



21-DAY DEVOTIONAL



JANUARY 5-25
2026

Abiding with Jesus

Day 1: Monday, January 5: John 15:1-8

1“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes a so that it will be even more fruitful. 3You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5“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. 6If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus uses a vineyard image where He is the true vine and Father God is the gardener and believers are branches on the vine. The meaning is simple but profound: Life does not come from trying harder — it comes from staying connected.

Branches don’t produce fruit by effort. They produce fruit by remaining attached to the vine.

This passage teaches us that spiritual fruit is the natural result of living in continual dependence on Jesus. Not religious activity. Not willpower. Not performance. But relationship.

Three key truths in this passage

1. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing (v.5). This means that on our own, we can’t produce spiritual life, transformation, or eternal impact. This verse destroys the concept of spiritual self-reliance.

2. The Father prunes what He loves (v.2). Pruning feels like loss: relationships removed, opportunities cut, seasons of hiddenness, disciplines that hurt. But pruning is not punishment — it is preparation for greater fruitfulness. The Father cuts back what competes with deeper life in Christ.

3. Abiding produces answered prayer and fruit (v.7). Abiding aligns your desires with God’s heart. So your prayers stop being self-focused and become kingdom-focused.

The ultimate goal in this passage is verse 8: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit...” The purpose of your life is not survival. It is not comfort. It is not even happiness. It’s to display the life of Christ through you.

John 15:1–8 teaches that a believer’s power, growth, fruit, and joy come not from striving, but from remaining deeply connected to Jesus in daily, dependent relationship. You don’t get spiritual fruit by striving. You get fruit by staying connected.

Theme: Abiding is the foundation of fruitfulness.

Prayer: “Lord, help me remain in You in every area of life.”

Abiding with Jesus

Day 2: Tuesday, January 6: John 15:9-17

9“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command. 15I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17This is my command: Love each other.”

This passage moves the teaching forward from “abide in Me” to “love like Me.” Yesterday’s reading was about connection to Christ, today’s reading is about the character that flows from that connection. The theme of this passage is remain in My love — and let that love flow through you to others.

How does this passage connect to the vine imagery from yesterday? In verses 1–8 Jesus says: “Abide in Me” and in verses 9–17 He explains what that looks like in real life:

Abiding is staying rooted in His love and living it out toward others.

So abiding is not some mystical, spiritual isolation. Abiding becomes visible through love, obedience, and sacrificial relationships.

The kind of love Jesus is talking about in this passage is not emotional affection. This is covenant love — the same love the Father has for the Son. “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you.” (v.9) That is a staggering statement. Jesus is saying that the same quality of love that exists inside the Trinity now flows into you. And verse 13 gives us the highest expression of this love, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” This is not just about dying. It’s about putting others before self, carrying burdens, forgiving, serving, sacrificing comfort. This kind of love is measured by how much it costs you.

Also in this passage, Jesus makes a radical shift in identity. In verse 15 Jesus says: “I no longer call you servants... I have called you friends.” Servants obey without knowing the heart. Friends are brought into intimacy, trust, and shared purpose. Christianity is not: “Do this for God.” But it’s “Walk with God.”

At the close of the passage, verse 16 gives the purpose: “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...” This means that God’s love doesn’t end on you. It multiplies into lives changed, people discipled, and God’s kingdom expanding.

John 15:9–17 teaches that those who remain in Christ are invited into His own love and are called to express that love through sacrificial, life-giving relationships that glorify God and produce lasting fruit.

Theme: Remaining in His love forms our obedience.

Prayer: “Grow my love for You and for people.”

Abiding with Jesus

Day 3: Wednesday, January 7: Psalm 27

1The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? 2When the wicked advance against me to devour a me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. 3Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. 4One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. 5For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. 6Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord. 7Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me. 8My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek. 9Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. 10Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. 11Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. 12Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations. 13I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Psalm 27 is one of the clearest windows in all of Scripture into the heart of a person who is fearless because he lives in God's presence. Its theme can be summarized in one line: Unshakeable confidence flows from intimate communion with God. Psalm 27 teaches us that when God is your dwelling place, fear loses its power. The writer of this psalm, King David, does not deny danger. He denies that danger has the final word.

David begins the psalm (vv. 1–6) with confidence in God and with bold declarations:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?”

“The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?”

This is not human boasting. It is the fruit of knowing God personally. And then David reveals his secret: “One thing I ask... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord... to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.” This is the source of his courage. Not military strength and not strategy. But it is being in the presence of God.

The second half of the psalm (vv. 7–14) is about dependance on God and here David becomes vulnerable: He cries, he waits, he asks not to be abandoned. But notice: he does not leave God's presence.

Psalm 27 teaches us that spiritual security does not come from the absence of trouble, but from nearness to God. David does not ask first for deliverance. He asks for God because he knows that everything else flows from that. Psalm 27 declares that those who seek God's presence above all else gain courage, clarity, and unbreakable confidence no matter what they face.

Theme: Seeking God above everything else.

Prayer: “One thing I ask... revive my desire to seek You.”

Abiding with Jesus

Day 4: Thursday, January 8: Psalm 63

1You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. 2I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. 5I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. 6On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. 7Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. 8I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. 9Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. 10They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. 11But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.

This psalm 63 (also written by King David when he was in the wilderness) is one of the most intimate worship psalms ever written. It reveals what a soul sounds like when it has discovered that God Himself is the reward. Its theme can be summed up this way: God's presence is more satisfying than anything this world can offer. It teaches us that true life, joy, and fulfillment are found in passionately seeking God above all else. It is worth noting that David is not writing from comfort. He is in the wilderness — a place of lack, danger, and isolation. And yet his soul is full because God is there with him.

David refers to a thirst that nothing else can quench. He says, "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you..." This is not religious duty but spiritual hunger. David wants God more than relief, more than safety, more than answers. David declares that God is better than the best of life when he says, "Your steadfast love is better than life." (v.3) It is not better than bad life. It is better than life itself. God is not a tool to get a good life. God is the good life.

For David, the wilderness becomes a sanctuary. David says he remembers God on his bed in the night watches. This means that the place of isolation becomes the place of intimacy and this is the secret of Psalm 63: When God is your delight, no season is wasted.

Psalm 63 shows us that our right desires lead us to worship. Worship then leads us to joy and joy leads to confidence. Confidence then silences fear. Even though the enemies still exist, they no longer control the story.

Psalm 63 proclaims that when God becomes the soul's deepest desire, even the wilderness becomes a place of abundance. You don't survive by escaping the desert.

You thrive by meeting God in it.

Theme: Hunger for God

Prayer: "Lord, increase my spiritual hunger during this fast."

Abiding with Jesus

Day 5: Friday, January 9: Matthew 6:5-18

5“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. **6**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. **7**And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. **8**Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. **9**“This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, **10**your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **11**Give us today our daily bread. **12**And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **13**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. **14**For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15**But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. **16**“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. **17**But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, **18**so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

In this passage, Jesus is teaching on what real spiritual life looks like when no one is watching. He is telling us that true devotion to God flows from a sincere, hidden relationship — not public performance. God is not interested in spiritual counterfeits: Religious activity that looks spiritual but is actually about being seen. Prayer, giving, and fasting were meant to be expressions of intimacy —but the religious leaders of Jesus day had turned them into spiritual theater. In this passage, Jesus calls His disciples back to the secret place.

Jesus highlights three practices: giving, praying and fasting. These are expected parts of a real walk with God. But He adds the same warning each time: Don't do it to be seen.

Jesus wants our giving and our praying and our fasting to be done out of our relationship with him where we move away from self and into God.

Giving and prayer and fasting can reveal what rules your heart. None of these practices are a way to look holy. They are ways to expose what we lean on instead of God. They pull our human cravings to the surface in life so God can become our true satisfaction.

Matthew 6:5–18 teaches that God desires authentic, private devotion that flows from love, not the public performance of religion.

God is not after your image. He is after your heart in the secret place.

Theme: Prayer and fasting with purity of heart.

Prayer: “Lord, purify my motives during this fast.”

Abiding with Jesus

Day 6: Saturday, January 10: Mark 1:35-39

35Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

38Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Mark 1:35–39 is a short passage, but it is one of the most revealing moments in Jesus’ ministry. It shows us how Jesus sustained power, clarity, and direction in the middle of overwhelming demand.

The primary theme is that intimacy with God the Father governs the direction of the Son’s ministry. Or put another way, prayer, not pressure, determined Jesus’ priorities.

Just before this passage, Jesus had healed crowds and cast out demons and now the whole city was at the door of where He was staying. His popularity was exploding. This is the moment when most Christians would be tempted to simply ride the momentum.

Instead, Jesus withdraws and in verse 35 is says, “Very early... while it was still dark...” This is not accidental. Jesus purposely chooses solitude and silence and prayer before ministering to the crowds, before all the noise and before all the needs. This is how He stays aligned with the Father instead of being hijacked by the never-ending demands of life.

His disciples say: “Everyone is looking for you.” In other words, “Your ministry is working great. Don’t stop now.” But Jesus replies, “Let us go somewhere else...” because He received His marching orders in prayer. Ministry success did not define His calling. His Father in heaven did.

Three major themes we can see in this passage are:

1. Spiritual power flows from private prayer. Jesus did not pray because He was weak. He prayed because He was dependent.

2. God’s voice outweighs people’s expectations. Popularity is not proof of obedience. Prayer keeps your life aligned with God, not applause.

3. Calling, assignments and mission flow from communion. Jesus says: “That is why I have come.” He didn’t discover that in the crowd. He discovered it in solitude with the Father.

Mark 1:35–39 teaches that intimacy with God is what keeps a person faithful to their true calling when success and pressure try to pull them off course.

Theme: Jesus’ rhythm of prayer and solitude.

Prayer: “Lord, teach me how to be with You before doing things for You.”

Abiding with Jesus

Day 7: Sunday, January 11: Psalm 139:13-18, 23–24

13For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17How precious to me are your thoughts, a God! How vast is the sum of them! 18Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you... 23Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

This part of Psalm 139 (again written by King David) is one of the most tender, searching, and theologically rich passages in all of Scripture. It is not about information — it is about identity, intimacy, and surrender. The overarching theme is: We are fully known, lovingly formed, and invited into honest surrender before God.

Three themes in the passage are:

- 1. You are intentionally created by God.** “You formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb...” This is not poetic exaggeration — it is theology. You are not an accident. You are not random. You were crafted by God with purpose. Your body, personality, temperament, wiring — none of it is incidental, because God designed you.
- 2. God’s knowledge of you is personal and intimate.** “All the days ordained for me were written in your book...” God does not merely see your actions. He knows your story, future, fears, and potential. This kind of knowledge is not surveillance — it is loving attention.
- 3. True spirituality invites God to search the heart.** “Search me, O God, and know my heart...” This is not fear. This is trust.

David is not hiding but he is opening himself to transformation. This is the heart of mature faith: “God, show me anything in me that does not belong.”

What does this passage teach us about relationship with God? You don’t have to perform for God. You don’t have to pretend with God. You don’t have to hide from God. Because He already knows — and He still stays.

That is why David can invite God to search him. Only love makes that safe.

Psalm 139:13–24 declares that we are intentionally created, deeply known, and graciously invited into honest transformation by a God who loves us completely.

This passage is not meant to make us feel small. It is meant to make us feel secure enough to be fully seen.

Theme: Heart searching.

Prayer: “Lord, search me and lead me in the everlasting way.”

Aligning with Jesus

Day 8: Monday, January 12: Isaiah 58:1-5

1 Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. 2 For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. 3 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

Isaiah 58:1–5 is one of the strongest passages in Scripture exposing religion that looks holy but is spiritually empty. The themes in this passage are direct, uncomfortable, and deeply relevant.

The primary theme is: God rejects outward religious devotion that is not matched by inward humility and obedience. You could even say that Christian religious activity without heart transformation is offensive to God. In this passage, God is confronting Israel's fasting, praying, and seeking God and God says He does not hear them. Why? Because their spirituality is performative, not repentant. They look religious but they live unjustly.

And in a shocking contrast, the people say: "Why have we fasted, and You have not seen?" and God replies: "You fast...and you oppress." In other words, you are trying to use spiritual practices to manipulate Me — while refusing to change.

Three key themes we can see from this passage are:

1. God sees the heart behind religious actions. Fasting, praying, and worship are not magical rituals. They are meant to express surrender and when the heart is wrong, the practice is empty.

2. Self-centered spirituality is still self-centered. They were fasting for visibility, for blessing, for leverage but not for a heart change. This is religion used as a tool.

3. God refuses to bless hypocrisy. They wanted God's attention without God's authority and so God says: "This is not the fast I choose." True spirituality changes how you treat people.

Isaiah 58:1–5 teaches that God will not accept religious practices that are disconnected from humility, justice, and a surrendered heart.

God is not impressed by how spiritual we look — He is moved by how surrendered we are.

Theme: Wrong approaches to fasting.

Prayer: "Lord, correct in me any distorted motives to prayer and fasting."

Aligning with Jesus

Day 9: Tuesday, January 13: Isaiah 58:6-12

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, 10and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. 11The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. 12Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

This passage in Isaiah 58 is the answer to yesterday’s passage. After God rejects false fasting, He reveals what true spirituality actually looks like. This is one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of what God desires from His people.

The central theme is that devotion to God includes expressions through love, justice, and restoring broken lives. In this passage, God redefines fasting when He says: “Is not this the fast that I choose...” And then He lists actions — not rituals: loosening chains, setting the oppressed free, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, clothing the poor.

This is not talking about secular social activism. This is covenant faithfulness and it is God’s heart towards people made visible. When God’s people live this way, there is a stunning promise that: “Your light will break forth like the dawn” and “The Lord will guide you continually” and “You will be like a well-watered garden.”

Three major themes we can draw from this passage are:

- 1. God’s presence is released through compassion** and when God’s people love the vulnerable, heaven moves. Mercy is not optional — it is spiritual.
- 2. Justice unlocks blessing** — This passage connects compassion to blessing in a way modern readers often miss. God does not pour out His favor on injustice.
- 3. God’s people become restorers** — “You will be called Repairer of Broken Walls...” True faith does not escape the world, it heals it.

Isaiah 58:6–12 teaches that when God’s people live out His heart for the broken, His presence, guidance, and power flow through them to bring healing and restoration.

Theme: The fast God chooses.

Prayer: “Lord, shape my heart toward Your compassion and Your justice.”

Aligning with Jesus

Day 10: Wednesday, January 14: Micah 6:6-8

6With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly a with your God.

This passage in Micah 6 is one of the clearest and most important summaries of what God actually desires from His people. It cuts through religion, ritual, and performance and goes straight to the heart.

The central theme is: God desires a transformed heart expressed through justice, mercy, and humble devotion — not religious performance. The people were asking, “What should we bring to God?” Burnt offerings? Thousands of rams? Even their firstborn child? They are trying to pay God off with religion. But God responds: “He has shown you what is good...” In other words: You already know what I want.

God gives His three requirements in a three-part description of true faith:

- 1. Do justice and live rightly.** Protect the vulnerable and refuse to exploit others. Faith that doesn't affect how you treat people is not true faith.
- 2. Love mercy.** Do not just show mercy — but love it. Delight in forgiveness, patience, compassion, and grace. God's people should enjoy being kind.
- 3. Walk humbly with your God.** Don't walk to impress God or to use God. Walk with Him. This statement is relational, not transactional.

This passage teaching us that God is not moved by: religious volume or emotional intensity or sacrificial cost. He is moved by: obedience and compassion and humility.

Micah 6:6–8 declares that authentic faith is not about how much you give to God, but how faithfully you walk with Him and treat others.

This passage sits right alongside what we read Isaiah 58 the past couple days.

God wants hearts — not performances.

Theme: What God truly desires.

Prayer: “Lord, help me walk humbly, love mercy, and do what is just.”

Aligning with Jesus

Day 11: Thursday, January 15: Joel 2:12-17

12“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” 13Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. 14Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God. 15Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. 16Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. 17Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, “Spare your people, Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

This passage in Joel 2 is one of the most powerful calls to repentance and spiritual renewal in the entire Bible. It reveals how God invites His people back when they have drifted.

The central theme is: God calls His people to wholehearted repentance because He is gracious and eager to restore. This is not a threat but an open-hearted invitation.

God says: “Return to Me with all your heart...” not with: more rituals or louder prayers or bigger sacrifices but with honest, broken-hearted surrender.

Three major themes in this passage are:

- 1. God wants hearts, not performances.** “Rend your heart and not your garments.” External emotion without internal action does not move God. God is after authentic change.
- 2. God’s mercy is the reason we can return** and then Joel quotes God’s own character: “Gracious and compassionate, slow to anger...” We do not return to avoid punishment. We return because He is good.
- 3. The whole community is called to repentance.** Everyone is summoned: elders and children and even newlyweds. This tells us that spiritual renewal is not private. It reshapes the whole people of God.

Then we are given a powerful image that the priests cry: “Spare Your people...” This is intercession among God’s people. The New Testament tells us that we are all priests unto God. And so this passage shows how revival begins: with humble, praying leaders and repentant hearts.

Joel 2:12–17 teaches that God invites His people to return to Him with sincere hearts, trusting in His mercy to bring restoration and renewal.

God is not waiting to crush His people. He is waiting to heal them.

Theme: Return to Me with all your heart.

Prayer: “Lord, give me a tender, responsive heart toward You.”

Aligning with Jesus

Day 12: Friday, January 16: Psalm 51:1-17

1Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. 5Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. 6Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. 7Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. 10Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. 13Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. 14Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

Psalm 51 (written by King David) is the Bible's clearest window into what repentance looks like. It is not the repentance of fear — it is the repentance of love that has been wounded.

The central theme is: God desires a broken, honest heart more than religious sacrifice. David has sinned grievously — adultery, deception, and murder. But instead of hiding, he runs to God. And so this Psalm is not about shame. It is about restoration and David knows something crucial: God does not reject those who come to Him in truth.

Some major themes are:

1. Sin is first and foremost against God. “Against You and You only, have I sinned...”

Sin is not just breaking rules — it is breaking relationship.

2. God alone can cleanse the heart. David does not say: “I will do better.” He says:

“Create in me a clean heart...” This is spiritual surgery — not self-improvement.

3. God wants inward transformation, not outward religion. “You do not delight in sacrifice...” God has always been after the heart.

4. Brokenness opens the door to grace. “A broken and contrite heart You will not despise.” Brokenness is not weakness. It is honesty.

5. Restoration leads to worship and witness. Once healed, David says: “Then I will teach transgressors Your ways...” Grace turns sinners into servants.

Psalm 51 teaches that genuine repentance — not religious performance — opens the door to God's forgiveness, cleansing, and restoring power.

Theme: Cleansing and renewal.

Prayer: “Lord, create in me a clean heart.”

Aligning with Jesus

Day 13: Saturday, January 17: James 1:22-27

22Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. 26Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

This passage in James is one of the strongest New Testament passages about what authentic faith actually looks like in everyday life. It strips away every version of Christianity that is only theological or emotional and replaces it with obedient, lived-out faith.

The central theme is: True faith is revealed by obedient action, not by religious talk. God's Word must transform how we live, not just what we know. James is warning against a very subtle spiritual danger: Listening to God's Word without letting it change you. You can attend church, hear sermons, read Scripture — and still be spiritually unchanged and James calls that self-deception.

The major themes in this passage are:

- 1. Spiritual hearing requires obedience,** “Do not merely listen to the word, do what it says.” God's Word is meant to be acted upon. Knowledge without obedience hardens the heart.
- 2. God's Word reveals who we really are.** The mirror metaphor shows: Scripture exposes our true condition and walking away without change means choosing illusion over truth.
- 3. True religion is compassionate and pure.** James defines real faith as: caring for the vulnerable, living unstained by the world.
- 4. Faith that doesn't affect behavior is empty.** Religion that does not change how we speak, serve, and live is worthless. God is not impressed by vocabulary — He is moved by obedience.

James 1:22–27 teaches that authentic faith is not what we hear or say, but what we live out in obedience, compassion, and moral integrity.

This is the New Testament version of the prophets: God still wants hearts —and hearts always show up in how we live.

Theme: Real spirituality expresses itself in action.

Prayer: “Lord, make me a doer of Your word.”

Aligning with Jesus

Day 14: Sunday, January 18: Matthew 22:34-40

34Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38This is the first and greatest commandment. 39And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”.

Matthew 22:34–40 is Jesus’ summary of the entire Bible.

Every law, command, and instruction is distilled into one unifying truth.

The central theme is: Love for God and love for others is the essence of true faith. Or in Jesus’ words: “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

This passage is stunning. A legal expert tries to trap Jesus with: “Which is the greatest commandment?” But Jesus refuses to play the game of ranking rules. Instead, He reveals the heart behind every rule.

Jesus then lists off the two inseparable loves:

1. Love God fully, “With all your heart, soul, and mind”. In making this statement, Jesus is saying that God is not one priority among many. He is to be the center of everything.

2. Love people genuinely, “As yourself”. You cannot love God without loving people. They are inseparable.

What this means is that this passage destroys two false religions:

Rule-keeping without love and love without following the Lord.

God wants loving obedience.

Matthew 22:34–40 teaches that all true obedience flows from wholehearted love for God and self-giving love for others.

Everything else is secondary.

Theme: The great commandments.

Prayer: “Lord, align my life with love, toward You and others.”

Advancing with Jesus

Day 15: Monday, January 19: Daniel 10:2-13

2At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. 3I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. 4On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, 5I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. 7I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; those who were with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. 8So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. 9Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. 10A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. 12Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

This passage opens one of the most mysterious and spiritually revealing scenes in all of Scripture. It pulls back the curtain on what is happening in the unseen realm when God's people pray. And it shows us that God hears and responds to prayer immediately, even when the answer is delayed by spiritual conflict. In this passage Daniel has been: fasting and mourning and seeking understanding for three weeks — with no visible response. Then an angel appears and explains: “From the first day... your words were heard...” The delay was not God's silence. It was spiritual warfare.

From this we can see that:

- 1. Heaven responds instantly to sincere prayer.** God does not ignore His people. Daniel's prayer triggered a heavenly mission.
- 2. There is unseen spiritual resistance.** The “prince of Persia” is not a human. It is a spiritual power opposing God's work. This passage shows the Bible's cosmic worldview: Earthly events are shaped by spiritual battles.
- 3. God's people participate in spiritual warfare through prayer.** Daniel did not know a battle was happening but his fasting/prayer sustained it. Prayer is not symbolic but strategic.
- 4. God sends strength to weary seekers.** The angel touches Daniel and strengthens him. God never calls people to intercession without also giving grace to endure it.

Daniel 10:1–14 teaches that sincere prayer activates heavenly movement, even when unseen spiritual opposition delays visible answers.

Theme: God hears from day one and some break-throughs take time.

Prayer: “Lord, strengthen my faith and let Your word give understanding.”

Advancing with Jesus

Day 16: Tuesday, January 20: Daniel 10:14-21

14Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.” 15While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. 16Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, “I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I feel very weak. 17How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.” 18Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. 19“Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed,” he said. “Peace! Be strong now; be strong.” When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, “Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.” 20So he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; 21but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. Yet no one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

This second half of Daniel 10 completes the curtain-pull that began in yesterday’s verses 1–13. Here we are shown not just that spiritual warfare exists — but how God sustains His servants inside it. The central theme is: God strengthens His people to stand in spiritual conflict and assures them that heaven is fighting for them.

This passage reveals that while Daniel is overwhelmed and physically weak and emotionally undone, God does not rebuke him. God touches him and this is the gospel in warfare form.

Some major themes from this passage are:

- 1. God meets human weakness with divine strength.** When Daniel collapses, the angel lifts him. God does not require us to always be strong — He supplies the strength we lack.
- 2. God reassures His beloved in the battle.** Daniel is called: “Man greatly loved.” Before strategy, before prophecy, before warfare — God gives identity. You fight best when you know you are loved.
- 3. The spiritual war is ongoing but God is still in control.** The angel returns to battle the “prince of Persia.” But the angel Michael stands with him. This is not chaos but it is coordinated divine victory.
- 4. God reveals what He is doing to His faithful servants.** God lets Daniel know what is happening behind the scenes.

Faithful prayer is honored with divine insight.

Daniel 10:15–21 teaches that God lovingly strengthens His people in the midst of unseen spiritual conflict and assures them that heaven is actively fighting on their behalf.

This passage reminds us: You are never battling alone —even when you feel overwhelmed.

Theme: Spiritual resistance and perseverance.

Prayer: “Lord, help me stay faithful even when answers delay.”

Advancing with Jesus

Day 17: Wednesday, January 21: Ephesians 6:10-18

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

This passage in Ephesians 6 is the New Testament's clearest teaching on how believers are meant to live in a spiritually hostile world. It is not about fear — it is about preparedness, authority, and victory. The central theme is that believers must stand in God's strength and use God's armor to resist spiritual opposition. Or more simply put: Spiritual victory comes from depending on God, not ourselves.

In this passage, Paul gives us insight that: Your real enemy is not people. Your battle is against: spiritual forces, deception, and darkness. This explains why prayer, truth, righteousness, and faith matter so much.

The major themes in this passage are:

- 1. The Christian life is spiritual warfare.** Neutrality is not an option. If you belong to Christ, you are in the battle but it is not a battle to be afraid of but a battle you are equipped to win.
- 2. God provides everything needed to stand** and every piece of armor represents something God gives: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and God's Word. We are not asked to invent strength — only to put it on.
- 3. Victory comes from standing, not striving.** Paul keeps saying: "Stand." The Christian life is not frantic fighting — it is holding your ground in Christ's victory.
- 4. Prayer is the battlefield** and all the armor is activated by prayer. Prayer connects us to the power that makes the armor work.

Ephesians 6:10–18 teaches that believers overcome spiritual opposition by standing in God's strength, clothed in His truth, and sustained through prayer.

You are not unprotected. You are not outmatched. You are equipped.

Theme: Spiritual warfare.

Prayer: "Lord, help me stay clothed with Your armor."

Advancing with Jesus

Day 18: Thursday, January 22: Hebrews 12:1-13

1Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2fixing 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. 3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. 4In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” 7Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. 9Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! 10They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. 11No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13“Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

This is one of the richest passages in Scripture on how God forms His people through hardship. It shows what spiritual endurance really means. The central theme is: God uses hardship and discipline to shape His children into mature, holy people. After Hebrews chapter 11’s heroes of faith, Hebrews 12 shows us how faith is lived when the race gets hard. This is not about admiration — it is about perseverance.

The major themes are:

- 1. Life with God is a long-distance race.** Faith is not a sprint and it requires endurance, focus, and laying aside what slows us down.
- 2. Jesus is our model and motivation.** He endured suffering because of the joy ahead and your pain has purpose when you see what God is producing.
- 3. God disciplines those He loves.** Discipline is not rejection but it is proof of belonging. God corrects because He is forming.
- 4. Suffering produces holiness and peace.** Life’s goal is not comfort —it is Christlikeness.
- 5. Weakness is meant to be strengthened.** God calls weary believers to rise, not retreat.

Hebrews 12:1–13 teaches that God lovingly uses hardship and discipline to produce endurance, holiness, and spiritual maturity in His children. This passage explains that you are not being broken — you are being shaped.

Theme: Running with endurance.

Prayer: “Lord, help me fix my eyes on Jesus and strengthen my weak places.”

Advancing with Jesus

Day 19: Friday, January 23: Acts 13:1-4

1Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. 4The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

Acts 13:1–4 is one of the most important passages in the entire book of Acts because it shows how God launches movements, not just ministers.

The central theme is that the Holy Spirit directs the mission of the church through prayerful worship and obedience.

What is happening in Antioch is that the church is worshiping and fasting and praying. This is not a strategy meeting. It is a presence-centered gathering because out of worship comes direction.

Major themes we can see are:

1. Mission flows out of God’s presence. They did not decide to send Barnabas and Saul. The Spirit spoke because God initiates mission — the church responds.

2. The Holy Spirit chooses and sends leaders. Calling is not voted on, it is revealed. The Spirit selects people for specific assignments.

3. Prayer and fasting precede spiritual breakthroughs. Fasting is not manipulation — it is alignment. These believers slowed down to hear God.

4. The church releases, not controls, God’s servants. The church laid hands and let them go. True spiritual leadership multiplies by releasing.

Acts 13:1–4 teaches that when God’s people worship and seek Him together, the Holy Spirit releases clear direction and launches His mission through obedient believers.

This passage is the birthplace of the global church movement —and it begins in the secret place of prayer fasting and worship.

Theme: Prayer and fasting releases calling and direction.

Prayer: “Lord, speak clearly to our church and guide our church into Your mission.”

Advancing with Jesus

Day 20: Saturday, January 24: Romans 12:1-8

1Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. 3For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

In this passage, Paul describes what a life transformed by Jesus actually looks like in practice.

The central theme is: A true response to God's mercy is a life fully surrendered and actively serving in love. And what Paul is doing is he is saying: "In view of God's mercy..." Which means that everything that follows flows from grace.

Christian obedience is not payment — it is gratitude to the Lord.

The major themes are:

- 1. Whole-life surrender.** "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice..." Faith is not just belief but it is offering your whole self to God.
- 2. Inner transformation:** "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." God changes us from the inside out and this is connected to how we discern His will.
- 3. Humility in identity:** "Do not think of yourself more highly..." Grace will produce in us a sober, grounded self-understanding.
- 4. Unity in diversity:** The church is one body with many parts. No gift is superior and every role matters.
5. Every believer is gifted for service. Spiritual gifts are not for status — they are for building others up.

Romans 12:1–8 teaches that God's mercy calls us into a transformed, surrendered life expressed through humble service within the body of Christ.

This passage shows how theology becomes community — and how grace becomes action.

Theme: Offering ourselves to God.

Prayer: "Lord, renew my mind and show me my place in Your body."

Advancing with Jesus

Day 21: Sunday, January 25: Isaiah 40:28-31

28Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28–31 is one of Scripture’s most powerful passages about where real strength comes from when life is overwhelming.

It is written to people who were exhausted, discouraged, and wondering if God had forgotten them.

The central theme is: God gives renewed strength to those who trust and wait on Him. Or you could say, human weakness becomes the doorway for God’s power.

Isaiah is addressing in this passage that God’s people were: worn down, disillusioned, and tempted to believe God no longer cared.

Isaiah answers that lie by stating that God is not tired and He is not absent and He is not limited.

The major themes in this passage are:

- 1. God’s power is limitless:** “The Lord... does not grow weary.” Your strength runs out but God’s does not.
- 2. Human strength is fragile.** Even the strongest people collapse and this reality level everyone.
- 3. Waiting on God releases supernatural renewal.** Waiting does not mean inactivity but it means trustful dependence. Those who wait exchange their weakness for His strength.
- 4. God gives endurance, not just relief.** God does not always remove the difficult journey but He gives us power to finish it.

Isaiah 40:28–31 teaches that those who place their hope in the Lord will receive divine strength to endure, rise, and move forward.

This passage reminds us:

You do not survive by pushing harder —you rise by leaning deeper into God.

Theme: Renewed strength.

Prayer: “Lord, let us rise up with wings like eagles.”