it all, then He entrusted it to Adam and Eve, to work at taking care of His creations, to manage with specific instructions and guidelines. God wanted a relationship with Adam and Eve as they worked together in the garden that He had so wonderfully made and filled with good and beautiful things. God made everything to live and work in harmony together.

Every living creature existed in harmony with God and mankind. No animal or human being ever got sick or suffered and nothing ever died. Probably the best word to describe life at this time in the story is "Harmony." All was as it was supposed to be. By God's design everything was in perfect harmony.

Take your Bible again and read **Colossians 1:17**. Write this verse in your own words.

What does this verse mean to you?

This verse is talking about Jesus, God's Son, and how He sustains everything by the power of His word. He holds the whole universe together by His powerful word. God says to the earth, "rotate around the sun" and it does; He says to the sun, "rise in the morning" and it does; He says to the water of the ocean, "you can only go this far" and it obeys. All of creation lives in perfect harmony because at this time all of God's creation is obeying Him.

Key Truth:

God created everything to exist in harmony. All of creation was designed to work together in harmony, living in obedience to the word of God.

Key Verse:

"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." **Colossians 1:17**

➔ Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it throughout the day. I would like to challenge you to share the last four verses you have been meditating on with someone today. You could share them with a parent, a brother or sister, or maybe a friend. Share with them what you have been thinking about.



Chapter 2



Creation



Fall



Rescue



Restoration

Day 5: How It All Fell Apart

We now turn to chapter 2 in the story. This is the chapter called “Our Fall.” We last left the world in perfect harmony. God, who has always existed, created a perfect world and crowned His creation with beings with whom He could converse and share all that He had made. God entrusted the first humans, Adam and Eve, with a perfect garden to work and live in. They lived in community with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So what went so very wrong?

Turn to **Genesis 2:15-17** and begin by looking at the instructions and guidelines that God gave to Adam and Eve. Write the guidelines below.

God told them to work in the garden, take care of it, and by the way, one other thing: you are free to eat from every tree that I have placed in the garden except for one. There is a tree that I do not want you to eat from, it is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I imagine God standing next to the tree at this moment pointing it out to them. Either way it is obvious that Adam and Eve knew which tree God was talking about. God also told Adam what the consequences would be if he ate from that tree, *“for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* Wow! Obey — Enjoy. Disobey — Die. So what did Adam and Eve choose? I imagine that for some time they chose to obey. But then one day...

Read **Genesis 3:1-5**. What went wrong? Try to identify the process through which sin entered the perfect harmony of the garden.

One day as Adam and Eve were working and enjoying the beautiful garden God had made for them, a former angel named Satan took on the form of a stunningly beautiful creature and approached Eve. Eve must have been familiar with this creature; I do not get the impression that she thought it was strange that this serpent could converse with her. Satan is great at disguise. **2 Corinthians 11:14** says, *“... for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”* So the serpent, who was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made, says to Eve, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” Note the serpent’s strategy. He first calls into question what God has said and tries to get Eve to doubt God’s word.

The story continues. Eve says to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” It appears Eve is very clear on the rules and the consequences. She not only got the idea of not eating but she adds in that in her conversations with God she understood that she was not even to touch the fruit. Eve tells the serpent the truth. The serpent replies, “You will not surely die.” Wow! The first BIG FAT LIE ever told on planet earth. Lying is now present in the garden. Read a little more about this serpent.



Read **John 8:44**. What does this verse say about the serpent (the devil)?

The devil (Satan) is the “father of lies.” The devil was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Eve will only be his first victim. This is the first lie in the story, told by a beautiful creature to a beautiful woman. Into the perfect place, into the perfect community and into the perfect harmony comes the first BIG FAT LIE, which begins everything moving in a tragic downward spiral. What will Eve do? How will she respond to this first lie?

Can you identify with Eve? What lie has the devil been telling you? Think about it. There is probably more than one. He tells them to you almost daily. Write a few of them down.

Key Truth:

The devil is the “father of lies”. He is a liar and he wants nothing to do with the truth. There is no truth in him. Identify his lies; do not be fooled, he is seeking to destroy you.

Key Verse:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

John 8:44



Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it throughout the day. Let this verse serve to remind you to be careful to identify the lies of the world – on the Internet, on television, and at the movies.



Day 6: Where It All Went Wrong

When we last left the story, Eve was interacting with a serpent who had just injected the first hideous lie into the perfect garden. The devil, who is the “father of lies”, has just said to Eve, “You will not surely die.” He tells Eve that God is the one lying to her, and he is telling the truth in attempt to convince her to believe him, not God. What will Eve do now that two opposing statements confront her, both claiming to be the truth? Who is telling the truth - God or the serpent?

Let’s return to the story in Genesis and see what Eve will do. Read **Genesis 3:6**. Try to dissect this one verse and write down the process Eve goes through in making her decision.

This verse says that Eve saw that the tree was good for food and it was pleasing to her eyes. I think Eve must have looked hard at the fruit, pondered it, doubted in her heart that what God had said was true, and wondered why God would withhold this good fruit from her. After all, she was a good person. I know I am trying to read Eve’s thoughts a little, but I do it as a son of Eve and it is the same process I seem to go through whenever I am tempted.

James 1:14-15 says, *“But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”* Eve saw the fruit with her eyes, and I too see all kinds of things with my eyes. I see something and I wonder why God would not want me to have it. I see something I want and start to convince myself that I really deserve it. It all begins with seeing something I can’t have.

Eve wanted to have the fruit when she saw *“that the tree was also desirable for gaining wisdom.”* You see the process here? After Eve saw the fruit, then she desired to have the fruit. She seems to have meditated on it long enough to get to the point of thinking she had to have it. Meditating on something that our eyes see can produce a desire to possess it.

Read **I John 2:16**. What does this verse say about this process?



Giving in to the temptation presented by the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride in possessing what I see are what lead to disobedience. So Eve did the unthinkable – she disobeyed God. She took the fruit from the tree and she ate it. Eve, of her own free will, took what God had said not to take. She made her very first selfish decision and changed the course of history.

Then, *“she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it”* (3:6). I am somewhat shocked by the words *“who was with her.”* I don’t know about you, but for a long time I had the idea that Adam was out petting the animals or something while all this was going on with Eve and the serpent. But no! Adam was there the whole time. He saw it all and He wanted to eat just as Eve did. He too was tempted. He heard, he saw, he meditated, he desired, and he freely chose to disobey. There are no excuses for Adam. They both willfully chose to believe the lie the serpent told and chose deliberately to disobey God. Wow!

It is important to remember what happened in Day 3 of the story. You read that God made Adam and Eve in “His image.” Remember that one of the things this meant was that they were free to make decisions and choices of their own. Not only was it their choice to decide on the names of the animals, but they had a choice every day if they would obey God or not. That is what makes us very different from all the other creatures God has made, we choose to obey or disobey.

It seems to me that God desires that we, of our own free will, decide to live in relationship with Him and obey Him without being forced to do so. I think God is glorified when we choose to obey Him, seek Him and live in relationship with Him of our own free will. Can you see how that would please God? Adam and Eve exercised their God-given freedom and they chose to disobey, just as we do today. **Romans 3:10** says, *“None is righteous, no, not one,”* (ESV) and **Romans 3:19** says, *“the entire world is guilty before God.”* (NLT) We are all guilty before God because we all have deliberately chosen to disobey Him.

Read **Romans 3:23**. Write this verse down word for word.

Key Truth:

The bad news is that Adam and Eve deliberately chose to believe the serpent over the Creator. In their own free will they chose to disobey God – just as each one of us has done in our lives, over and over again – and sin entered the world.

Key Verse:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” **Romans 3:23**



Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it throughout the day. Share this verse with someone today and ask him or her what it means to them!



Day 7: The Consequence

In Day 6 of this devotional, we left the story on a sad note. Lied to by the serpent and tempted to eat of the fruit that was forbidden, Adam and Eve deliberately chose to disobey God. This deliberate disobedience brought with it some very stunning consequences, as we will see today.

What will happen when they realize what they have done? What will happen when God comes to walk with Adam and Eve in the garden in the afternoon? What will be the result of their poor decisions? How will God respond to their deliberate acts of disobedience?

Let's look first at what Adam and Eve did when their eyes were opened and they came to the realization of what they had done. Take your Bible and turn to **Genesis 3:7-13**. What did Adam and Eve do when they realized that they had disobeyed the Creator God? Try to see the process. Make a list of the things that they did in the order that they did them.

I find it very interesting that the first thing that happened after Adam and Eve ate the fruit and disobeyed God was that they realized they were naked. They suddenly became self-conscious. Before this, their eyes were never on themselves. They were always on God the Creator, His creation around them, or on each other. They had never been self-centered or self-conscious before. Now the only thing they could see was themselves. Their disobedience brought with it self-centeredness, and that self-centeredness brought shame. They felt awful; they knew they had blown it. Adam and Eve remind me a lot of myself.

So they quickly pulled some leaves off a fig tree and sewed them together to cover their shame. They tried to hide their embarrassment. I wonder what the serpent was doing during all this time. I wonder if he was laughing at them.

They heard the sound of God the Creator moving through the garden and they tried to hide from His presence behind the trees. Bad idea. God sees them, of course. God sees everything all the time. God already knew what they had done, but He still asked Adam for an explanation, and in perfect form, Adam blamed Eve. When God questioned Eve, she blamed the serpent. Isn't that exactly how it happens still to this day? I disobey God, and then I blame someone else. I can't tell you how many times I have found myself doing the very same thing Adam and Eve did. You would think that I was a descendent of this disobedient couple!



Let's return to the story and look at the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Read **Genesis 3:14-19**. What were the consequences to each of the three participants in the disobedience? Make a list.

The serpent:

The woman:

The man:

Added to these consequences, God in His mercy and grace removed Adam and Eve from the beautiful garden He had made (Genesis 3:20-24). They were now slaves to the disobedience and rebellion that had entered their hearts. God did not want them to live like this forever. He escorted them out of the garden so they would not eat of the tree of life and live forever in this miserable condition. Adam and Eve's sin had caused a separation between them and God. God also said, *"for you are dust, and to dust you shall return"* (Genesis 3:19). Dust to dust! The penalty for their disobedience was immediate spiritual death or separation from God, and eventual physical death. In **Genesis 5:5**, we read of just that - Adam's physical death. Satan, in the form of a serpent, breathed his smoky, foul, lying breath on Adam and Eve; they inhaled deeply and died. The stench of death was now all over them.

So what about us, the children of Adam and Eve? How does this all affect us? **Romans 5:12** says, *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."* You see, even though Adam and Eve were the first to sin, they were not the last. We have all sinned by disobeying God. What are the consequences of our disobedience to God?

Read these verses and write down what each of the consequences are:

Isaiah 59:2: *"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."*

Consequence:



Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death..."

Consequence:

Key Truth:

The consequences for disobedience to God are spiritual death, or separation from God, and physical death. Disobedience always brings separation and death.

Key Verses

"For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23
"But your iniquities have separated you from your God . . ." Isaiah 59:2



Write these two verses on a 3x5 card and carry them around with you for the next 24 hours. Read them throughout the day.



Day 8: Our Great Need

Key Truths:

The last few days in the story have been very, very dark. Take a moment and thumb back through the past few days and jot down the key truths.

Day 5:

Day 6:

Day 7:

Sin had entered the perfect world that God created and with it brought separation and death. When we left the story yesterday God had handed out the consequences for Adam and Eve's disobedience — "separation from God and death."

"For the wages of sin is death . . ." **Romans 6:23**

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God . . ." **Isaiah 59:2**

Yes, Adam and Eve were the first humans to disobey, but not the last. The human race quickly spiraled downward. Adam and Eve had two sons: Cain and Abel. One day Cain, like his parents, disobeyed God and the world took its next big turn downward.

Take your Bible and let's return to the story. Read **Genesis 4:6-8**. What did Cain do to Abel and how?

"Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master it." **Genesis 4:7**



Wow! What was Cain's problem? Sin was crouching at the door of his heart and he was unable to get control and rule over it. Sin now dominated mankind. His disobedience led to anger, his anger led to jealousy, his jealousy led to the murder of his brother. This was the first murder on earth. But the story gets even darker.

Skip ahead and read **Genesis 6:5-7**. Describe the human race at this point. How bad is it? How is God feeling about all this?

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" **Genesis 6:5**. The heart of God the Creator is sickened and His Spirit is grieved by the rampant disobedience. Man has become a slave to disobedience and every thought he has is self-centered and rebellious.

Look around you. Turn on the news. Is there any doubt that we live in a broken world that is enslaved to disobedience? We continue to suffer the consequences of disobedience: sickness, misery, fighting, killing, separation from God, and death. We are left with the question: Is there any hope? Read what one man wrote long ago about this seemingly hopeless condition we face in **Romans 7:24**. Write it down word for word.

Paul, the writer here, has identified our great need: "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Who can free us from the slavery of our sin and self?" We need someone to rescue us from our helpless situation.

Key Truth:

We are in great need. We need HELP! We need someone to step in, to save the day, to rescue us from all the lies, and from self-centeredness, which continues to lead to spiritual death or separation from God.

Key verse:

"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" **Romans 7:24**

➡ Write this verse on a 3x5 card and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it throughout the day.



Chapter 3



Creation



Fall



Rescue



Restoration

Day 9: A Ray Of Hope

In chapter 1 the story opened with God and His creation of a perfect world. In chapter 2 we saw how sin entered the story and death by sin. In the story Adam and Eve have been removed from the beautiful garden because of their disobedience, and the human race is spiraling downward out of control. We were left with many questions as to our future. Can anything be done to stop the crazy cycle of death and separation brought on by our own disobedience? Is there anyone who can step in to save the day? Is there someone to rescue us from all the lies and slavery to disobedience, which continues to separate us from God?

Thankfully, today we start a new chapter in the story. It is a chapter of hope and of His Redemption. In the midst of the darkness of our great need, God made a promise. He gave us a ray of hope, a small light at the end of the tunnel. This glimmer of hope came in the form of a promise, a promise given to Adam and Eve. God had not left them (nor us) without hope.

You have already read the promise, but maybe you missed it. It is in the words of God to the serpent in **Genesis 3:15**. What is the promise?

On the very day that sin enters God's perfect world, God Himself shines the first ray of hope through a promise. God promises that one day a son of Eve will be born who will crush the head of the serpent and destroy him. At the same time the serpent would strike the heel of this son of Eve. What could this mean? Who could this be referring to?

Then God makes another promise to a man named Abraham. Take a moment and read **Genesis 12:2-3**. What did God promise Abraham?

God was going to send a blessing to all the families of the earth. What would be the blessing? What did God mean by this promise? But wait, there is more. The promises just keep coming, promise upon precious promise. Read some of them:

"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between His feet, until He to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be His."

Genesis 49:10



“May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him. For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.” **Psalm 72:11-14**

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” **Isaiah 7:14**

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” **Isaiah 9:6**

“In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.” **Isaiah 29:18**

“But for you who revere My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.” **Malachi 4:2**

These are just a few of the well over 100 promises given by God over the years; the precious promise of eternal life and a restored relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God has done something to rescue us from all the lies and the cycle of disobedience that leads to separation from Him and eventual physical death to give us a life once again with Him.

Read **2 Peter 1:3-4**. What does Peter call these promises that we have been looking at?



Key Truth:

There is a ray of hope. God saw our great need and granted us a precious and great promise. He promised to send someone to save the day. And God always keeps His promises.

Key Verse:

“Through these He has given us his very great and precious promises...” **2 Peter 1:4**



Write this part of the verse on a small piece of paper and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it each time you eat a meal. At each meal today share it with the person you are eating with. Ask them what they think the promises are.



Day 10: Promise Made, Promise Kept

“The days are coming”, declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good promise I made...”

Jeremiah 33:14

“And this is what he promised us – eternal life.” **1 John 2:25**

“In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time...” **Titus 1:2**

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” **John 17:3**

Wow! What a promise - a precious promise of eternal life and a restored relationship with God. God promised that He would send a Savior, someone who would set us free from sin and self-centeredness and draw us back into a relationship with Himself. For centuries God prepared the way for the coming of the Promise.

Read **Galatians 4:4-5**. Write down what these verses are saying to you.



Just when all seemed lost, when the human race was in complete slavery to disobedience, separated from God and on the road to death, at just the right time, God fulfilled His promise. God loved us so much that He sent God the Son, born of a woman (a daughter of Eve), born under the curse of the Law, into a self-centered, sinful, disobedient world. God did this to redeem us from the curse and bring us back into a relationship with Himself.

Read about God's love and plan for redemption for us in **John 3:16-17**. What did God do for you and me? Write it down in your own words.



God loved us so much He came to earth in the person of Jesus, God the Son. In the small hilly town of Bethlenem, God the Son was born of Mary, a daughter of Eve and a virgin, just like God had promised in Genesis and Isaiah. Hope had come into the world. A light had dawned in the darkness.



Luke 1:78-79 says it this way: *“Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”*

You know this part of the story as the Christmas story. Look at the Christmas story in **Luke 2:1-20**. How did God enter into the world? Write down your observations.

Luke 2:21 says, *“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named JESUS, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.”* Just as God had named the first perfect man now God names the second perfect man — JESUS. God had kept His Promise! He sent God the Son — Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of Man, the God/Man, God Himself clothed in a human body.

Read **Galatians 4:4**. Write it down word for word as it appears in your Bible.

Key Truth:

When darkness had swept over the earth, at just the right time God sent the Promise. God loves us so much that He came to planet earth in the person of Jesus to fulfill the promise He had made. God never lies and He always keeps His promises. Promise Made — Promise Kept.

Key Verse:

“In the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.” Titus 1:2

Write this verse on a small piece of paper and carry it around with you for the next 24 hours.

➡ Meditate on it throughout the day to remind you that God never lies! I want to ask you to share this verse with one of the women in your life today. Ask her what she thinks this verse means.



Day 11: The Greatest Love

The story started with God and His Creation; then came the dark chapter of the fall of mankind, followed by the promise of hope. This promise was a Savior, a Messiah, someone who would restore all things and right the wrong. Yesterday we saw that God did not lie but kept His promise.

God in human form was the Promise. He had come into the world in the person of Jesus, a male child, born to Mary, a virgin daughter of Eve. Jesus was the fulfillment of the long-awaited promise. Jesus is God housed in a human body. But what would Jesus do to save us from the crazy cycle of disobedience, self-centeredness and sin leading to separation from God and eventually to physical death? How would God entering the world in the person of Jesus change anything?

Take your Bible and see why God came. Look up these two verses and write down why God said He came.

John 10:10:

Mark 10:45:



God came to earth to give us an abundant life and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Remember the promises:

“And this is what he promised us — eternal life.” **1 John 2:25**

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” **John 17:3**

God came to earth to bring us back into relationship with Himself for the rest of eternity. But in order to do this, there was something that He had to do first. He first had to pay the price for our disobedience. Do you remember what the price was for sin?

Remember these verses from Day 7: **Isaiah 59:2**, **Romans 5:12** and **Romans 6:23**? Look back and read these verses again. What is the penalty for our disobedience and sin?



The ultimate penalty for our disobedience is death. You see someone has to die to pay for our disobedience. If we are to go free, someone must pay the price and die in our place.

Who would die in someone else's place? Who would do such a thing? Who would love me enough to lay down His life for me, to pay my penalty, to die for me? This part of the story is without question one of the greatest things I have ever heard.

Read these two verses and let them touch your soul. Write down what they mean to you.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

Romans 5:6

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." I Peter 3:18

When we were powerless to save ourselves and doomed to die, God stepped in. He came to earth in the person of Jesus, He took our place and died for us. But why would He do it? Why would God die for me? Check this out in **Romans 5:6-8**. Write your thoughts about this passage.

God loved me so much that He took my place. God (the **RIGHTEOUS ONE**) died for me (the **UNRIGHTEOUS ONE**). Mark it down. Don't ever forget it. God loved us so much that He laid down His life for you and for me. He died my death. He paid the price for all my sin and set me free. God made a way, Oh glorious day! When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price of all my sin and set me free.

Key Truth:

God came to pay the penalty for my disobedience. He brings me back into a relationship with Himself and gives me an abundant life for all eternity.

Key Verses:

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." **John 10:10***
*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." **Mark 10:45***



Write these verses on a 3x5 card and carry them around with you for the next 24 hours. Read them throughout the day. Then, when the 24 hours are up, give them to a friend!



Day 12: The Great Exchange

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." **John 10:10**

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." **Mark 10:45**

God came to give us an abundant life with Him by offering His life as a ransom to save us from sin and death, which we rightly deserve because of our disobedience to Him. It has been called "The Great Exchange." His life for mine. God came to take my place. Incredible! Let's look a little closer at how it all came down.

Take your Bible and find John 1. In this passage it refers to Jesus as the Word and the Light. Read **John 1:1-11** and jot down what it says about the Word and the Light.

Who was Jesus as the Word?

What did Jesus do as the Word?

Who was Jesus as the Light?

What did Jesus do as the Light?

These verses support things we have already learned in the story and give us some new information as well. Here are a few truths to wrap your mind around.

1. The Word, or Jesus, has always been (1).
2. Jesus is, in fact, God Himself (2).
3. Jesus was with God in the beginning, at the creation of our world (2).
4. Jesus is the Creator of everything (3).
5. In Jesus is life, and His life is like a light for us in the darkness of our sinful world (4, 5).
6. Jesus is the true light for everyone (9).
7. When God came to earth in the person of Jesus, He was not recognized by His own creation. We had drifted so far into the darkness of disobedience that we did not even recognize our Creator (10).



8. Jesus was rejected by the very ones He had come to rescue (11).

God came to earth as the Word and the Light. That is the story so far in a nutshell. God became a human being in the person of Jesus over 2,000 years ago. He did this in fulfillment of the promise He had made immediately after Adam and Eve first disobeyed Him. He came in fulfillment of all the precious promises He had made throughout the time of the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled more than 100 predictions of His birth, life, rejection, and death. He lived a perfect life. **Hebrews 4:15** says, *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin.”* Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are, to disobey God, but He never did.

He lived a perfectly obedient life. He obeyed God in everything. In **John 14:31** Jesus says that He always did exactly what the Father asked Him to do. Jesus always obeyed! Read about His ultimate act of obedience in **John 19:16-30**. Describe in your own words what happened some 2,000 years ago.

Jesus died a horrible, painful death on a Roman cross. He died willingly for you and me. Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice, pleasing and acceptable to God the Father as full payment for our sins. On the cross Jesus’ final words were, *“It is finished”* **John 19:30**. Jesus took our place on the cross and died our death so that He might open a door of opportunity to an abundant life with God for all eternity, and to bring us back to God.

Key Truth:

God, in the person of Jesus, died on a cross. It has been called “The Great Exchange,” His life for mine. The miracle of Redemption is that Jesus took my place on the cross, the perfectly innocent for the hopelessly guilty. Jesus suffered and died in my place. Spend a few minutes today just thanking God for taking your place, for dying your death, and for paying the price of all your sins on the cross. Thank you, God!

Key Verse:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.” **1 Peter 3:18**



Write this verse on a small piece of paper and carry around with you for the next 24 hours. Read it throughout the day and each time you read it say, “Thank you, God! Then, when the 24 hours are up, I want to challenge you to give this verse to a friend and explain to him or her what it means!



Chapter 4



Creation



Fall



Rescue



Restoration

Day 13: The Way

Today we turn another page and enter an exciting new chapter in the story. In this chapter God restores His creation to Himself through Jesus. When we last left the story, God in the person of Jesus had suffered and died a cruel death on a cross, taking our place. Jesus offers us redemption - the perfectly innocent for the hopelessly guilty. But be careful not to make Jesus a martyr. His death was not a tragedy that could have been prevented; His death was the very reason for which He came. Jesus came to die in our place. Jesus is not a martyr - He is a Savior. The best part is the story does not end with God dying in our place. After His death they bury Him and three days later something incredible happens.

Read **Luke 24:1-8**. Describe what happened after Jesus willingly gave up His life for us?

“He is not here; He has risen!” **Luke 24:6**. Jesus rose from the grave, conquering death and sin. Jesus had won the day. On the third day Jesus emerged from the grave alive, never to die again.

Read **Romans 6:9-10**. What do these verses say about Jesus’ resurrection? Write down your thoughts and observations.

Death no longer has dominion over us because of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus was victorious over death. Death has lost its power. Jesus’ resurrection brought forth restoration and life. His resurrection and His victory over death are huge.

Go to the book of 1 Corinthians. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**. What is Paul saying here about the gospel or the “Good News”?

The “Good News” is that Jesus came to earth to give His life as a sacrifice in my place; He died and rose again, opening the way to a restored relationship with God Himself. But what does all this mean? How does Jesus being raised from the dead affect me?



Romans 6:4-8 says, "...just as Christ (Jesus) was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him."

What do these verses say that Jesus' resurrection has done for us? Write down your thoughts.

Jesus' death and resurrection opened the WAY for the human race to be restored into a living relationship with God. It opened up a new WAY to live. Jesus set us free from sin. The human race no longer has to be enslaved to sin, which leads to separation from God and eventual death. The relationship has been restored. We now can choose to live in harmony with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit because of Jesus. Jesus opened the WAY. Through Adam and Eve sin entered the world and death entered the world because of sin, but through one man, Jesus, life is now offered to everyone. A "new and living way" has been opened up to all of humanity (Hebrews 10:20).

Key Truth:

Jesus is the WAY to a restored relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Key Verse:

"Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." **John 14:6**



Write this verse in LARGE print. This is your verse to meditate on until you've completed this devotional.



Day 14: The Truth

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:14

In Day 13, we saw that by rising from the dead Jesus opened the WAY for a restored relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. That is the good news. Jesus’ death and resurrection have opened a “new and living way” for all those who desire an abundant life and a restored relationship with God.

“Therefore Jesus said again, ‘Very truly I tell, I am the gate for the sheep.’ **John 10:7** Jesus is the door through which the human race can now, one by one, enter into the abundant life and a personal relationship with God our Creator.

Read **John 3:1-16**. What is Jesus saying here?

Jesus tells Nicodemus here “he must be born again spiritually.” Remember in the story when Adam and Eve disobeyed God? The consequence was that they died spiritually. They were separated from God. So Jesus is saying that to restore that relationship with God each of us has to be reborn spiritually. How are we reborn? Jesus goes on to explain to Nicodemus that whoever believes in Him will be restored into relationship with God for all eternity. This is how some others told this part of the story:

- John, one of the first to believe said, *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”* **John 20:31**
- Paul, one of the early church leaders, when asked the question: “What must I do to be saved?” Jesus answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” Acts 16:30-31

Read **Romans 10:9-10**. Take a moment and write these verses down word for word.

Jesus is the door to a restored relationship with God. To enter through the door, one simply needs to confess and believe. Simply confess the true story. Confess that God exists and created everything. Confess that you, like Adam and Eve, have fallen by disobeying God (which is sin), and that you need a savior. Then, believe in your heart that God, in the person of Jesus,



came to earth, lived a sinless life and died on a cross in your place to pay the price for your sin, and that on the third day He rose from the dead to give you new life.

This is how one walks through the door. Have you ever done that? If not, today is a great day to do so. Waiting on the other side is your Creator who desires a personal relationship with you and offers you an abundant life with Him forever. He wants everyone to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). But He will not force you to make a decision to be in a relationship with Him. He offers this relationship with no strings attached for all who will confess their sin, and believe in their heart that God in the person of Jesus died and rose for them.

You can do this right now while you are reading the story. If you have never confessed these things to God and believed in your heart that He died and rose for you, I plead with you to do so now. You will not be sorry you made the decision to begin a relationship with God. If you have already made this decision and have this relationship with God, stop and just say thank you once again to God for saving you and drawing you into a relationship with Him. Read these two verses slowly and think about what they are saying:

“Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” **John 14:6**

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” **Acts 4:12**

The Bible clearly teaches that there is no other way, no other door. Jesus is the only way. I know that might be hard to hear, I know it was hard at first for me, but then I thought about it and about the huge price God paid. If there was another way why would God have come to earth and died for me? I kind of wish there was another way. I wish that no one had to die, that maybe I could do enough good things in this life to earn my way to heaven, but I cannot and that is why God had to come and die for me. I could never be good enough. Make no mistake. There is no other way. The truth is that there is no way into a relationship with God the Creator except through Jesus. If there were another way God would not have had to die.

Key Truth:

Jesus is the TRUTH. Jesus is the only WAY to a restored relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Key Verse:

“Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” **John 14:6**



Write this verse on a 3x5 card. I want to challenge you today to give this verse to someone in your family and then discuss with them what Jesus is saying.



Day 15: The Life

So far in this chapter on restoration we have learned that Jesus came to restore us into a personal relationship with God. Jesus is like a door; He is the Way into a personal relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is also the Truth. He always speaks the truth because He is God, and God cannot lie. The truth is that Jesus is the ONLY way to a restored relationship with God. The story continues as we discover that not only is Jesus the Way and the Truth, but He is also the Life.

Jesus said, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." **John 10:10**

Abundant life awaits all those who put their faith in Jesus. The abundant life that God offers us does not begin some day in the future. Our restoration begins right now. Eternal life begins now. Yes, there is hope of future restoration, which we will see tomorrow, but the future begins today. Abundant life is for today.

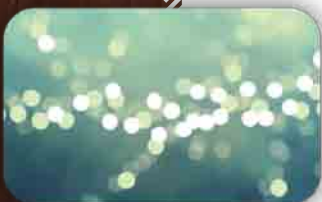
Read **2 Corinthians 5:14-17**. What do these verses tell us about the abundant life?

When someone comes by faith to Jesus, God makes him/her into a new creation - A new creation with access through a personal relationship with Christ to God Himself. Now go forward a few pages in your Bible to the book of Ephesians. Read **Ephesians 4:20-32** and make a list of what this new abundant life is to look like.

This new life that Jesus offers is one we must choose to live by faith. Just as we came to Jesus by faith, God wants us to live in Jesus by faith. **Colossians 2:6-7** says, *"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."*

Once again we see the role of faith in the story. By faith we believe that God exists and that He created everything. By faith we believe that God came into the world in the person of Jesus and died for our sins and rose again. But faith does not stop at our salvation; we must continue to live by faith. Read these verses slowly and jot down some thoughts about what they are saying about living by faith.

"And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again." **2 Corinthians 5:15**



"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Galatians 2:20

"For we live by faith, not by sight." **2 Corinthians 5:7**

God wants us to live by faith. Jesus came not only to die for us but He came to show us how to live by faith. He came to model this faith relationship with God the Father so we could see it and desire it, and then He died so we could have it. Jesus died to restore us into a faith relationship with God. In the life of Jesus we find our example of how to live a life of faith. A study on the life of Jesus is crucial for your growth as a Christ follower and disciple. John says, *"Whoever claims to live in Him (Jesus) must walk as Jesus did."* (**1 John 2:6**). Jesus walked by faith.

Key Truth:

Jesus is the LIFE. He came to show us how to live a life of faith in God. Jesus lived His life as a model for us of how God wants us to live – by faith.

Key Verse:

"Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." **John 14:6**



Many people will need to see us live the story in front of them for some time before they will believe. They need to see the story lived out before they will believe that the story is real. Write this verse on a 3x5 card and give it to someone today and explain to them that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.



Day 16: Everything Restored

Key Truths:

The last three days in this devotional have been wrapped around **John 14:6** which says, Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Take a moment and thumb back through the last three days and write down the key truths.

Day 13:

Day 14:

Day 15:

Paul was a man who started off hating Jesus. He would not believe that Jesus was the Way. Like many people, he wanted his religion to be the way to God. He started off denying the truth of who Jesus was and he dedicated his life to stopping the movement of multiplication that Jesus had begun. Paul eventually came to believe by faith that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Then he gave his whole life to the story, telling everyone he could the story of Creation, Fall, Rescue, and Restoration. He became an expert at telling the story. He does a masterful job, led by the Spirit of God, as he explains the story in book of Ephesians. Take a look. Read **Ephesians 2:1-3**. Which part of the story is this? How does Paul describe the self-centered life?

This is the Bad News, and it is really BAD. Paul is describing here the human condition. We are all dead in our sins, under the domain of Satan, living in disobedience, gratifying our own self-centered desires. We are objects of the wrath of Almighty God. If you do not understand how really, really bad this is for us; you will never really appreciate the Good News, which is what follows. Read **Ephesians 2:4-5**. Make a list of all the things Paul says that God has done for us.



This is the Good News! Because of His great love and mercy God has made us alive through faith in Jesus Christ. **“By grace you have been saved” Ephesians 2:5.** The word “GRACE” means that God’s richest blessings fall on me, which I do not deserve, because Jesus took my place and died my death. Grace is not a cheap word but a very expensive one. God’s grace cost His life. He gave His life for mine. Read **Ephesians 2:6-7.** What else has God done for us by grace?

“Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.” John 1:16

God has not only rescued us from sin and restored us into a relationship with Him but He just keeps giving grace upon grace. God continues to pour out the riches of His grace to us through Christ Jesus and will continue forever. God also promises to one day make everything new. **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)**

One day all will be made right and all of creation will be restored. God will dwell with mankind once again. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain. That day is coming. Praise God!

Key Truth:

God is offering to every person a restored relationship with Himself, the Creator. Jesus is the only WAY to that restored relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the TRUTH. Jesus is the LIFE. Abundant life in Christ is now and will continue throughout all eternity. The abundant life is the Christ-life. God made a way back to Himself for the human race and that way is through faith in Jesus, who is the door. How exciting that we can walk through the door by faith and be born again spiritually into a new and living relationship with God.

Key Verse:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)



Write these verses on a 3x5 card. Carry them around with you for the next 24 hours and let its truth soak deep into your soul. Place the card in your Bible and have it ready to share with someone God leads you to.



Key Devotional Verses

"Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God." **Psalm 90:2**

"By faith we understand that the universe was formed God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." **Hebrews 11:3**

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." **Romans 3:23**

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 6:23

"But your iniquities have separated you from God; your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear." **Isaiah 59:2**

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." **John 10:10b**

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."
I Peter 3:18a

"Jesus answered, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." **John 14:6**

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." **Ephesians 2:8-9**

"You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." **I Corinthians 6:20**

"And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again." **2 Corinthians 5:15**

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

"I die every day!" **1 Corinthians 15:31**

"We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please Him..."

2 Corinthians 5:7-9

"Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did." **1 John 2:6**

"You are witnesses of these things." **Luke 24:48**