

An illustration in a woodcut style. The scene is split into two color zones: a dark red zone on the left and a dark grey/black zone on the right. In the red zone, a woman with long hair is crouching on the ground, looking towards the right. A dragon-like creature is coiled on the ground near her. In the black zone, an angel with large, feathered wings stands on a large rock. The angel is holding a sword upright in his right hand and a banner aloft in his left. The background features a large, fluted classical column on the left and a dark, textured wall behind the angel.

RESISTANCE

DAILY DEVOTIONAL
PART 2: VICTORY

In Part 2 of this series, I want to remind ***you that you don't fight for victory but from it!*** God is doing work in your life, your family, and our church, but you'll face resistance from the enemy. As we explore this, my heart is to help you see with fresh eyes the invisible battle we face each day. Whether you realize it or not, every believer is a soldier in God's army, called to stand firm against the forces that seek to derail our faith, disrupt our peace, and distort God's truth.

We'll unpack the Scriptures that speak directly to the struggle between light and darkness. You'll encounter stories of victory and defeat, of human weakness and divine strength. You'll be reminded that while our battles are not against flesh and blood, they are very real and often come in forms we don't expect—temptation, fear, confusion or even discouragement. But the good news is this: We do not fight alone. We've been given every tool we need to stand firm. With the armor of God, the power of prayer, and the strength of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome.

This journey is about more than just surviving—it's about thriving in the face of resistance, knowing that every struggle is an opportunity for victory in Christ. Let's dive in together, armed with faith and ready to take our stand. The battle belongs to the Lord.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a horizontal line and a cursive 'J'.

Bryan Jones
Senior Pastor

DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

"... Our Father in heaven..."

Matthew 6:9b (NLT)

- **What do You want to say to me today as my Father?**

"... may Your name be kept holy."

Matthew 6:9c (NLT)

- **What do You want to reveal to me about Your power today?**

"May Your Kingdom come soon."

Matthew 6:10a (NLT)

- **Help me make Your priorities my priorities today.**

"Give us today the food we need,"

Matthew 6:11 (NLT)

- **Is there anything specific You want me to do with my time or the people I'm around today?**

"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us"

Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

- **Reveal to me anyone I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness.**

"And don't let us yield to temptation..."

Matthew 6:13a (NLT)

- **Is there anywhere I'm vulnerable to temptation?**

BEHOLDING WHAT WE ARE BECOMING

And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." **Galatians 4:6 (NLT)**

Have you ever experienced a moment that made you react—a surprise gift, an unexpected encounter, or finding an insect under a neglected pot? Our responses reveal the impact of an experience and how deeply it resonates. In Galatians, we find that our identity as children of God begins with a response to Jesus. When we encounter Him, our hearts are moved to respond with belief.

Identity starts with beholding. As we see God's character—His beauty, humility, and trustworthiness—our hearts are moved to believe. This belief forms the foundation for accepting what He says about us. True confidence doesn't come from forcing belief but from encountering Jesus, who is the ultimate answer to insecurity, problems and lies.

A challenge for Christians is trying to force belief in the truth of Scripture without truly encountering God's character. In a world obsessed with self-validation, many strive to prove their worth through effort alone. Yet, our confidence isn't rooted in our abilities—it comes from Jesus, whose presence transforms us.

Belief isn't only formed in dramatic encounters with Jesus but also in quiet, everyday moments. It's in these unhurried rhythms—like the silent ease between close friends—that intimacy grows. Similarly, our relationship with God gives us access to an unforced, unhurried space with Him, requiring no agenda, just presence. It is that proximity to Jesus that transforms everything.

APPLICATION: As we draw near, encountering His love and truth, our hearts respond. Beholding Him shapes our identity, deepening our confidence and allowing us to rest in the truth of who He says we are.

He Is Love (1 John 4:8) → We Are Loved (1 John 4:19)

He Is Protector (Psalms 18:2) → We Are Safe (Psalms 18:2)

He Is A Good Creator (Colossians 1:16) → We Are Purposefully Made (Psalm 139:14)

He Is The Author Of Hope (1 Peter 1:3) → We Have Hope (Isaiah 40:31)

Today, take time to think about the lies you wrestle with or the needs you have and work backward. How does the person of Jesus Christ answer your needs? Meditate on the scriptures that reveal God's character and allow that awareness to cultivate the belief you need.

PRAYER: Father, you are the author of Truth. I am thankful I don't have to create my purpose, meaning, safety or provision. Everything I need is found in you. Reveal your character to me today and teach me to respond in belief. In your precious name, I pray. Amen.

WEEK ONE • MONDAY

THE BELOVED

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." **Matthew 3:17 (NIV)**

Imagine standing on the riverbank the day Jesus was baptized, the air buzzing with anticipation. As Jesus stepped into the water, something extraordinary happened. Scripture says:

"...heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'" **Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV)**

These words from the Father reveal a profound truth about our identity in Christ. God didn't call Jesus *servant* or *warrior* but *Loved Son*. This title speaks of intimacy, joy, and affection—far beyond religious performance or duty. God loved Jesus, and Jesus believed Him.

Immediately after this declaration, Jesus was led into the wilderness for 40 days of testing. Without food or drink, He resisted Satan's attempts to distort His identity and confidence in God's Word. How? Jesus believed the truth spoken over Him: He was not a servant or orphan but the Beloved Son of God. That truth affirmed at the river fortified Him through the trials.

The Father's declaration over Jesus that day in the river extends to us, offering direct access to His love. At our core, we are beloved sons and daughters. The enemy wants to steal that confidence, just like he tried to do to Jesus in the desert. He tries to bully us out of belief and confidence in our belovedness, wanting us to doubt or dismiss just how great God's love is for us. But we get to stand firm in the Truth: we are God's Beloved. The belief that we are God's Beloved is our greatest weapon against the enemy's lies.

APPLICATION: We often need reminders that we are God's Beloved. Undoing lies that have taken root in our hearts and minds takes time. Today, as you go about your day, practice this short, breath prayer:

As you inhale, say - I am your Beloved. As you exhale, say - And You are mine. Through breath prayers, focus on His love, letting it calm stress, fear or pain. Meditating on His love cultivates belief, replacing lies with truth, and empowers us to face life's challenges.

PRAYER: Father, Your love is everything. It is who You are, and it is my hope. I ask that You teach me about Your love and replace any fear with the confidence that can only come from You. You're worth it all, and I am thankful to be called Your Beloved. In your beautiful name. Amen.

THE RESTORATION OF IDENTITY

But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly healed. Then He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." **Luke 8:46-48 (NIV)**

Have you ever felt unworthy? Have you felt something stand between you and the Lord? The woman with the issue of blood experienced this. For twelve years, she suffered terribly. In the culture of the day, such a physical ailment would have had terrible consequences for her physical, relational and spiritual life. Cut off from friends and restricted from corporate worship, she would have been exiled and called unclean. She was alone.

In desperation, she placed her last hope in Jesus, touching the hem of His cloak. In that moment, everything changed. Jesus not only healed her physically but restored her identity. He didn't call her unclean or broken—He called her daughter. She went from outcast to beloved child with one faith-filled touch. Jesus is in the business of restoration. He didn't come only to offer eternal life but to give life abundantly. For this woman, Jesus didn't just fix her problem—He restored who she was. She was no longer the unclean woman but a cherished daughter.

This is what Jesus does for us. He enters our brokenness, failures and insecurities and brings restoration. He gives back what's been stolen, reestablishing what was lost, and resurrects the essence of what it means to be loved by Him. John 10:10 reminds us, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* The enemy loves to seed doubt and insecurities in us, whispering that we are unlovable and unreachable. This is the opposite of what Jesus does. He enters our brokenness, bringing hope and transformation with just one touch.

APPLICATION: Where do you feel unworthy or in need of help? These are the places Jesus loves to meet you. Be honest with Him—share your fears and pain. Invite Him in to restore what's broken or lost. Like the woman with the issue of blood, find your identity in His word. Ask Jesus how He sees you—His words and response can change everything.

PRAYER: Jesus, I need You and want You. I believe You can restore and rebuild. Come into the places of shame, lost hope, and lies I've believed. Teach me to trust what You say about me. Have Your way in me. Amen.

THE POWER OF PRESENCE

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

Daniel 3:17-18 (NIV)

Some Bible stories inspire awe, like tales of heroes, foes and God's power. We may overlook their depth as we age, recalling them only in fragments. Yet, these stories reveal profound truths. Take Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as an example. Exiled and thrown into captivity, they faced immense trials. But their steadfast faith in God guided and protected them through their greatest test.

After refusing to reject God and accept the gods of their captors, they were sentenced to death by fire. Instead of fear, they responded with faith, declaring that God could save them and that He was worthy of their love and loyalty even if He did not. Thrown into the fire, the onlookers saw not destruction but life. Even more astonishing, a fourth figure miraculously joined them, and they moved freely within the flames, unharmed. The Lord didn't just save them from the fire; He was present with them.

When we are tested, afflicted, and troubled in our lives, Jesus is the fourth man in the fire. He offers more than just physical protection or eternal life; He promises to be *with* us. Our belief and confidence in who we are in Christ goes beyond what is happening in our present reality. Faith that we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:31-39) comes not from effort but His presence.

We don't just need solutions. We need His presence. What guards our lives, our identities, our hearts, and our minds is Him. Whether it is unforeseen circumstances, loss, failure, unfulfilled hopes, or lies thrown at us by the enemy, the presence of Jesus holds the answer to everything. The wisdom, comfort, solution, provision, and protection we need are in His person.

APPLICATION: Where do you need the person, protection, and provision of Jesus? Life's urgency and stress can distract us from inviting Him into our struggles. Take a moment to reflect on what troubles you or where you need help. Invite Jesus, the fourth man in the fire, to walk with you and minister to you today.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for Your unending presence. I invite You into my circumstances, emotions, and thoughts. Teach me to trust Your ways and show me who I am in You. Your way is best. Amen.

MADE FOR A PURPOSE

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

One of the greatest tactics the enemy uses against our identity in Christ, our trust in what God says is true, is hopelessness. Unforeseen circumstances, loss, past failure, deferred hope—all these things can chip away at our confidence and hope.

Scripture is full of examples of individuals like us who wrestle with deep questions and disappointments from prolonged exposure to trials and loss.

- God's people waited for freedom from Egypt.
- Hannah cried for a child.
- Paul suffered in prison.

The list could go on. The Bible is filled with stories of people who prevailed in desperate situations. How did they keep their faith? They had hope in something greater than their circumstance.

We were made for a purpose. God's word testifies to this reality: our lives are not an accident. It proves to our waiting hearts that we are God's children and, therefore, have hope and a future. Paul said as much in his letter to the church in Philippi. He writes,

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength. **Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)**

In hard moments, our greatest comfort is that the Lord has not abandoned us. The enemy loves to discourage us into believing we are without purpose. This is not true. The heroes of faith believed God was who He said He was, and they were who He said they were. This belief builds hope, propelling us into the future God destined for us before our lives began (Jeremiah 1:5). Trust in His truth and embrace His purpose for you.

APPLICATION: Where do you need a fresh breath of hope? Bring those struggles to the Father today. In our desperation, He plants Truth, identity, and hope to weather any storm.

PRAYER: Father, thank You that I don't have to create or protect my life alone. You give me purpose and a plan through Your wisdom. Reassure my heart of Your presence today. Teach me to look beyond my circumstances and surrender control to Your trustworthy care. I will follow and trust in Your name alone. Amen.

THE GIFT OF TIME

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." **Genesis 12:1 (NIV)**

Can you imagine Abram's (later known as Abraham) shock when God told him to leave everything—home, family, and dreams—and go into the unknown? He likely felt some trepidation. Yet, staring into uncertainty, Abram took a step of faith that began a long, incredible journey.

We live in a culture of speed, where convenience rules. In this fast-paced world, it's easy to feel frustrated with the slow pace of personal growth, healing or change. The enemy uses this impatience to make us feel inadequate, as if our faith isn't growing fast enough. But God didn't create us in a factory; He created us in a garden.

Nature reveals God's value for time. Trees don't grow overnight, gardens don't produce fruit in a day, nor do we. Transformation and growth take time. In His kindness, God uses the journey to reveal more than we could ever convince ourselves to believe. Jesus hints at this reality when He says, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing."* (John 15:5) Remaining in Him, day after day, leads to a slow but profound transformation. The doubts, lies, and fears we wrestle with don't just need quick answers; they need the journey *with* Him.

God's slowness is beautiful—the way He is consistently with us, patiently tending to our needs, minds, and hearts, using time to deepen our understanding of who He is and who we are to Him. Time is a gift. Anyone who has fallen in love knows that time with another is sacred; in those slow spaces, love has time to grow. Similarly, our journey with God isn't about reaching the promised land but walking with Him, discovering His character and love. Through slowness, we indeed come to know Him.

APPLICATION: Where do you feel frustrated—circumstances, healing, unfulfilled dreams, or persistent lies? These spaces are fertile ground for truth and joy. Invite the Lord into those areas and ask for His perspective and value for the journey He's chosen for you.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for being with me in every step. You're not offended by my struggles, but help me grow. Teach me about You in life's slowness. Reassure me of Your truth and guide me to walk confidently. Amen.

GOD HAS POWER OVER SHAME

And I will deal severely with all who have oppressed you. I will save the weak and helpless ones; I will bring together those who were chased away. I will give glory and fame to my former exiles, wherever they have been mocked and shamed.

Zephaniah 3:19 (NLT)

C.S. Lewis once said, *...we must not imagine that it is only our vices which prevent us from doing good. Our shame prevents us just as much.* I believe that when people feel immense shame over personal decisions or from their past sins, they often see themselves the way Lazarus would have looked walking out of that grave: dead and wrapped in grave clothes, certainly causing people to talk.

But Jesus not only raises Lazarus from the dead but immediately makes certain that he appears as an alive man and no longer a dead man. Because of Jesus, we have new clothes of righteousness given to us. But often, many of us walk around carrying the shame and guilt of sins that Jesus has already forgiven.

Today, be reminded that Jesus didn't just forgive your sins, but He also changed your identity.

APPLICATION: What are some things that you would like to be cleansed from today? Ask Jesus to share how He dealt with those things, and then take a minute to respond to His words.

PRAYER: Jesus, it's so easy to view myself differently than how you identify me. Please help me receive your forgiveness and walk in new clothes, not those my old self wore. Amen.

OBEDIENCE FIRST, MIRACLES SECOND

Jesus was still angry as He arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible." Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing Me.

John 11:38-41 (NLT)

Before Jesus had Lazarus, a dead man, walk out of the tomb. He asked those looking on to roll the stone away. Could you imagine the enormity of that task requested by Jesus? I remember walking through the cemetery as a young boy and being told I was not to walk over or onto any graves and gravestones. As much as our secular culture continues to degrade, I still feel there is respect for the dead.

The idea that Jesus wanted to roll a stone away would not only have been disrespectful, but the smell would have invaded the place. The amount of shame that would have been confronted at that moment would have been immense. But their trust in Jesus moved them to obedience, and then they got to experience a miracle.

Often, God works through our shame to help us get to a breakthrough. But we must trust Him with our shame and obey what He asks.

APPLICATION: Take a moment and imagine what you would have felt if Jesus had asked you to move the gravestone away. Remind yourself that God desires to work with us, not despite us, to move in this world. Give Him thanks for his partnership today.

PRAYER: God, help me have the courage to release my shame to You. I want to be obedient and faithful to You and not measure myself based on how others perceive me. Help me obey You fully and completely, even if confronted with shame. Amen.

SHAME BEFORE VICTORY

Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. **John 11:45 (NLT)**

The Scriptures say that many came to believe in Christ after they saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. But that's not what Lazarus' sister Mary thought would happen. In fact, Mary was probably feeling ashamed. Why? Earlier, out of her grief, she told Jesus that it was Jesus' fault that Lazarus had died.

I can imagine friends and family members putting pressure on the sisters, Mary and Martha, at this moment. *Don't you know the miracle worker? Are you connected with that guy who turned water into wine? Why didn't He show up when you needed Him?*

This is how we can feel at times. We don't have the gift of being everywhere all at once or knowing all things, although some of us act like we have that gift! But God does. Jesus knew that God would use this tragic situation to make more people aware of Him and that their eternities would be shifted forever because of this moment. It can be challenging to trust Christ when we don't have all the information, but our greatest shame is often a preparation for our most significant victory if we surrender our shame to Christ.

APPLICATION: Is there a situation in your life where you don't have all the information that God might be working through? Take a moment and share your angst with Him, and then ask if there's anything He wants you to know about that situation.

PRAYER: God, I thank You that You do not work in incomplete equations. You know what's happening in my life and what I need. I ask You to help me trust even when I can't see what You are doing. Amen.

MIRACLES THROUGH SHAME

But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together. "What are we going to do?" they asked each other. "This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation."

John 11:46-48 (NLT)

Verse 46 in this story, when the Pharisees basically go and tattletale on Jesus, baffles me. I mean, they recognize that Jesus raised a man from the dead, and then they go and then rather than celebrate what God did, they become afraid and predict the downfall of both the Temple of God and the entire nation!

Not everyone reacts positively when God moves miraculously in someone's life, removing their guilt and shame and forgiving their sins. I wish it weren't so, but sometimes, people root for us to fail. I pray you're not one of those people in someone's life.

As followers of Jesus, we must be the most positive and encouraging people. We must believe that God still does miracles. We can be sure that when God moves powerfully, the enemy will oppose Him.

APPLICATION: We must stay strong and focus on God's movement in our lives. Even when other people seek to oppose God's work, we must dig in and trust Him even more.

PRAYER: God, help me see You working around me even if I am experiencing opposition. Help me see Your movement more clearly than any circumstances around me. Amen.

GLORY OVER SHAME

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

Matthew 8:2-3 (NIV)

Shame is insidious. *It is less than black and white than guilt is*, says Ed Welch, Christian psychologist. *It can plague you because of what you did, what you didn't do, what others did to you, or what others didn't do to you.*

Shame is unlike an illness. With an illness, the correct treatment may help you experience relief even if you don't know the root cause of the disease. But shame can feel so elusive to try and diagnose at times. But Jesus addresses shame in Scripture in this way: Closeness. Intimacy. Presence.

If you're experiencing intense shame over something you've done or something that's been done to you, be reminded of Jesus' movement toward you. He did it in this passage with the leper, the Samaritan woman, the woman at the well with many husbands, the tax collectors, and the woman with a bleeding issue that doctors couldn't fix. Jesus moves toward these people, notices them, reaches out to them, and invites them into a relationship with Him. They're invited into a community that can make them whole.

APPLICATION: Come clean with God about your shame today. Where do you feel it, and why? Express it to Him fully and ask Him if He wants to meet you in that shame. Listen for His response.

PRAYER: Lord, I'm overwhelmed by shame. Help me, Lord. Open my eyes to Your love and care for me. Each day, guide me into living in the way you see me. Amen.

VICTORY OVER DEATH

Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And the dead man came out...

John 11:43-44a (NLT)

No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:37-39 (NLT)

Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is an extraordinary display of Jesus' authority over death. This miracle also points to the future miracle of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus demonstrates that He even has victory over death itself.

Death is one of people's greatest fears, and even though many face it with fear, Jesus is not overwhelmed by it. Jesus can take our greatest fears and turn them into opportunities for glory.

When we fear death or if fear in general grabs at our souls, remember that Jesus conquered it. The very same power that raised Lazarus and Jesus from the grave is the same power that's available to us today. Christ's victory confirms that we can boldly face anything life throws at us, knowing that Jesus has got this.

APPLICATION: Write down a fear or worry that feels burdensome to you. Surrender that to Jesus in prayer. Meditate over Romans 8:37-39 above and ask God to give you the courage to face life today with the boldness that comes from Christ.

PRAYER: Thank You, Jesus, for Your victory over death, fear and the grave. Help me to live with the boldness You offer. Help me to see that my future is secure because of You. When I feel overwhelmed today, please remind me of Your power and promises. Amen.

LOOKING AT THE WRONG THING

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die. **Genesis 2:16-17 (NIV)**

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Genesis 3:6 (NIV)

Today, let's turn our attention to the Creator rather than to created things.

God made it perfectly clear. Adam and Eve had been given all they needed; they were only to keep away from one tree. Tempted by the devil, they turned their eyes away from the only One who could fill and sustain them. By looking at the wrong thing, they lost what they needed most—God. Unfortunately, we have inherited the sin patterns of Adam and Eve, and like them, we seek life, pleasure and wisdom in a million other places rather than in God.

That's why Moses wrote this creation story. The Israelites had been rescued from the hands of the tyrannical Egyptians and given a promise from God that they were destined for somewhere beautiful (that's why it's called *The Promised Land*). It was a land flowing with milk and honey. Moses was directing their attention back to the place where there was harmony between God and man, a land where they would have all they needed. This was a far cry from their experience of slavery in Egypt.

APPLICATION: What are you settling for? In what ways do you search for life apart from God? Identify one way you often find yourself *looking at the wrong thing*, and instead, spend a few minutes in prayer, drawing your attention to God. Look to Him to fill your needs.

PRAYER: God, my eyes are often drawn away from You. I'm easily tempted to believe that You are not enough and that other things will fill my deepest longings. Please help me keep my eyes on You and trust You to give me what I need. Amen.

BREAKING FREE FROM THE POWER OF LUST

For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 1 John 2:16 (NIV)

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10 (NIV)

Today's passages remind us that we've been born into a world at war. We fight against our sin (driven by lust and pride), the world (that powerfully lures us in), and the enemy (who seeks to steal and kill and destroy). These are not small battles. These are not slight inconveniences. This is war. This explains why the world is in the state that it's in. This also sheds light on the internal struggle we face every day. There is a pull inside us that longs for freedom, yet the world cannot give us freedom.

The second part of John 10:10, above, is what I'm after. I long for the life, the fullness of life, that comes from Jesus. He didn't come to make us nice people. He didn't come to make us moral. He didn't even come to give us a ticket to heaven. He came to set us free. As the apostle Paul chimes in, *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.* Galatians 5:1a (NIV).

There is hope! Let me repeat it. There is hope! Jesus' death and resurrection have the power to set you free from the lusts inside you and the world's cravings that surround you.

APPLICATION: Identify a stronghold in your life. Think of the ways this world has a hold on you. Name it and ask God to set you free.

PRAYER: God, I long to be free from how I lust after this world. My pride and sinful desires pull me away from You, and I long for freedom. By the power of Your Spirit, I pray that You would free me from my attachment to this world and restore my union with You. Amen.

A FLEETING GLANCE

Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. **Proverbs 23:5 (NIV)**

I can't tell you how many times I've purchased something only to experience what's often known as buyer's remorse. You know, it's the feeling of regret, anxiety or disappointment that comes when you realize the thing you thought would satisfy you has only let you down. It wasn't what you thought it was. You felt great for a short time, but the feeling quickly faded. Or what often happens is something new comes out and makes the old one feel... well, old.

Today's passage reminds us that things, even as shiny and valuable as gold, don't last. While powerful enough to catch our attention, riches (or popularity, promotion... you fill in the blank) have no lasting power to satisfy the deepest longings in our souls. The reality is that our lust causes us to grasp at things. We see something for even a brief moment and are blinded, in a sense, to what truly has value.

As the apostle Paul instructs us, *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* Philippians 4:8 (NIV).

APPLICATION: Make a list of things that are noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. Look at this list throughout the day to help you focus on things that truly have value.

PRAYER: God, I often mistake temporary things for that which is eternal. Even a glance pulls my eyes to the things of this world rather than keeping my focus on You and things that truly last. I pray You'll help me see the emptiness of what the world offers and help me value those things that truly matter. Amen.

FIXING OUR GAZE ON GOD

...And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Hebrews 12:1b-2 (NIV)**

I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. **Psalms 121:1-2 (NIV)**

For years, I thought the Christian life was more about what *not* to do: I couldn't look at this, I couldn't partake in that, I shouldn't do this, I shouldn't do that. Today's passages provide a different perspective. Rather than focusing on what *not* to do, these verses direct our attention toward what to do.

The writer of Hebrews urged his Jewish readers not to miss the Messiah. They were in danger of missing Jesus, the long-awaited Savior and King. He reminded them that the story that began with Adam and Eve was not over and pleaded with them to continue running with perseverance. Note that the text says *fixing our eyes*. This is not a casual, once-in-a-while glance but a full-on, continuous focus on Jesus.

You may wonder how we look toward someone we cannot see. Well, what's in view when we look at someone's face? Their presence and character, right? Fixing our eyes on Jesus involves craving his presence. Although Jesus is physically absent now, we can experience His presence within us through the Helper He sent in His name, the Holy Spirit. Looking to Jesus also involves gazing upon His trustworthy character revealed to us in the pages of Scripture. Whenever you get discouraged or frustrated—feeling like you want to quit—fix your eyes on Jesus. He will give you the strength to finish the race that's marked out for you.

APPLICATION: Write down several things you know to be true about God. This might include His promises, words that describe His character, or the ways He's described in the Bible. Keep this list in front of you today to help you fix your gaze on Jesus.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, help me keep my eyes on You so that I can run with perseverance the race You have marked out for me. Amen.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:62 (NIV)

Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him... I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation 1:7a, 8 (NIV)

A common way the enemy works is to cause us to focus on the past. And when we have our eyes on the past, we are often crippled, unable to move forward with passion, purpose and joy.

I played quite a bit of sports growing up. I had the opportunity to achieve all sorts of medals, trophies and pins. After I moved out of the house, my mom kept all of those awards on the shelves in my room. Whenever I went home, I would see the awards and be reminded of good times with friends and the challenges we faced and conquered together. There's something to be said about remembering successes and lessons learned along the way, but I feel sad for people whose best days seem to be in the past. You know, the football players who talk with their buddies about how great that High School championship was or the track records they set. It's as if there's nothing, or not much, to live for because the glory days all seem to be in the past.

But that's not how Jesus works. If you've stepped into a relationship with Jesus, your best days are always ahead. No matter what you've been through or what you're currently facing, God will either bring you up (heal, strengthen, etc.) in this life or eventually in the life to come. And if we keep our eyes on *that* prize, we'll be freed from the past and the sin that so easily entangles us and will move forward with greater passion and purpose. This journey of faith requires intentional focus. We cannot afford to allow the distractions of thoughts from the past to take our attention off the prize. Let's keep looking forward. Together.

APPLICATION: Meditate on today's Scriptures and ask God to fill you with anticipation of what's ahead. Imagine what it will feel like to be freed from the regrets and wounds of the past and to experience the freedom that awaits you.

PRAYER: God, I pray You'll fill me with hope. I pray You'll help me keep my eyes on the freedom and life that awaits me as I grow closer and closer to You. Amen.

SEEING WITH GOD'S EYES

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law.

Psalm 119:18 (NIV)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you...

Ephesians 1:18a (NIV)

Today, let's remember that God sees everything! One of the best ways to keep our eyes off the wrong thing and onto the right thing is by seeing life from God's perspective. His eyes are perfect! He is wise, and He alone can help us see what's good and pleasing for life and faith.

Today's passages are prayers that reflect the hearts of King David and the apostle Paul to see as God sees. Interestingly, both passages point out that it's through our eyes (and the eyes of our heart) that we see the beauty in God's instruction (law) and learn of the hope offered to us in Christ. It's God's desire that we see as He sees. I'm reminded that studying the Bible involves more than simply gaining knowledge. Spending time in the Bible and prayer are meant to help us view the world from God's eyes. He's given us His Word and enlightened our hearts so we'd live differently that we'd interpret our world and circumstances differently.

While the enemy wants us to look merely through our eyes or see things through his eyes, the Bible clearly states that we have the privilege of seeing through God's eyes. *Let's look together!*

APPLICATION: Read Ephesians 1:15-23 and ask God what He wants you to know. Circle words and phrases that seem significant. Write these down and keep them with you to help you see as God sees.

PRAYER: God, I have a limited view. I long to see things as You see them. I pray You'd deepen my desire to spend time with You and help me have Your perspective as I go about my day.

THE BATTLE FOR CONTROL

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. **Romans 8:5-6 (NLT)**

One of the biggest battles in our house is over the television remote. It's amazing to watch two young boys passionately fight over control for something that will soon disappear from their attention. But boy, is it a fight!

When it comes to our lives, who has control? Do we wrestle with our flesh in the same way? The Scriptures refer to our flesh, which is our human body. We must remember that it was created good. Often, our desires are good, but they usually don't stop there. Desires tend to cause us to outpace our created limits and then encourage us to dive deep into sin.

But the Spirit provides another way of living. This comparison between our sinful nature and the Spirit-led life is a great motivation for us in our fight to live lives that honor God:

*your sinful nature...leads to death.
But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.*

While our flesh leads us to temporary pleasure, its end is death, but the way of the Spirit is life and peace.

APPLICATION: Ask God to share one area where your flesh can get out of control. Money, food, sex, power and influence are all possible areas. Then, take some time and ask the Holy Spirit to help you develop a battle plan to war against this desire.

PRAYER: Lord, I need the Spirit's influence to overcome this sinful desire. Lead me to follow You fully in this area. Give me life and peace. In Your name. Amen.

RUN!

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.

2 Timothy 2:22 NLT

Imagine a fire spreading through a forest. If you find yourself too close, what's your instinct? You don't stand there debating whether it might burn you—you get away, you run! Similarly, the Bible tells us to flee from youthful passions, representing desires driven by our flesh. These can include cravings for immediate pleasure, selfish ambitions and lustful thoughts. These destructive desires can seem harmless initially, but like the fire, they grow quickly and can consume us if we don't find an escape.

The word *flee* here is active and urgent. It's not enough to resist or reason with these desires. We must make decisive moves away from them. But fleeing is only half the battle. 2 Timothy 2:22 also calls us to flee towards something better—righteousness, faith, love and peace. This means replacing what we've left behind with godly pursuits that lead to spiritual growth.

APPLICATION: What are some areas of temptation in your life? Find something to run towards when you feel that temptation. Consider a time of prayer or a phone call with a friend or mentor.

PRAYER: Father, Help me see my unique temptations. Please give me strength and boldness to flee from them and towards You. Fill me with righteousness, faithfulness, love and peace. Surround me with people who are pursuing this same purity of life. Amen.

POWER TO LIVE

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, He will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

Romans 8:11 (NLT)

Do you ever feel powerless in the face of temptation? It's easy to fall into the mindset that overcoming sin is a battle we fight on our own. But Romans 8:11 offers us a life-changing truth: the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives within us. Think about that—the power that defeated death now resides in you! What an encouragement.

This Spirit doesn't just strengthen us for eternal life. It empowers us here and now to resist sin and live in victory. Lust of the flesh might seem overwhelming, but it cannot overpower the Holy Spirit. When we feel weak, God's Spirit enables us to say *no* to sin and *YES* to righteousness. Praise the Lord for this.

However, we must **choose** to rely on Him. The Spirit's power is available, but it's our responsibility to tap into it by staying connected to God through our habits and practices. We must continue to be rooted in the Spirit of God.

APPLICATION: Today, ask the Spirit to empower you for Godly living. Find a promise in Scripture that encourages you to live a Spirit-powered life and commit to memorizing it.

PRAYER: God, Remind me today of the power available to me through your Spirit. Allow me to experience that power as I am tempted today. Amen.

CONTENTMENT

Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:11-13 (NLT)

One of the first Christmases we had as parents, I remember being so excited to find the perfect toy for my son to enjoy. I remember searching the web for the ideal options for his age, and I wanted the absolute best for him. When he opened the gift, there was so much joy on his face, and I was thrilled. Sadly, that joy wore off after only a few days.

The truth is that the initial fulfillment from material items fades quickly. The things meant to bring us happiness have diminishing returns. Discontentment whispers, *You need more*. It convinces us that something else—a new possession, relationship or achievement—will finally make us happy. But the truth is that these things never fully satisfy. They only leave us wanting more.

Paul, writing from prison, gives us a powerful lesson in Philippians 4:11-13. He says he *learned the secret* of contentment regardless of his circumstances. That secret is found in Christ. When we anchor our joy and satisfaction in Jesus, we're no longer enslaved to the world's empty promises. But instead, contentment leads us to joy.

APPLICATION: Spend some time today thanking God for His presence and power in your life. Resist comparing your story and life to others.

PRAYER: God, Help me find more joy in You than in anything this world offers. Remind me that true satisfaction comes only from You. Amen.

RESISTING OUR FLESH

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple. "If You are the Son of God," he said, "throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'

Matthew 4:5-6 (NLT)

In this passage, we find Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness. This test involved the devil challenging Jesus to prove His identity by throwing Himself off the temple, knowing that angels would save Him. At first glance, this might not seem like a temptation related to the flesh, but at its core, it is.

The devil was tempting Jesus to misuse His power for self-serving purposes—seeking immediate gratification, recognition and safety apart from God's timing and plan. This is often how the lust of the flesh operates. It entices us to prioritize physical desires, comfort and worldly affirmation over obedience to God.

However, Jesus resisted by leaning into God's word and plan. He refused to take shortcuts. His example shows us the power of trusting in God's provision and plan rather than giving in to a temporary desire for the fulfillment of His flesh.

APPLICATION: Practice self-control when temptation comes, and it will. Pause when tempted and ask for the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to resist. Find ways to say no to your flesh to build up resistance against the enemy's schemes.

PRAYER: God, Thank you for Your son Jesus, who stood firm in the face of temptation. Give me the strength to say no to the enemy and YES to Your plan and provision. Amen.

GRACE FOR THE BATTLE

Each time He said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NLT)

Have you ever desired to be weak? I don't know about you, but that is never something that I was coached to do as a child and especially as a man. But Paul says that his weakness is something worth bragging about! Thankfully, he clarifies and shares that this weakness allows God to work through Him. Paul's suffering in this life leads to the strength of God being on display.

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 that our weaknesses are not barriers to victory but opportunities for God's power to shine. When we admit our need and lean into His grace, God fills the gaps with His strength. The temptations we face, including the lust of the flesh, are no match for His grace.

Weakness is not failure. It's an invitation to depend on the One who never fails. His power rests on us, equipping us to resist sin and walk in righteousness.

APPLICATION: What weakness are you aware of right now? Ask God how He wants to show His power through you. Commit to following His lead and His plan as He promises to work through this weakness.

PRAYER: Lord, Thank You! Your grace is all that I truly need. When I'm suffering or tempted, help me see how to resist or make it through to the other side. My life is in Your hands. Please help me to offer it, with all of its weaknesses, to you freely. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HE WILL VS. I WILL

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God'...

Isaiah 14:12-13 (NIV)

Independence is deadly in our faith. Notice what Satan said in his heart: I will. Jesus would only do what the Father willed. He didn't do things and then invite God. He was in unison and step. We may think it's spiritual not to bother God or bog Him down with our requests, but that's a form of pride, a form of independence. Your life isn't yours. It's God's. So everything you do should be in step with Him.

It may sound humble and harmless, but saying *I will* reinforces the idea that you are on your own. A few years ago, I said, *my team* in a meeting. God challenged me. They weren't my team. They were *His team*. Everything we have is from God, and we're stewards of the great gifts He entrusts us. Train yourself to say, *I will do this with God, I will work with God on my chores, my family, my job, my future, or my struggle*. It's a way to be reminded to choose the Spirit, not the self.

The other day, I was talking to someone who just wasn't making good decisions. The sad part is that no matter what I said, he didn't really care. He seemed set on choosing his way over God's. I felt pressured to say the right thing and honestly felt I failed. I operated like it was my duty to change him.

Let the pressure and weight fall. That's the pride of performance. Just be faithful to do what God's called you to do. Be faithful to walk in step with the Spirit. He's the only one who can change someone, so trust that! He is faithful. If it's all on you today, you need to feel anxiousness, pressure, and weight for how everything goes, but if He's in control, that creates freedom and joy. Walk in that truth today.

APPLICATION: Remember that everything you do today is with God!

PRAYER: Whatever you carry in your strength, surrender that to God. He is good and faithful. Think about what creates stress or joy in you and invite Him into those things. Think about the good things that have happened to you and imagine God walking and delighting in those things with you! Thank Him for being interested in every detail of your life.

HOW GOD HUMBLER

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are right and His ways are just; and those who walk in pride He is able to humble.
Daniel 4:37 (ESV)

God is a creative God, which means He can go about humbling us in different ways. God works in our lives to create dependence and deep trust in Him. As we grow, so does our humility and trust. You don't have to know the future if you know the One who holds the future. As the verse above says, God cares enough about us to make us more like Him. Here are ways God goes about humbling us to make us more like Him:

1. Through Difficulties: The good times are great, but the difficult times usually shape us to be more like God. The fires of life often reform us, and in the difficulties, we're usually desperate for God to show up.

2. Through Discipline: God doesn't punish us. Jesus was punished on the cross, but He will discipline us as a loving Father. Any parent who loves their children will discipline them to help them understand right and wrong and to help them flourish in life. Parents don't enjoy disciplining, but they see what it produces in their child. God is the same way, and He's a better parent than we'll ever be.

3. Through Jesus' Example: Whenever we see Jesus and His humility, it changes us. In Philippians 2, we see the God of the universe as being marked by humility. Think about it: the most powerful being in the world is a servant. When we see Jesus serving and loving others, it creates a deeper humility in us.

4. Through Prayer: Prayer is often where God works and humbles us. When we spend daily time in God's presence, we're reminded of our need for His wisdom. True prayer involves confessing our weaknesses, acknowledging our dependence on Him, and submitting to His will.

5. Through His Glory: Everyone in the Bible who gets a glimpse of God's glory has fallen to the ground in worship and adoration. No one saw God and said, *That's exactly what I thought He looked like!* They were wrecked because He was bigger, more powerful, and more glorious than imaginable. When God reveals His glory, we can't help but fall to our knees and worship Him!

APPLICATION: Walk with the Lord, and He will make you humble!

PRAYER: Review the list and ask the Spirit how God is growing your humility. See what He reveals to you. Thank Him for humbling you through each one in the past!

HUMILITY BEFORE THE RIGHT PERSON

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. **James 4:10 (NIV)**

Everyone has a level of humility. Think about it. If you get around someone better than you, a hero, or someone you admire, you have humility around them. You're focused on what they think and being respectful. A part of this could be people pleasing, but it's also humility in their presence. The goal isn't to be humble around certain people. The goal is to be a person marked with deep humility, which only comes from the Spirit. What matters is to have humility with the right person, which is God.

When I become humble and open before Him, He changes me and creates a new heart and love in me. It's impossible to be humble and love others consistently in your strength. Eventually, you'll face a difficult person, trial or roadblock that'll make loving others and humility in your strength impossible. What's the solution? You need a better power source. When you're humble before the Lord, He fills you and gives you supernatural strength.

I was in a meeting the other day, and a person was passive-aggressive and negative. I really tried to listen and absorb their frustration. It was almost like the Lord showed me that what they were sharing wasn't the issue. They needed to be loved. Later that week, someone from the meeting said, *You must be dialed into God. I expected you to fight in that meeting, but you were calm.* It made me think of this verse.

When you humble yourself, God will lift you up with more power, peace, love and endurance. When you get around someone long enough, you think and act like them. When you get around God long enough, you get a supercharged humility. You start to do and say things that aren't like you because the Spirit is living your life through you.

APPLICATION: Draw near to God and ask Him for deep humility.

PRAYER: Where can you humble yourself and acknowledge that you'll only succeed through God's grace? When we humble ourselves before Him, He's faithful to exalt us in His time and His way. Invite Him in.

SPIRIT CONTROL IS BETTER THAN SELF-CONTROL

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)

Self-control is a great thing. We all need it to become the people God calls us to be. The Bible speaks about the importance of self-control. Part of self-control is learning to trust and surrender to the spirit's control. Said another way, Spirit-control is better! We might think of pride as just looking down on others, but pride is so much more. Pride, at its core, is thinking we know best. If we're honest, we can believe our ways are better than God's. I don't know many people who would have chosen every path God has allowed us to walk, but God sees what we can't. He knows how this thing or things can shape you and awaken you in the man or woman He has called you to be.

Pride is the assumption that our ways, our timing, and our plans are sufficient for life's challenges. When we release our need for control and humbly submit to His will, we open ourselves to His wisdom and grace.

The other day, my daughter had a toy she was trying to fix, but she was putting it together backward. I offered to help, but she said, *No, Dad, I got this*. I smiled and let her frustratingly keep trying to put her toy back together. After a while, she came to me defeated and handed me the toy. I told her, *It's too late. The deal is off!* No, I didn't say that. I gladly fixed her toy and handed it back to her, but I couldn't do anything until she surrendered the toy to me.

This is often what God will do. He will always help us, but pride causes us to say, *No, Dad, I got this*. Pride keeps us from going to God first because we want things done our way, and God won't always force His way into our lives. Sometimes, He will, but other times, He will sit back until we are ready to surrender.

I realized lately how much frustration, heartache, and pain I could avoid in my life if I took my life and my future and laid them before my Dad. May you humbly approach Him today and lay whatever you're trying to fix at His feet. When you do, you'll find He will fix it His way, but He will always smile and welcome you into His presence.

APPLICATION: Don't try to fix things in your wisdom. Bring them to God first.

PRAYER: Ask God to give you a humble spirit. Ask Him to help you willingly lay your plans and your future at His feet. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you that He is a good Father!

THE NEED TO BE RIGHT

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." **Matthew 16:22-23 (NIV)**

Doesn't this verse seem a little intense? Get behind me, Satan. This is one of Jesus' disciples, after all. First, we should never assume we know what God is doing in the life of a fellow believer. Sometimes, God needs to say some harsh things so that a person will wake up, and we often try to fix what God might be trying to heal. Simply put, let God be God and trust what He's doing with each person.

Jesus isn't saying Peter is Satan, but He's operating subtly with something demonic and evil, which is pride. Pride is the need to be right. Pride assumes we also know best. Self-confidence is good, but Spirit-confidence is better. One way to measure pride is how many questions you ask versus statements you make. In the Gospels, Jesus asks many more questions than He answers. To be precise, Jesus asks 307 questions. He is asked 183, of which He only answers 3.

I confess I need to grow in this area. A counselor once told me, *Bryan, you just need to become curious about others*. We spend so much time judging, being afraid, or trying to convince people of certain things. Just get curious about why they said what they said. Take an interest in them.

Humble people ask questions. Proud people have all the answers. Humble people ask for feedback. Proud people only give feedback. Our political, spiritual and individualistic/consumeristic culture has created a culture of pride. Everyone has the answers, but no one listens.

Social media is a prime example of this. Do your posts look and sound like Jesus? A subtle and demonic evil of our culture is the need to be right. This is precisely what's happening in the passage above. Peter needs to be right. He needs things to happen exactly how He wants. This is pride, and we have to be aware. The need to control everything in your world is a form of pride. You aren't trusting God to do things His way. This is why Jesus says, *Get behind me, Satan*. He's saying Satan has the need to be right, the need to be in control, the need to have everything go his way. A follower of Jesus is surrendered. Remember this. Invite God into this.

APPLICATION: Spend more time asking questions today than giving answers.

PRAYER: Ask the spirit to help you listen well to others. Do you spend more time in prayer, speaking or listening? Ask God what's on His heart. Ask God what's giving Him joy or what He's grieving. You may be surprised to find that a whole new life of prayer emerges.

THE NEED TO BE SEEN

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:5-6 (NIV)

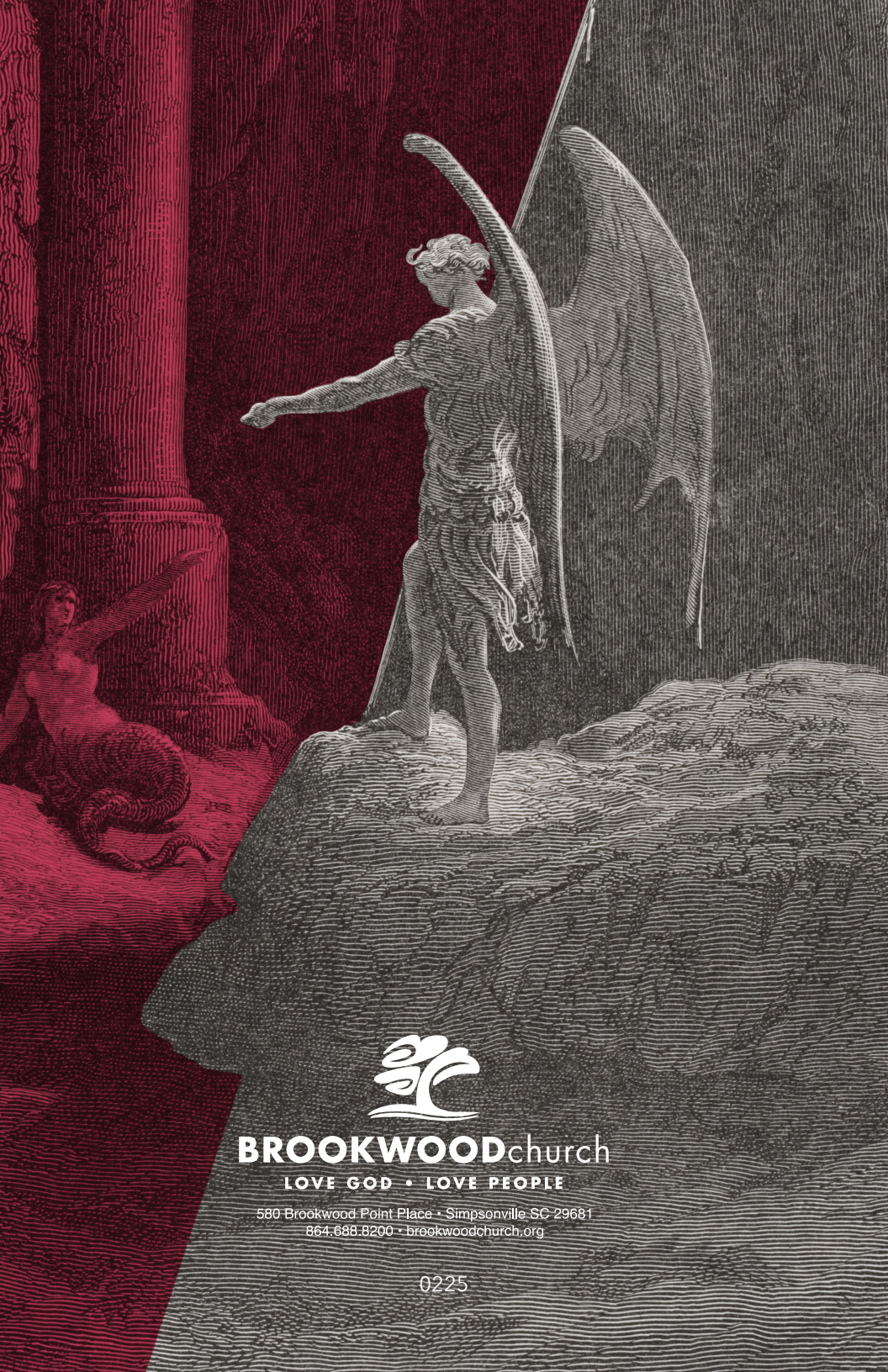
One of the gifts God gives us to fight against pride is secrecy. When we need to be seen by others and constantly need praise, it's because we aren't rooted in the spirit. You can't have public power, spiritually speaking, without a private spiritual world. Jesus is saying that some people have such a need to be seen, recognized and approved by others that faith has no private component. When you wake up early to be with Jesus or when God says something amazing, at times, keep that between you and God. Let a love and secret life with God drive you so that you don't start looking for the praises of others. You can't live for the approval of God and man. One will win out in your life. That's why Jesus says to get alone. Go into a room and let my love and life flow through you. Let Him meet and fill you up so you are free to love others well.

I know people who need to post every moment of their life on social media. That can often keep them from being present with others. However, it's the same thing if you only talk about yourself and your day. Jesus was the Savior of the world, but he often noticed others. This is a picture of humility. I was once challenged not to speak about myself for an entire day. Just talk about others or any subject that wasn't all about me. I found I had way less to say that day. Humility is self-forgetfulness. It's saying I'm more concerned about you than myself. This is very difficult, but when you get alone with Jesus and learn to have a private spiritual life, it frees you up to live this way.

How's your private life? Are you spending time alone with God and letting His love and power wash over you? This is exactly what Jesus did. He got alone with the Father, then went and poured out His love.

APPLICATION: Spend time alone today with your heavenly Father.

PRAYER: Ask God to help you be hidden in Him, to set you free with His love, and to help you become more aware of others.



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