



KEYS TO WORSHIP

A Personal Devotional

By

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A FEW NOTES:

This devotion guide is set-up with a devotion for each day of the week. As you will see, Saturday is a praise and worship chorus that I believe speaks to the theme of the week. On Sunday is a praise passage from the Scripture that addresses the theme as well. As you prepare for worship on Sunday morning, it is my hope that the week's devotions tied in with the Sunday Scripture will allow you to come to the Sunday service with a heart full of gratitude and a mouth ready to praise. That's why the devotion starts with Monday and ends on Sunday morning.

Some of you may react to this devotion guide as too "touchy-feely" and for many of you, that will be true. May I presume to say you may be the very person who needs it the most. Too many of us live in our heads. We are living in the scientific, technological age and intellect and the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge has become a false god to many of us. God wants us to love Him with our hearts, minds, and strength. It's crucial that we take the Truths from our heads to our hearts. Someone once said that the longest 18" in the world is the distance from the head to the heart. Take the trip; it is worth it.

Our Creator God is amazing and the way He designed music is evidence of that. On the next page, you will see the visual representation of the major notes that are used to write all music. I have shown them on a keyboard as well as on a staff. Additionally, it will help your understanding to know that each note can be sharpened or flatted. When a note is sharp it kicks the sound up a notch. When a note is flatted it kicks it down from its original sound.

It would be difficult to compose a song and leave any of the notes out of the entire song. It's possible I suppose, but it would be hard to do. It is my belief that there are worship principles that are just as important for worship as the notes in a song. In order to live a life of worship all of the principles are necessary. Just as sharps and flats change the music, there are ways to move our worship up or down a notch as well.

I hope that this devotion becomes music to your ears, and my prayer is that it will help you live a life of praise that becomes music to our Father's ears.



MONDAY: WORSHIP IS A LIFESTYLE

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

“I, the Lord, hate and despise your religious celebrations and your times of worship. I won’t accept your offerings or animal sacrifices—not even your very best! No more of your noisy songs! I won’t listen when you play your harps. But let justice and fairness flow like a river that never runs dry.” Amos 5:21-24

What offering should I bring when I bow down to worship the Lord God Most High? Should I try to please him by sacrificing calves a year old? Will thousands of sheep or rivers of olive oil make God satisfied with me? Should I sacrifice to the Lord my first-born child as payment for my terrible sins? The Lord God told us what is right and what he demands: “See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.” Micah 6:6-8

As we see from these verses, God doesn’t care much for the outward shows of worship. He doesn’t care how beautiful the music sounds if we aren’t loving others and living righteous lives. He won’t even listen to it. The music is noise in His ears.

We have to walk in worship. We have to keep before us that we don’t turn our worship on and off. It occurred to me that one way we take the Lord’s name in vain (using it in an empty, meaningless manner) is to be singing along with the radio or a track and it goes something like this:

“Here I am to worship, Here I am to bow down”

“Will you kids shut up; what is that idiot in the car in front of me doing?”

“You’re altogether lovely, altogether worthy....”

Our worship on the outside and what we do publicly needs to match our inside. We can never stand before God through our own perfect life. But we stand before God’s Throne through the perfect righteousness of Christ. He is looking for a pure heart. He is looking for someone who is seeking after Him. He is looking for people whose walk matches the talk/songs of their lips.



TUESDAY: WORSHIP CAN BE UNIQUELY EXPRESSED THROUGH MUSIC

I'd like to take a few minutes to look at the basic foundational "keys" to music. There are seven different note names before we begin to repeat the pattern. We start with A go through G (seven different notes) and then start the pattern over again. From one note like "A" to the next "A" is called an octave.

I say all of that to say, God is the author and creator of music. We know that even the rocks cry out in worship. God put sound waves in the world. We can hear music down in caves on the rock formations, at the beach, in bird songs. Now, for me I see spiritual applications from our music patterns and chords. The number "7" is a number of completion in the Hebrew. Just as it takes seven notes to complete a musical pattern, we see the number "7" used throughout the Scriptures as a number of completeness; for example it took "7" days to complete creation. The number 8 is considered "7 + 1" and is a number that represents a fullness or an abundance. It takes those 7 notes to create a new song for the Lord. Now get this, in the description of the temple and its surrounding courts there were 7 steps to the outer court (to leave labor to rest) and 8 steps to the inner court to leave rest to worship. (Eke 40)! Eight notes in an octave! Eight steps to enter into worship! Isn't God just awesome! Eight steps to the fullness of God's presence!

A basic chord contains 3 notes. These three notes blend perfectly together. A "C" chord is made up of 3 distinct notes "C, E, and G". They blend together to make a richer deeper sound as compared to one note. They can be played in any order: "C,E,G; E,G,C; G,C,E."

A chord to me, is a perfect representation of the trinity. It takes all three separate notes to complete the chord. We know that the Trinity is made up of the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit—three distinct beings that complete the trinity. The number "3" represents a fullness that is a fullness of testimony or manifestation of completeness in the Hebrew. The number three is all over the place in Scripture. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again in three days as one example. (Acts 10:40 and noted in all four Gospels).

It's not an accident or a coincidence that musical sounds are based on that pattern. The premise of this devotion guide is to use the information God has given us to learn more about Him and more about worship. Each note is able to be sharpened or flatted. This happens with our worship as well. There are certain ways to sharpen our worship and there are certain things that will flatten it. I'll be using the seven basic notes to give us information to "key" in on. Get it? "Key in on?" My hope is that this will "strike a chord" with you. Get it? "strike a chord?" Oh well, back to the task at hand.



WEDNESDAY: WORSHIP REFLECTS WHO GOD IS

I've taken the seven notes of music and will use each one to identify a name of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. In education using a strategy like this is called a mnemonic device. It helps a person memorize material. Should you decide to memorize these names, it will help. I'm including Scriptures found in *The Promise*.

A He is our Advocate

My children, I am writing this so that you won't sin. But if you do sin, Jesus Christ always does the right thing; and he will speak to the Father for us. Christ is the sacrifice that takes away our sins and the sins of all the world's people." 1 John 2:1-2

B He is our Builder

God is the one who began a good work in you and I am certain that He won't stop before it is complete on the day that Christ Jesus returns. Phil. 1:6

C He is our Comforter

"Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Father is a merciful God, who always gives us comfort. He comforts us when we are in trouble, so that we can share that same comfort with others in trouble." 2 Cor. 1:3-4

D He is our Deliverer

"But the Lord watches over all who honor him and trust his kindness. He protects them from death and starvation. We depend on you, Lord, to help and protect us. You make our hearts glad because we trust you, the only God. Be kind and bless us. We depend on You." Psalms 33:18-22

E He is our Encourager

"God our Father loves us. He is kind and has given us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope. We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father will encourage you and help you always to do and say the right thing." 2 Thess. 2:16-17

F He is our Father

"Think how much the Father loves us. He loves us so much that he lets us be called his children, as we truly are." 1 John 3:1

G He is our Gift-Giver

"Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father who created all the lights in the heavens. He is always the same and never makes dark shadows by changing." James 1:17



THURSDAY: WORSHIP DESCRIBES GOD THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

A He is All-Powerful

"Nothing is impossible for God." Luke 1:37

B He is Big

"I praise you, Lord God, with all my heart. You are glorious and majestic, dressed in royal robes and surrounded by light. You spread out the sky like a tent, and you built your home over the mighty ocean. The clouds are your chariots with the wind as its wings." Psalms 104:1-3

C He is Compassionate/Caring

"When his people pray for help, he listens and rescues them from their troubles. The Lord is there to rescue them from their troubles. The Lord is there to rescue all who are discouraged and have given up hope." Psalms 34:17-18

D He is Detailed

"Aren't two sparrows sold for only a penny? But your Father knows when any one of them falls to the ground. Even the hairs on your head are counted." Matthew 10:29

E He is Eager

"The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and kissed him. Luke 15:20

F He is FAITHFUL

"Then I remember something that fills me with hope. The Lord's kindness never fails! If he had not been merciful we would have been destroyed. The Lord can always be trusted to show mercy each morning. Deep in my heart I say, "The Lord is all I need; I can depend on Him." Lam. 3:21-24

G He is GOOD

"The Lord forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick, and protects us from death. His kindness and love are a crown on our heads. Each day that we live, He provides our needs and gives us the strength of a young eagle." Psalms 103:4(b)-5



FRIDAY: WORSHIP REFLECTS WHAT WE ARE NOT

Read the following Scriptures from The Promise:

“Be careful what you do when you enter the house of God. Some fools go there to offer sacrifices, even though they haven’t sinned. But it’s best just to listen when you go to worship. Don’t talk before you think or make promises to God without thinking them through. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so don’t talk too much.” Ecc. 5:1-2

“Please Lord, show me my future. Will I soon be gone? You made my life short, so brief that the time means nothing to you. Human life is but a breath and it disappears like a shadow. Our struggles are senseless; we store up more and more, without every knowing who will get it all. What am I waiting for? I depend on you, Lord! Psalms 39:1-7

When we spend time in worship and reflect on who God is and what He does, it helps us gain perspective. We are able to put God in His place and put ourselves in our place. We are reminded through many songs that God is God, we are not; He is in Heaven; He has the big picture, we don’t; He’s big enough and powerful enough to handle anything that needs to be handled for us. So often as we put our eyes on God and take our eyes off ourselves, we are able to see things clearly. As we minister to God in song, He in turn ministers to us. Why does He do that?

Because He’s that kind of God—the giver of good gifts, the giver of strength, the author and finisher of our faith. **HE IS STILL GOD AND WE ARE NOT!**



SATURDAY: LIFE SONG

Use this praise and worship song to think about what God has been speaking to you.

Empty hands held high
Such small sacrifice
If not joined with my life,
I sing in vain tonight.

May the words I say
And the things I do
Make my lifesong sing,
Bring a smile to You.

Let my lifesong sing to You
Let my lifesong sing to You.
I wanna sign Your name
To the end of this day
Knowin' that my heart was true.
Let my lifesong sing to You.

Lord, I give my life
A living sacrifice
To reach a world in need
To be Your hands and feet
May the words I say
And the things I do
Make my lifesong sing
Bring a smile to You.

Let my lifesong sing to You
Let my lifesong sing to You.
I wanna sign Your name
To the end of this day
Knowin' that my heart was true.
Let my lifesong sing to You.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Let my lifesong sing to You.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Let my lifesong sing to You.

By Mark Hall
2005 Club Zoo Music
CCLI # 4578839



SUNDAY

PSALMS 57:7-11; ZEPHANIAH 3:17

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

“I am faithful to you, and you can trust me. I will sing and play music for you, my God. I feel wide awake! I will wake up my harp and wake up the sun. I will praise you, Lord, for everyone to hear, and I will sing hymns to you in every nation. Your love reaches higher than the heavens; your loyalty extends beyond the clouds. May you, My God, be honored above the heavens; may your glory be seen everywhere on earth.” Psalms 57:7-11

“The Lord your God wins victory after victory and is always with you. He celebrates and sings because of you, and he will refresh your life with his love” Zeph. 3:17

As you enter the Lord’s House this morning to worship consider that the Lord celebrates and sings because of you, because of your life. Isn’t it the least we can do to celebrate and sing because of Him?



KEY OF "A": AVAILABILITY

SHARPEN WORSHIP:

Attendance

Agreeable

FLATTEN WORSHIP:

Absences

(Dis)Agreeable



MONDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WITH AVAILABILITY

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

Samuel served the Lord by helping Eli the priest, who was by that time almost blind. In those days, the Lord hardly ever spoke directly to people, and He did not appear to them in dreams very often. But one night, Eli was asleep in his room and Samuel was sleeping on a mat near the sacred chest in the Lord's house. They had not been asleep very long when the Lord called out Samuel's name.

"Here I am!" Samuel answered. Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. What do you want?"

"I didn't call you," Eli answered. "Go back to bed." Samuel went back.

Again the Lord called out Samuel's name. Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "What do you want?"

"Son, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep."

The Lord had not spoken to Samuel before, and Samuel did not recognize the voice.

1 Sam 3:1-8

The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out; The sheep will not follow strangers. They don't recognize a stranger's voice and they run away. John 10:3,5

Are you able to hear God's Voice above the voices of your family, your friends, the voices of tv, radio, and internet? Do you spend time listening for His Voice?

Wouldn't it be sad to think that the Lord was trying to get your attention or talk to you through His Word and you never heard Him because you weren't available. Don't take a chance that you are missing God's Voice as you "sleep" in church or as you busily and noisily live your life.

Do you have quiet time with your Heavenly Father? Or like Eli and Samuel are you sleeping? Or do you tell yourself, "Go back to sleep." Time with the Father doesn't have to be one hour per day. Start with ten minutes or fifteen minutes. Build in QUIET each day. Turn your radio off in the car, turn your tv off, turn your cell phone off just for that period of time. Then reflect on a Scripture or pray. Learn to recognize His voice.



TUESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ATTEND TO HIS VOICE

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

Eli finally realized that it was the Lord who was speaking to Samuel. So he said, “Go back and lie down! If someone speaks to you again, answer, “I’m listening, Lord. What do you want me to do?” Once again Samuel went back and lay down. The Lord then stood beside Samuel and called out as he had done before, “Samuel! Samuel!”

“I’m listening,” Samuel answered. “What do you want me to do?” 1 Sam 3: 8-10

In verses 9-10 Samuel prays this short prayer, “I’m listening. What do You want me to do?” Pray that prayer for yourself and do it more than once. Now’s the hard part. Listen. Be still, be quiet, listen for the still small voice.

What you hear will NEVER contradict Scripture. It will only confirm the Truth of it. What you hear from the Lord will not be accusing or condemning. It may be convicting. The difference between the two is the end result. If you feel shamed and like you want to be hidden from other people and from God, then that isn’t Him. If you feel repentant yet encouraged to change or make a difference and you feel hope, then that is conviction and that is God. If it makes you want to draw closer to God, then that is God’s Voice you are hearing.

The best way to hear God’s Voice is to daily spend time in His Word. Again and again, He will use the Truth of His Word to speak to you. He may also bring a praise chorus or a hymn to mind. These have Truth about God and your relationship with Him as well.



**WEDNESDAY:
WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ATTEND TO HIS
PRESENCE**

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the Lord. He was on his throne high above and his robe filled the temple. Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying as they shouted, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord All-Powerful! The earth is filled with your glory." As they shouted the doorposts of the temple shook and the temple was filled with smoke. Then I cried out "I'm doomed! Everything I say is sinful and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, The Lord All-Powerful!" Isaiah 6:1-5

Take a minute and visualize the vision Isaiah had. What would God's throne look like? What would the place sound like? What language would the creatures be using? What voices would the creatures be using? Would they be shouting it, speaking it, singing it? His robe filled the temple as it flowed down from the throne. What color is it? Is it only one color or many? What material would it be? Satin? Velvet? Wool? Maybe a material we've never seen before. Of course, we don't know for sure. The point is to sit and make it as real as possible so that you can experience a small part of it.

When you enter God's Sanctuary each Sunday, do you take a little time to prepare your heart so that you can actually visualize God in His Heaven with His robe filling the temple? Ask God to make His Presence in our church and in your home as real to you as He was to Isaiah. Make yourself available to Him each day and on Sunday mornings.



THURSDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH GOD

Please read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

Then I cried out, "I'm doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord All-Powerful." One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, "This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty." Isaiah 6:5-7

Isaiah is struck with a sense of his unholiness before God due to his unclean lips. He also acknowledges that everyone around him has unclean lips. Could you say the same thing?

Today complete the following report card for what you hear in the various places you go.

A= Excellent; honoring to God

B= Good; some questionable words but nothing obviously sinful

C=Average; compared to some places not too bad

D=I wouldn't want God to hear what I'm hearing. There are many references to sex and violence. Crude language is being used.

F=I'm hearing God's name taken in vain; I'm hearing Jesus' name used in a destructive or casual way. I'm hearing lies and I'm hearing gossip.

- _____ Home (tv and music count)
- _____ Work or school
- _____ Your vehicle
- _____ Church
- _____ Extra-curricular events (sports, shopping, etc.)

Today ask God for an awareness of and a sensitivity to what the people around you are saying. Ask Him to make you aware of what you are saying and also listening to. Ask Him to allow you to hear it the way He hears it and to react to it the same way He reacts to it. Ask Him to help you be in agreement with Him regarding your reactions and responses to what you hear and see. How does all of this affect your worship of Him and your availability to Him and His voice?



**FRIDAY:
WORSHIP SHARPEN WHEN WE ARE AGREEABLE TO
GOD'S MESSAGES AND MISSIONS**

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

*After this, I heard the Lord ask, "Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go with us?"
"I'll go," I answered. "Send me!" Isaiah 6:8-9*

The Lord asks the question: "Is there anyone I can send? Will someone go for us?" Isaiah was agreeable in his answer: "I'll go. Send me."

Where has the Lord sent you to minister? It is not an accident that you are where you are in the world. Your job, your family, your church—God has a mission for you right where you are. You have to be agreeable, though, and available. You can't make excuses or explain why you don't like it or want it or why it will never work. Ask God to show you His purposes for "sending you" to the places you travel today. Ask God to open your eyes and your ears to see each place and each person as a Divine Appointment. Tell Him you are available to His leading today.



SATURDAY: HERE I AM TO WORSHIP

Use the chorus, “Here I Am To Worship” as your quiet time today. It is in the first person; therefore, it is a direct prayer to Jesus. Call Him the Light of the World, the King of all Days.” You can either read the song or sing it. Do it out loud so you can hear it with Jesus as He is hearing it. Whether read or sung, it is a prayer offered up. It says you are available for worship.

HERE I AM TO WORSHIP

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You,
Hope of a life spent with You.

So here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You’re my God
You’re altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days
Oh so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly You came to the earth You created
All for love’s sake became poor.

So here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that You’re my God
You’re altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.

And I’ll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
And I’ll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross

By Tim Hughes
2000 Thankyou Music
CCLI #3266032



**SUNDAY:
PSALMS 63:1-8**

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

*You are my God and I worship you.
In my heart, I long for you,
As I would long for a stream in a scorching desert.*

(Tell Him why you long for Him today; what's happening in your life that makes you long for Him?)

*I have seen your power and your glory
In the place of worship
Your love means more than life to me,
And I praise you.
As long as I live, I will pray to you.
I will sing joyful praises and be filled with excitement
Like a guest at a banquet.*

(What makes you feel joy and excitement about your relationship with God today?)

*I think about you before I go to sleep,
And my thoughts turn to you during the night.
You have helped me
And I will sing happy songs in the shadow of your wings.
I stay close to you, and
Your powerful arm supports me.*

(Acknowledge to Him the ways He has helped you. Sit quietly for a moment and feel the shadow of His wings over you and feel His powerful arm supporting you in all that you do.)

Bring the Truth of what you have learned this week to church this morning and be available to what God wants to say to you through the songs, prayers, and the sharing of His Word.



KEY OF "B":
BATTLES

SHARPEN WORSHIP:

Blood

Banner of His Name

FLATTEN WORSHIP:

Blind

Bound



MONDAY: WORSHIP FLATTENS WITH BLINDNESS

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

You used to be like people living in the dark, but now you are people of the light because you belong to the Lord. So act like people of the light and make your light shine. Be good and honest and truthful as you try to please the Lord. Don't take part in doing those worthless things that are done in the dark. Instead, show how wrong they are. It is disgusting even to talk about what is done in the dark. But the light will show what these things are really like. "Light shows up everything, just as the Scriptures say, "Wake up from your sleep and rise from death and then Christ will shine on you." Act like people with good sense and not like fools. These are evil times so make every minute count. Don't be stupid. Instead find out what the Lord wants you to do. Don't destroy yourself by getting drunk, but let the Spirit fill your life. When you meet together, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as you praise the Lord with all your heart. Always use the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to thank God the Father for everything. Ephesians 5:10-17

If you want to have victory and power in your worship and prayer life, you must believe that there is a battle between good and evil. You must believe that when you come to worship in God's House that Satan (the devil) and his company will be working hard to ruin worship. Again this week, we will use a mnemonic device. The devil uses certain weapons to disrupt worship. The devil uses: distance, discouragement, distraction, and disturbance. These strategies will keep you away from the light and keep you blind.

One key that flattens worship is to be blind. When you stay in darkness or stay away from the light, you are blind to the evil that is around you. It is the light that shows what things are really like. Christ must shine on you. A Christian's directions are found in the last two verses: "Meet together, sing, praise, use Jesus' name and say thanks. Don't allow the devil to use the weapon of distance to keep you away from the light.

When are the times you've experienced a strong desire to stay away from church and stay away from other believers? What blessings does the devil want you to miss by using his weapon of distance?

When have you felt discouraged and found it almost impossible to sing, praise and give thanks? Why does the devil use the weapon of discouragement so powerfully? What are you missing when you let that weapon work and it overtakes your ability to praise, sing, and give thanks?



**TUESDAY:
WORSHIP HAPPENS ONLY THROUGH THE BLOOD OF
JESUS**

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

My friends, the blood of Jesus gives us courage to enter the most holy place by a new way that leads to life! And this way takes us through the curtain that is Christ Himself. We have a great high priest who is in charge of God's House. So let's come near God with pure hearts, and a confidence that comes from having faith. Let's keep our hearts pure, our consciences free from evil, and our bodies washed with clean water. We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful, and to do helpful things. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer. Hebrews 10:19-25

God gives peace, and he raised our Lord Jesus Christ from death. Now Jesus is like a Great Shepherd whose blood was used to make God's eternal agreement with his flock. Hebrews 13: 20-21

What is the one thing the Scripture says is needful to have courage and to meet with God? Who is the high priest? Who is in charge of God's House? Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! He is our Great Shepherd and our Helper. We have an eternal agreement with God due to Jesus' blood. There is power in the blood. Don't try to understand it. Don't ever doubt it. Always believe it.

In Hebrews 10:22 as we come near to God (worship Him) we are to do three things. As you look at these three things, recognize that they involve your entire being.

- Your _____ needs to be pure.
- Your _____ needs to be free from evil.
- Your _____ needs to be washed with clean water.

What is the condition of your heart? Where are your emotions, your feelings, your desires? Is your mind and conscience free from bad thoughts, images, words? Does your body and soul need to be washed? Has it engaged in things that are not pleasing to God as you draw near? Ask God to shine His light on your whole being and show those things that need to be washed and cleaned by Jesus' blood.

If you are struggling in any of these areas, these Scriptures tell us to call on Jesus, but they also say to get together with other believers and ask them to give you thoughtful, encouraging Truth. Don't allow the devil to use the weapon of distraction or being disturbed by the wrong kinds of thoughts, desires, emotions, and actions.



**WEDNESDAY:
WORSHIP IS FLATTENED WHEN WE ARE BOUND BY
FALSE BELIEFS**

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

You were rescued from the useless way of life that you learned from your ancestors. But you know that you were not rescued by such things as silver or gold that don't last forever. You were rescued by the precious blood of Christ, that spotless and innocent lamb. Christ was chosen even before the world was created, but because of you, he did not come until these last days. And when he did come, it was to lead you to have faith in God, who raised him from death and honored him in a glorious way. That's why you have put your faith and hope in God. You obeyed the truth, and your souls were made pure. 1 Peter 1:8-21

Be on your guard and stay awake. Your enemy, the devil, is like a roaring lion, sneaking around to find someone to attack. But you must resist the devil and stay strong in your faith. 1 Peter 5:8-9

I am glad that everyone knows how well you obey the Lord. But still, I want you to understand what is good and not have anything to do with evil. Then God, who gives peace, will soon crush Satan under your feet. Romans 16:19

One of Satan's most effective strategies is to get you to believe that he doesn't exist. It sounds very far-fetched and fanciful; it sounds like a well-written fairy tale. If we really search our hearts, some of us would find unbelief there.

If unbelief isn't working, then Satan will use minimizing. We may acknowledge that there is such a thing as Satan, and such a thing as evil but we really don't believe he's a roaring lion. We don't believe he's wandering the earth looking to attack someone. If we minimize him, then we aren't vigilant; we don't have any weapons. If we really search our hearts, we would find minimization there.

Satan will also use exaggeration. He will get you to believe that he is everywhere, knowing everything, and causing all bad things to happen. Then we aren't resisting him, but focusing on him! We're looking for him! We're speaking of him! We're praying about him! We're acknowledging his power and his strength! Some of us would find exaggeration about Satan in our hearts or we would find we use him as an excuse. We use him as an excuse for bad choices and for the consequences of our actions.

We must acknowledge he exists, that he does wander like a roaring lion, that he wants to attack. We must, however, resist speaking, thinking, or learning too much about him. We must resist him and work to strengthen our faith and belief in Jesus Christ and our hope in him.

Search your heart today and ask God to show you any of these false beliefs that you have been living. Then ask God to show you Truth and call on Jesus' Name and His blood for power and strength.



THURSDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE BATTLE WITH THE RIGHT WEAPONS

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

Finally, let the mighty strength of the Lord make you strong. Put on all the armor that God gives, so you can defend yourself against the devil's tricks. We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world. So put on all the armor that God gives. Then when that evil day comes you will be able to defend yourself. And when the battle is over, you will still be standing firm. Be ready! Let the truth be like a belt around your waist, and let God's justice protect you like armor. Your desire to tell the good news about peace should be like shoes on your feet. Let your faith be like a shield, and you will be able to stop all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Let God's saving power be like a helmet, and for a sword use God's message that comes from the Spirit. Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people. Ephesians 6:10-18

Draw a line from each piece of God's protection to its article of clothing.

Truth	shoes on your feet
God's Justice	shield
Tell the Good News	belt around your waist
Faith	helmet
God's saving power	sword
God's message from The Spirit	armor

The goal of all this protection is to be standing firm at the end of the battle. Satan will use compromise and surprise to get you to stumble and to fall. Using the complete armor of God everyday will protect you against those surprise attacks.



**FRIDAY:
WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE HIDE BEHIND THE
BANNER OF GOD AND HIS TRUTH**

Read this portion of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians from *The Promise*:

Do you think I am a coward when I am with you and brave when I am far away? Well, I ask you to listen because Christ himself was humble and gentle. Some people have said that we act like the people of this world. So when I arrive I expect I will have to be firm and forceful in what I say to them. Please don’t make me treat you that way. We live in this world, but we don’t act like its people or fight our battles with the weapons of this world. Instead we use God’s power that can destroy fortresses. We destroy arguments and every bit of pride that keeps anyone from knowing God. We capture people’s thoughts and make them obey Christ. 2 Cor. 10:1-5

What is a *fortress*? Other versions use the word *stronghold*. According to this text, it is a place Satan has used to hold someone captive. It is a place where he has a strong hold, where someone is bound. On Thursday we looked at our defensive positions in this warfare. Today we look at our offensive position. We look at how to take spiritual ground that the enemy has captured and is holding. There are three strategies we take on the offense.

We destroy _____.
We destroy _____
We capture people’s _____
We take those thoughts and make them _____

Does Satan have any areas of your life that he has bound and kept captive from God and His Power? Especially, examine your thought patterns. Do you use arguments about things God is calling you to do? Do you have pride in your own strength and ability to handle areas of your life? Do you have strong areas of thoughts and beliefs that keep you from being all God has called you to be?

Here are a few examples to trigger your thoughts:

“I can handle this on my own...”

“I don’t need anybody else’s help. It’s nobody business.”

“I’m afraid I’ll fail.”

“I’m afraid I’ll be criticized.”

“This shouldn’t be bothering me after all these years. It should be over; therefore I’ll ignore it. It’s bound to go away.”

“Time heals all wounds”

“God is punishing me.”

“God doesn’t love me the way He loves others.”

“If I’m really good and do it right, I’m saved and safe.”

Ask God to identify those areas of stronghold Satan may have on your life. Ask God to show you a “freedom fighter” (another Christian with spiritual wisdom) to bring you out and into His Peace.



SATURDAY: WE WANT TO SEE JESUS LIFTED HIGH

Imagine a movie like The Patriot or Braveheart; any movie with a powerful battle scene will do. Now imagine yourself in that battle. Recreate it to be a spiritual battle scene. You are on the Lord's side coming against evil. You are flying the Banner of the Lord. You have on your battle gear. You are moving in to win back enemy ground that has been captured. You look around at your brothers in battle. You'll be fighting side-by-side. You are lining up to hear your battle strategy from your commander. Take a minute and picture it. Feel the emotions. Hear the sounds.

Read aloud or sing through this praise song as a battle cry and lift high the banner!

*We want to see Jesus lifted high
A banner that flies across this land
That all men may see the Truth and know
He is the way to Heaven.*

*We want to see, we want to see
We want to see Jesus lifted high.
We want to see, we want to see
We want to see Jesus lifted high.*

*Step by step we're moving forward
Little by little we're taking ground
Every prayer a powerful weapon
As strongholds come tumbling down and down and down...*

*We want to see Jesus lifted high
A banner that flies across this land
That all men may see the Truth and know
He is the way to Heaven.*

*By Doug Horley
1993 Thankyou Music (EMI Christian Music Publishing)
CCLI #1033408*



**SUNDAY:
PSALMS 20 (The Promise)**

Read this Psalm aloud as a prayer for your life and for those you love.

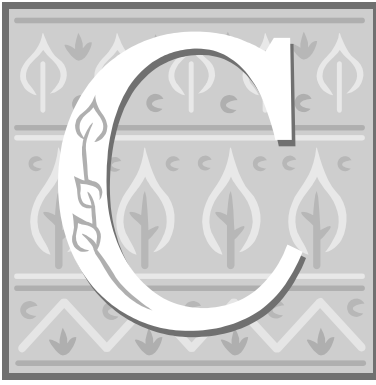
*I pray that the Lord will listen when you are in trouble
And that the God of Jacob will keep you safe.
May the Lord send help from his temple and
Come to your rescue from Mount Zion.
May he remember your gifts and be
Pleased with what you bring.*

*May God do what you want most
And let all go well for you.
Then you will win victories, and we will celebrate
While raising our banners in the name of our God
May the Lord answer all of your prayers!*

*I am certain, Lord, that you will help your chosen
You will answer my prayers
From your holy place in heaven,
And you will save me with your mighty arm.*

*Some people trust the power of chariots or horses,
But we trust you, Lord God.
Others will stumble and fall,
But we will be strong and stand firm.*

Give the king victory. Lord, and answer our prayers.



KEY OF "C":
CALLED

SHARPEN WORSHIP:

Chosen
Childlike

FLATTEN WORSHIP:

Comparison
Childish



MONDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE RECOGNIZE WE ARE CHOSEN

Read the following Scriptures from The Promise:

“Israel I, The Lord will lure you into the desert and speak gently to you. I will return your vineyards and then Trouble Valley will become Hopeful Valley. You will say “Yes” to me as you did in your youth when leaving Egypt. (the world) Hosea 2:14

I promise that from that day on you will call me your husband instead of your master. I will no longer even let you mention the names of those pagan gods that you called master.” Hosea 2:14

“I will accept you as my wife forever, and instead of a bride price I will give you justice, fairness, love, kindness and faithfulness. Then you will truly know who I am. Hosea 2:19-20

“And your constant craving for sex keeps you from knowing me.” Hosea 5:4

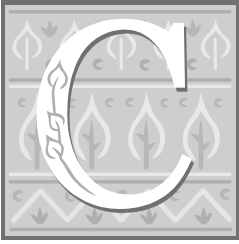
We are God’s beloved. The book of Hosea is written to show God’s deep and abiding love for his chosen group of people, the Jews. Hosea, as a prophet, married a prostitute. This was part of God’s plan because He wanted to show how His love for His people has just as much intensity and passion and heartbreak as Hosea had for his unfaithful wife, Gomer.

Satan has a sexual stronghold in our country. This is a chilling strategy because it blinds us to the deepest most intimate love God has for us. We find it difficult to think of God as our husband or us as His bride because thoughts of physical intimacy get in the way. It overshadows the emotional and spiritual intensity God has for us.

This must grieve the heart of our Father. Can’t you hear in Hosea 2:20 how much He wants us to know Him? Read, “Then you will truly know who I am.” What precedes the word, “*then*”? It is when we can see ourselves in a marriage relationship. Then we will truly know Him.

Ask God to pull down any sexual strongholds that get in the way of knowing God as He truly is. Spend time thinking about the love a husband and wife have for each other when it is as it is supposed to be.

Allow God to reveal to you the deep, abiding, faithful, intimate, passionate love He has for you.



TUESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE WORSHIP AS A CHILD

Read these Scriptures from *The Promise*:

When Israel was a child I loved him and I called my son out of Egypt. (the world) But as the saying goes, "The more they were called, the more they rebelled." They never stopped offering incense and sacrifices to the idols of Baal. I took Israel by the arm and taught them to walk but they would not admit that I was the one who healed them. I led them with kindness and with love not with rope. I held them close to me; I bent down to feed them. But they trusted Egypt instead of returning to me; now Assyria will rule them. War will visit their cities and their plans will fail. My people are determined to reject me for a god they think is stronger, but he can't help. Israel I can't let you go. I can't give you up. How could I possibly destroy you as I did the towns of Admah and Zeboilem?" I just can't do it. My feelings for you are much too strong. Hosea 11:1-8

We are called to be God's children. He chose us and drew us out of Egypt (the world). As a parent, if you have teenagers you will be able to identify with the passage. When your children are little, you pick them up, you comfort them when they cry, you reach down and teach them to walk. You take care of them. So as these sweet, innocent children grow, they begin to struggle with who to listen to and who to believe. Often they take the parents of their childhood for granted and turn to others. We do the very same thing to God.

Attempt to draw a connection between offering incense and sacrifices to the idol of Baal and your own false gods. Who are those people that you often turn to for counsel before God? What are the things you turn to for comfort and wisdom instead of the Word?

As you begin to think of those things and those people, think about how strong God's feelings are for you. Think about how it feels for Him to watch you make plans that will fail and head towards war within yourself. Make a decision to turn to God and His Word first and allow Him to direct your path, your plan and to His people for guidance and help.



WEDNESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE KNOW WE ARE CREATED FOR A PURPOSE

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

The Lord said, “Jeremiah, I am Your creator and before you were born I chose you to speak for me to the nation.” Jeremiah 1:4

“Even before I was born, you had written in your book everything I would do.” Psalms 139:

“Who do you think you are to question God? Does the clay have the right to ask the potter why he shaped it the way he did? Doesn’t a potter have the right to make a fancy bowl and a plain bowl out of the same lump of clay? Romans 9:20-21

As we all struggle and search for our significance and our place in this world, it is comforting and assuring to think that God truly has a plan for our lives. He has chosen us to do things for Him in this world. Our days are written in His book already.

It is my personal belief that we have been created to represent God in a very specific way—to add to His story. There are certain truths, tasks, and testimonies He has called us to do that can never be done by anyone else in quite the same way. If we choose not to step up to do our part, He will complete His plans for His Kingdom but the plans may happen differently and with different people. You will miss the blessing of working with God to accomplish a task for His Kingdom.

The passage in Romans reminds us that it is folly to compare ourselves to one another and complain because we don’t have the right face, hair, body, voice, talents, intelligence, abilities as someone else. Do we really think we have the right to complain to the Creator and tell Him He made a mistake as He crafted us? Can you possibly think that when He looks at You He shakes His Head and says, “I really messed up on that one.” I don’t think so. We need to walk in faith that God has in us exactly what He wanted.

Spend a few minutes and think about your mission in this life. What is God calling you to do? It probably won’t be as a full-time missionary or a famous singer. It more than likely will be affecting the world right around you—your family, your friends, your co-workers. There are ways, though, that you can represent Christ to them that no one else can. Your personality, your temperament, your abilities will show them a unique, specific part of who Christ is. I pray that will become your mission



THURSDAY: WORSHIP IS FLATTENED WHEN WE ACT CHILDISH

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

All children are foolish, but firm correction will make them change. Prov. 22:15

Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors and teachers so that his people would learn to serve and his body would grow strong. This will continue until we are united by our faith and by our understanding of the Son of God. Then we will be mature just as Christ is and we will be completely like Him. Christ holds it together and makes all of its parts work perfectly as it grows and becomes strong because of love. We must stop acting like children. We must not let deceitful people trick us by their false teachings, which are like the winds that toss us around from place to place. Love should always make us tell the truth. Then we will grow in every way to be more like Christ the head of the body. Eph. 4:11-16

When we were children we thought and reasoned as children do. But when we grew up, we quit our childish ways. 1 Cor. 13:11

For now there are faith, hope, and love. But of these three, the greatest is love. 1 Cor. 13:13

Be alert and think straight. Put all your hope in how kind God will be to you when Jesus Christ appears. Behave like obedient children. Don't let your lives be controlled by your desires as they used to be. Always live as God's holy people should because God is the one who chose you and He is holy. That's why the Scriptures say, "I am the Holy God and you must be Holy, too."

I don't think it is rocket science to see the difference between being childlike and childish. When we think about the greatest commandment, "You must love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength," it appears these verses address all the issues:

- Heart—the greatest is love. We must love God and we must love others. To love yourself first and best is childish.
- Soul—We must be holy, just as God is holy. We need to be involved in Soul Care—prayer, the word, fellowship with other believers. Making excuses for wrong behavior is childish.
- Mind—Know the Truth and tell the Truth. Stay grounded in Truth. Don't be double-minded or easily influenced by smooth talkers. Following the last human voice you hear is childish. We all know people and work with people who change how they think and what decisions they make based upon the last person they talked to.
- Strength—Be self-controlled, be obedient, don't act impulsively. To do what feels good and take the easy way is childish.

Examine yourself and determine in these four areas where you are childlike and where you are childish. Pay attention today to these four areas as you go through your day. Ask God to reveal to you those areas that need maturing.



FRIDAY: WORSHIP IS FLATTENED WHEN WE COMPARE OURSELVES TO OTHERS AND NOT TO CHRIST

Read the following Scriptures:

Stop being hateful! Quit trying to fool people and start being sincere. Don't be jealous or say cruel things about others. Be like newborn babies who are thirsty for the pure spiritual milk that will help you grow and be saved. 1 Peter 2:1-2 The Promise

Lord, I am not proud and haughty. I don't think myself better than others. I don't pretend to "Know it all." I am quiet now before the Lord, just as a child who is weaned from the breast. Yes, my begging has been stilled. O Israel, you too should quietly trust in the Lord—now and always. Psalms 131 Living Bible

I am not conceited Lord, and I don't waste my time on impossible schemes. But I have learned to feel safe and satisfied just like a young child on its mother's lap. People of Israel, you must trust the Lord now and forever. Psalms 131 The Promise

If you think you are better than others, when you really aren't, you are wrong. Do your own work well, and then you will have something to be proud of. But don't compare yourself with others. We each must carry our own load. Gal. 6:3-5 The Promise

It is my belief that a guaranteed recipe for depression and frustration is to compare yourself to others. If you want to be miserable, then get up every day and make it your goal to look at others only in reference to yourself. One of two things will happen:

If you find yourself better than someone else, you will develop pride and your love for that person will become less. You will find yourself frustrated and angry because the other person isn't as smart, talented, organized or wonderful as you are.

If you find someone else better than yourself, you will develop feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Your love for that person will go down because you will either feel jealous, envious, or uncomfortable.

I can't see any good coming from comparing ourselves to other people. I also can't see any good in comparing our church to churches we were in before. I believe Satan uses comparing as a strategy because it leads to distance and disconnect among people.

For the next week, pay attention to your comments to others. Do you start conversations with, "Well, if I were doing it... Well, if that were me I would have..., Well, in my previous church we..., I don't see why we can't do it the way "they" do it.... How often do you refer to the all-powerful all-perfect "THEY". They say we should, they say we ought to, they think...

Pay attention to your thoughts as well. How often when you are talking to a friend or an acquaintance do you compare your looks, abilities, finances, or strength/weaknesses to that person. Are you thinking, "I'm glad I'm not messed-up like that." Or "Why can't I be that wise or strong?"



SATURDAY: MY HEART IS SPOKEN FOR

Read and reflect on this song by Mercy Me.

Take this world from me
I don't need it anymore
I am finally free
My heart is spoken for

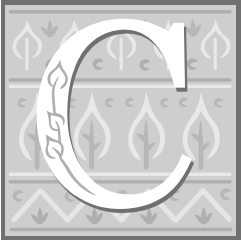
Oh and I praise You
Oh and I worship You
Covered by a love divine
Child of the risen Lord.
To hear you say this one's mine
My heart is spoken for

Now I have a peace I've never known before
I find myself complete
My heart is spoken for

Oh and I praise You
Oh and I worship You
Covered by a love divine
Child of the risen Lord
To hear you say this one's mine
My heart is spoken for

By the power of the cross
You've taken what was lost
And made it fully yours
I have been redeemed
What you spoke to me
Now I am spoken for

By Bart Millard, et al
2002 Simpleville Music
CCLI # 3912539



SUNDAY:
ISAIAH 41:13-14 (The Promise)

Read the following Scripture:

*I am the Lord your God. I am holding your hand
So don't be afraid. I am here to help you.
People of Israel, don't worry, though others may say,
"Israel is only a worm!"
I am the holy God of Israel, who saves and protects you.
Isaiah 41:13-14*

Use these verses to fully realize in your mind, heart, and soul who you really are in Christ because you were chosen and because you are loved—just as you are.



KEY OF "D":
DEVOTED

SHARPEN WORSHIP:

Day by Day
Delight

FLATTEN WORSHIP:

Drudgery
Defeat



MONDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE LIVE DAY TO DAY

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

I celebrate and shout because of my Lord God. His saving power and justice are the very clothes I wear. They are more beautiful than the jewelry worn by a bride or a groom. Isaiah 61:10

I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? Look at the birds in the sky! They don't plant or harvest. They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth more than birds? Can worry make you live longer? Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of them. God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith? Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what He wants. Then the other things will be yours as well. Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself. You have enough to worry about today. Matthew 6:25-34

And when I was burdened with worries, you comforted me and made me feel sure. Psalms 94:19

How important it is to live day-by-day! How important it is to not borrow trouble! In the first Scripture it says God's saving power and justice are the clothes Isaiah wears. We get dressed each day. We don't put on clothes for the next day or the next week or the next month. We put on what we need for the day. Spiritually, we put on God's saving power and justice each day. That's what we need for the day. If we put on the worries of tomorrow then we feel burdened just like we would if we put on an entire week's worth of clothes.

This week, as you get dressed each morning, picture yourself only putting on the issues of the day. Picture yourself putting away in a dresser drawer the worries and burdens of tomorrow. Trust that God's saving power and justice is more than sufficient for the day .



**TUESDAY:
WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN WE ALLOW BLESSINGS TO
BECOME DRUDGERY**

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

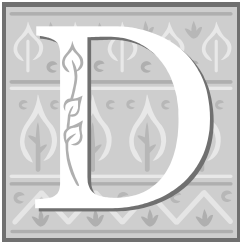
The Lord and his disciples were traveling along and came to a village. When they got there, a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary who sat down in front of the Lord and was listening to what he said. Martha was worried about all that had to be done. Finally, she went to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it bother you that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!" The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42

The drudgery of the day to day chores and tediousness of life can overtake and overcome the blessings and joy of our lives. Every day we have a choice to make. We can become preoccupied with the work that needs to be done or we can choose the best part. We can choose to use all of our energy on the things that don't last or spend time on those things that can never be taken away.

You're thinking to yourself that all of that sounds pretty and is easy to say but impossible to do. When the house needs to be cleaned, lunches need to be packed, the lawn needs to be mowed, the oil needs to be changed in the car, it is hard to ignore it. Don't make it an either/or goal. Of course, you can't neglect the things that need doing; you can, however, build into your day a time to look around you and see and hear and experience the blessings and gifts from God. You can build a time into your day when you sit at Jesus' feet and just experience His Presence.

Clean socks will be taken away from you (they'll just get dirty all over again); a beautifully mowed lawn will be taken away; lunches and cooked food will disappear. The time you spend learning to listen and experiencing Jesus, the time you spend taking in your blessings and gifts will never be taken away. They will be planted in your spirit and will nourish and enrich you. You can then feed on these things as you go about the drudgery of life.

Take fifteen minutes today (morning is usually best) and worship at Jesus' feet. Think about your blessings. Have an attitude of gratitude. Make the choice to live that way day-by-day. Your attitude is very much a choice, you know.



WEDNESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE DELIGHT IN EVERYDAY THINGS

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

Some people brought their children to Jesus so that he could bless them by placing His hands on them. But his disciples told the people to stop bothering him. When Jesus saw this, he became angry and said, "Let the children come to me! Don't try to stop them. People who are like these little children belong to the Kingdom of God. I promise you that you cannot get into God's Kingdom, unless you accept it the way a child does." Then Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them by placing his hands on them. Mark 10:13-16

Oftentimes, the pressures of people will keep you from experiencing the delight of living. From Jesus' life, the event which included children was included in 3 of the 4 Gospel accounts. The event must have been a "key" event to God as He inspired the accounts, and the event must have made a lasting impact on three of the writers. Let's look at the event involving children.

Obviously, from the passage, the apostles thought children were a waste of time and not important enough to be with Jesus. Jesus thought differently. He gathered them close and blessed them. He went on to say that we enter the Kingdom of God when we accept it the way a child does. When we think we are too important or our worship is too important to include children, we need to remember this passage. We need to remember that it is in 3 of the 4 gospels so it was important in Jesus' life.

We also need to think about how a child would view the Kingdom of God. To summarize, I think it shows that small children live from the heart. They don't live in their heads. So often, we as adults think we are too important or too smart for the simple things of life. Jesus shows us in this passage that this is not true.

When have you felt you were too important or too wise to spend time doing simple things? When's the last time you looked at the clouds or watched lightning bugs? When's the last time you heard a Truth that touched your heart and you let it linger there, bringing tears to your eyes, instead of drawing it up into your head and dissecting and analyzing it? When's the last time you watched the joy and abandonment of children as they sang or played or slept? There is great delight in the simple things of life. Try them, you'll grow to love them.



THURSDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ARE DEVOTED TO GOD

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

Jesus realized that they would try to force him to be their king so he went up on a mountain where he could be alone. John 6:15

Right away, Jesus made his disciples get into a boat and start back across the lake. But he stayed until he had sent the crowds away. Then he went up on a mountain where he could be alone and pray. Later that evening, he was still there. Matthew 14:22-23

Right away, Jesus made his disciples get in the boat and start back across to Bethsaida. But he stayed until he had sent the crowds away. Then he told them goodbye and went up on the side of a mountain to pray. Later that evening, he was still there by himself, and the boat was somewhere in the middle of the lake. He could see that the disciples were struggling hard, because they were rowing against the wind...Mark 6:45-48a

From these passages where Jesus separates Himself away and goes to the mountaintop, we see a couple of things. The first thing we see is that the people were ready to place demands on Jesus that He was not going to fulfill. We also see that as He sat on the mountaintop He could see “the disciples were struggling hard.” We see two definite groups of people—those who have expectations, and those who have great needs. Jesus, however, stayed on the mountain until His time with His Father was finished. He didn’t rush. He also went to minister to those who had needs (the apostles) and not those who had expectations (people who wanted to make Him king.)

Are you able to distinguish between people’s expectations on you and their needs? When either one is pressing in on you, Jesus gives us a wonderful example of how to respond. Get away, get quiet, and breathe. Spend time in prayer. Go to a beautiful place in nature where you can look around. Find a place where you feel small and you can see the bigness of God. Delight in the sights, sounds, and smells of God’s Kingdom. The people will wait. Don’t live your life by the tyranny of the urgent. We each get twenty-four hours a day. We choose how we spend most of them and we get to choose what attitude we’ll have with ALL of them.

Be devoted to God. Don’t let things or people or places get between you and Your Father. Sometime this week, go to a quiet place in nature and ask God to help you experience it with a child’s eyes and heart.



FRIDAY: WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN WE DEFINE MISTAKES AS DEFEAT OR FAILURE

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

A little while before morning Jesus came walking on the water toward his disciples.

When they saw Him, they thought He was a ghost. They were terrified and started screaming. At once, Jesus said to them, “Don’t worry! I am Jesus. Don’t be afraid.”

Peter replied, “Lord, if it is really you tell me to come to you on the water.”

“Come on!” Jesus said. Peter then got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Him.

But when Peter saw how strong the wind was, he was afraid and started sinking, “Save me, Lord!” he shouted.

Right away, Jesus reached out His hand. He helped Peter up and said, “You surely don’t have much faith. Why do you doubt?”

*When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind died down. **The men in the boat worshiped Jesus and said, “You really are the Son of God!”** Matthew 14:25-32*

Take a few minutes and think about this scene. Start at the point that Peter sinks. Peter is struggling in the water—probably choking, yelling, and flailing. The other men in the boat are watching it happen. They stayed in the safety of the boat. Do you suppose they are judging Peter, thinking how foolish he is or feeling pity for him? Do you think they are considering jumping in and saving him? Jesus reaches out His hand. Peter grasps it and then TOGETHER Jesus and Peter get into the boat. Here is the important point: the men in the boat worshipped Jesus and said, “You really are the Son of God!”

That’s important because they worshiped Jesus because of Peter’s failure!! It was because Jesus saved Peter and made the wind calm down. Has there been a time you took a risk for Jesus? Have you ever stepped out in faith while others stayed in safety and watched? Did you ever feel judged and criticized because you took a risk and they didn’t?

Be of good cheer! Very often, it is in our defeats, in our failures that we lead other people to worship. When we are weak, Jesus has the chance to show Himself strong. If Peter had walked on the water, the men would have talked about Peter and how strong his faith was and how wonderfully he walked. Because he failed, their eyes were on Jesus and they learned the powerful lesson that Jesus saves. Not only does He save, but He brings you to safety. He gets you back in the boat.

Thank God for a time when you were weak and you experienced Jesus’ strength in your life. Ask God to open your eyes to His work the next time you fail or have a defeat. Make choices daily as to whether you will stay in the boat where it’s safe or go out in the wind to get closer to Christ.



SATURDAY: POWER OF YOUR LOVE

Read the words to this praise chorus and make it your prayer today.

*Power of Your Love
Lord I come to You
Let my life be changed renewed
Flowing from the grace that I found in You
And Lord I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be swept away by the power of Your love.*

*Hold me close let Your love surround me
Bring me near draw me to Your side
And as I wait I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You;
Your spirit leads me on by the power of Your love.*

*Lord unveil my eyes
Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love as You live in me
Lord renew my mind as Your will unfolds in my life
In living everyday by the power of Your love.*

*Hold me close let Your love surround me
Bring me near draw me to Your side
And as I wait I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You;
Your spirit leads me on by the power of Your love.*

By Geoff Bullock
1992 Word Music (Word Music Group)
CCLI # 917491

(continued on page 41)

(continued from page 40)

Take a few minutes, examine your heart, recognize and acknowledge where you have the most struggle on a day-to-day basis. On a scale of 1 to 5 rate how you live. (5 being the most like you and 1 being the least like you)

- ___ I spend an hour or more a day worrying about things.
- ___ I neglect quiet time each day with God because I get busy.
- ___ I often meet the expectations of others.
- ___ I will quickly meet others' needs without giving them the opportunity to first meet the need themselves or depend on God
- ___ I find children annoying and noisy.
- ___ I prefer to live in my head rather than feel things in my heart.
- ___ I don't have time to notice sunsets and flowers.
- ___ I praise and thank God everyday for His goodness and kindness to my family and me..
- ___ I find public failure devastating.
- ___ I like to hide my mistakes from others.
- ___ I prefer to stay where it's safe rather than take a risk and fail.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which areas you need to correct so that you can see Him more clearly, love Him more dearly and follow Him more nearly.



**SUNDAY:
PSALMS 118 (The Promise)**

*Tell the Lord how thankful you are,
Because He is kind and always merciful
Let Israel shout, "God is always merciful"
Let the family of Aaron the priest shout, "God is always merciful!"
Let every worshiper of the Lord shout, "God is always merciful!"*

*When I was really hurting, I prayed to the Lord,
He answered my prayer and took my worries away
The Lord is on my side and I am not afraid of what others do to me.
With the Lord on my side, I will defeat all of my hateful enemies
It is better to trust the Lord for protection than to trust anyone else including strong leaders.*

*Here is the gate of the Lord!
Everyone who does right may enter this gate.
I praise the Lord for answering my prayers and saving me.
The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone!
The Lord has done this and it is amazing to us.
This day belongs to the Lord! Let's celebrate and be glad today.
We'll ask the Lord to save us!
We'll sincerely ask the Lord to let us win.*

*God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
We praise you from here in the house of the Lord.
The Lord is our God, and He has given us light.
Start the celebration! March with palm branches all the way to the altar.
The Lord is my God!
I will praise Him and tell Him how thankful I am.
Tell the Lord how thankful you are.
Because He is kind and always merciful*

Read this Psalm aloud and if you're really brave try shouting parts of it as is mentioned in the first four verses. If you've ever watched children, they know how to celebrate. Make today a day of celebration and praise because the Lord is kind and always merciful!



KEY OF "E": ESTEEM

SHARPEN WORSHIP:

Exalt God

Encourage Others

FLATTEN WORSHIP:

Esteem (self)

Eyes on Everyone Else



MONDAY: WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN WE ESTEEM OURSELVES

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

Christ was truly God but he did not try to remain equal with God. He gave up everything and became a slave when he became like one of us. Christ was humble. He obeyed God and even died on a cross. Then God gave Christ the highest place and honored his name above all others. So at the name of Jesus everyone will bow down, those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And to the glory of God the Father everyone will openly agree, Jesus Christ is Lord. Philippians 2:5-11

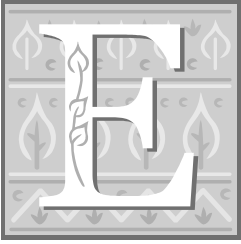
As you look at Philippians 2:5-11 the writer says that it was because of Jesus' humility (Yet it was because of this...vs. 9) that God raised Him up above every other person and thing. What is so important about humility? Why did Jesus have to lay aside His power and glory to be raised up? If we are to be like Jesus, then how important is humility for us? Look at this list of humility versus pride and determine where you fall. Pray about those areas where you need strengthening and what things you need to lay aside. (If you're having trouble with this—you might have a bigger problem than you think!)

Broken People

- Make a choice to be broken
- Admit their personal needs
- Want to be holy
- Expose their weaknesses & struggles
- Want to grow spiritually
- Serve others
- Are vulnerable
- Accept responsibility for own sin
- Want to be real
- Esteem others
- Are willing to yield the right to be right
- Yield their own rights
- Serve others & help them be
- Rejoice when others are lifted up
- Quick to see where they're wrong

Unbroken/Prideful People

- See brokenness as weakness
- Only pray for others
- Want to be happy
- Keep weaknesses & struggles hidden
- Want to be comfortable
- Serve themselves
- Are protective
- Blame others for own sin
- Want respectability & honor
- Have critical spirit toward others
- Need to prove they are right
- Are protective of their rights, time & reputation
- Are wounded by promotion of others and feeling overlooked
- Blame others; are defensive when criticized



TUESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE EXALT GOD THROUGH OUR STRENGTHS

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

Are we once again bragging about ourselves? Do we need letters to you or from you to tell others about us? Some people do need letters that tell about them. But you are our letter and you are in our hearts for everyone to read and understand. You are like a letter written by Christ and delivered by us. But you are not written with pen and ink or on tablets made of stone. You are written in our hearts by the Spirit of the Loving God.
2 Corinthians 3:1-5

If you are a “letter from Christ, written by your spiritual leaders, a letter written not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the Living God, not one carved out of stone, but in human hearts” what would the letter say? Would Christ be recommending you or would you have to recommend yourself? Would your letter start with sentences beginning with, “I did, I’ve said, I’ve accomplished, I can do,” or would your sentences start with “Jesus does this through me, Jesus has accomplished this through me...”

In verse 4 it says it is okay to say good things about ourselves. The reason we say good things is because God does good things in and through us. If we go around putting ourselves down and being self-critical, then what testimony do we have to what Jesus has done in our lives? If we keep the emphasis on who gives us success and power in our lives, then we can say the good things He has accomplished.

Make a list of the “good things” Christ has accomplished in and through you. Make sure and offer a prayer of thanks and praise for His work in your life.

Additional Scriptures for further study: 2 Cor. 4:7; Romans 9:19-21



WEDNESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ENCOURAGE OTHERS

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

If your faith is strong, we should be patient with the Lord's followers whose faith is weak. We should try to please them instead of ourselves. We should think of their good and try to help them by doing what pleases them. Even Christ did not try to please Himself, but as the Scriptures say, the people who insulted you also insulted me." And the Scriptures were written to teach and encourage us by giving us hope. God is the one who makes us patient and cheerful. I pray that he will help you live at peace with each other, as you follow Christ. Romans 15:1-7

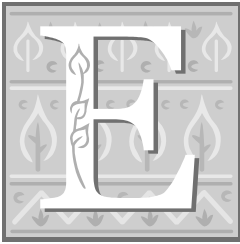
How hard is it for you to be patient with those who aren't like you? Do you find people drive you crazy who are struggling in areas where you have victory? Do you want to snap at them and say, "Get over it." "Grow up." "Move on"? What do these verses say about that?

Take a look at this verse, "We should think of their good and try to help them by doing what pleases them." How does that apply to worship services? To music choices? To the length of the sermon? To your Sunday School class? When you find yourself frustrated in any of these areas is it because you're making it all about you? Does that really accomplish anything except frustration?

A GUARANTEE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS (from the above Scripture passage)

The Scriptures were written to _____ and _____ by
Giving us _____. God is the one who makes us _____ and
_____. Prayer will help you live at _____ with each other. This will lead
to _____.

Answers: teach, encourage, hope
patient and cheerful
peace
praise



**FRIDAY:
WORSHIP IS FLATTENED WHEN WE COMPARE
OURSELVES TO OTHERS**

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise* then cover the correct answers below and complete the exercise.

My friends, you are spiritual. So if someone is trapped in sin, you should gently lead that person back to the right path. But watch out, and don't be tempted yourself. You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand. If you think you are better than others, when you really aren't; you are wrong. Do your own work well, and then you will have something to be proud of. But don't compare yourself with others. We each must carry our own load. Share every good thing you have with anyone who teaches you what God has said. Galatians 6:1-10



Below the hands write down the things
You are supposed to do for others

Below the man write down the things
You are supposed to do for yourself

Answers:

Do for others:

Offer a helping hand

Share every good thing w/others

Gently lead a sinner down the right path

Don't get tired of helping others

Don't give up

Especially help believers

Do for yourself

Don't be tempted

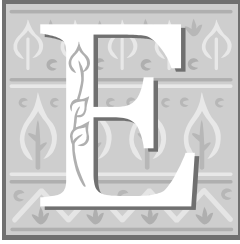
Carry your own load

Do your own work well

Don't make a fool of yourself

Don't give up

Don't compare yourself to others



SATURDAY: BE MAGNIFIED

Read the following praise song and reflect on the questions as you read through it:

*I have made You too small in my eyes
O Lord, forgive me;
And I have believed in a lie
That You were unable to help me.*

What lies have you believed about God? About yourself? About others?

*But now, O Lord, I see my wrong
Heal my heart and show Yourself strong;
And in my eyes and with my song
O Lord, be magnified
O Lord, be magnified*

When have you responded to men instead of God? To your selfish desires instead of God's Spirit? When do you turn to Dr. Phil or a friend at work instead of reading your Bible and asking God FIRST?

*I have leaned on the wisdom of men
O Lord, forgive me;
And I have responded to them
Instead of Your light and Your mercy*

*But now, O Lord, I see my wrong
Heal my heart and show Yourself strong;
And in my eyes and with my song
O Lord, be magnified.
O Lord, be magnified.*

*Be magnified, O Lord
You are highly exalted;
And there is nothing You can't do
O Lord, my eyes are on You.
Be magnified.
O Lord, be magnified.*

by Lynn DeShazo
1991 Integrity's Hosanna! Music
CCLI # 645914

Think of two situations in your life that seem too big for God to handle. Ask God to show Himself strong and magnified in these situations. Believe in faith the words of this song and look for your answer—not in people, but in your God who loves you.



SUNDAY:
1 SAMUEL 2 (The Promise)

Read the Prayer of Hannah.

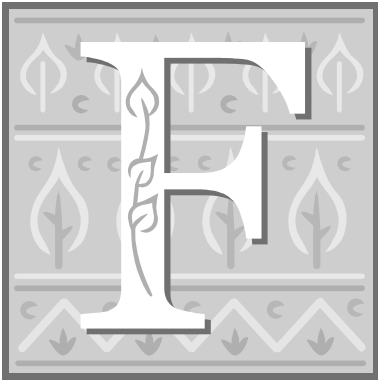
*You make me strong and happy, Lord
You rescued me and now I can be glad and laugh at my enemies.
No other god is like you. We're safer with you than on a high mountain.
I can tell those proud people, "Stop your boasting.
Nothing is hidden from the Lord and He judges what we do."*

*O Lord You break the bows of warriors
But You give strength to everyone who stumbles
People who once had plenty to eat
Must now hire themselves out for a piece of bread
But You give the hungry more than enough to eat
A woman did not have a child, and You gave her seven
But a woman who had many was left with none
You take away life and You give life
You send people down to the world of the dead
And bring them back again.*

*Our Lord You are the one who makes us rich and poor
You put some in high positions and bring disgrace on others
You lift the poor and homeless out of the garbage dump
And give them places of honor in royal palaces
You set the world on foundations and they belong to You
You protect Your loyal people
But everyone who is evil will die in darkness*

*We cannot win a victory by our own strength
Our Lord, those who attack You will be broken into pieces
When You fight back with thunder from Heaven
You will give the whole earth
And give power and strength to Your chosen King.*

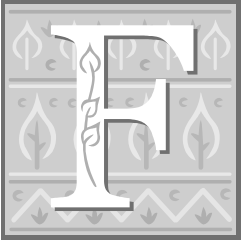
Pray this prayer as an act of worship this Sunday. Concentrate on the things the Lord does. He is referred to as You in Hannah's prayer. Recognize the things for which the Lord should be exalted oftentimes as we try to exalt ourselves—strength, happiness, safety, food, your children, life itself, money, reputation, protection, victory, power against the enemy. Repent for any of those things in which you esteem yourself—Or think you deserve the credit. Repent for the times you judge others because they don't have these things. Be humbled by the fact that God has chosen to give you these good things to. WHY YOU?



KEY OF "F":
FRUIT

SHARPEN WORSHIP:
Fresh Food
Flowing Fountains

FLATTEN WORSHIP:
Fallow Ground
Little Foxes



MONDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN IT COMES FROM THE FRUIT OF ABIDING

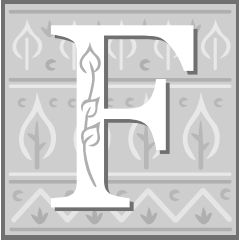
Read this portion of John 15 from *The Promise*:

Jesus said to his disciples:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts away every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit. But he trims every branch that does produce fruit, so that it will produce even more fruit. You are already clean because of what I have said to you. Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me. I am the vine and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. John 15:1-5

After you read these verses when Jesus tells us to “abide”, make a point to go outside at some point today and study the trees. Do you see them working hard? Do they seem tired to you? Do you see them struggling? What can you learn about “abiding” by watching them? As you travel throughout your day, continue to study the trees. What do you think Jesus would like you to know about abiding in Him?

On the back of this paper, draw a large tree that represents you. It could be a pine, an oak, a weeping willow, an apple tree. Give some thought as to what tree accurately represents you. A pine—because you are prickly and hard to get close to? An oak—restful and relaxing? A weeping willow—you tend to be gentle and emotional?



TUESDAY: WORSHIP HAPPENS WHEN THE FRUIT IS ALLOWED TO GROW

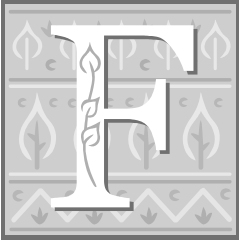
Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

That same day Jesus left the house and went out beside Lake Galilee, where he sat down to teach. Such large crowds gathered around him that he had to sit in a boat while the people stood on the shore. Then he taught them many things by using stories. He said: A farmer went out to scatter seed in a field. While the farmer was scattering the seed, some of it fell along the road and was eaten by birds. Other seeds fell on thin, rocky ground and quickly started growing because the soil wasn't very deep. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and dried up, because they did not have enough roots. Some other seeds fell where thorn-bushes grew up and choked the plants. But a few seeds did fall on good ground where the plants produced a hundred or sixty or thirty times as much as was scattered. If you have ears, pay attention! Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-27

Think about the four types of people or seeds. Think about what snatches the seeds away. Even if you are saved, the enemy will try the same three strategies in your life, to keep you from bearing more fruit. As God sows the word in your heart, Satan snatches the fruit of the word by:

- Distraction—the enemy just takes it away before you take the time to process it or understand how it applies to your life. Very often as God plants a Truth or plants encouragement in your life, the enemy will use a discouraging word or criticism to snatch away the joy of a new Truth.
- Busyness or shallowness—the enemy keeps you busy or keeps you from going “deep” in your faith. You stay a baby tree and are content that way. You mean to have a quiet time, join a Bible Study, or be accountable to someone, but day after day you just keep putting it off.
- Worries—the enemy keeps you worried and focused on meeting your own needs instead of abiding in Him.

We all struggle with the above three; however, when we recognize them as strategies of the enemy of our souls and we choose to provide the proper nourishment and environment for God's seeds of Truth to grow in our lives, the fruit will abound.



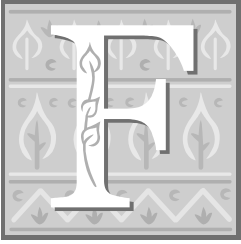
**WEDNESDAY:
WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ARE REFRESHED BY
THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER**

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

Fruit trees will grow all along this river and produce fresh fruit every month. The leaves will never dry out, because they will always have water from the stream that flows from the temple, and they will be used for healing people. Ezekiel 47:12

But I will bless those who trust me, They will be like trees growing beside a stream—trees with roots that reach down to the water and with leaves that are always green. They bear fruit each year and are never worried by a lack of rain. Jeremiah 17:7-8

If you continue with the teaching on Monday that we are the branches and leaves producing fruit and Jesus is the Source as the vine or trunk, what do these verses teach about WHERE to abide? What does it mean for us to have “deep roots” that reach down? What are the promises from God that you see in these passages? Add the roots and the water onto your tree picture. Diagram and label the parts with their spiritual parts.



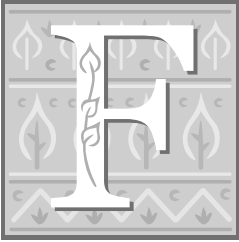
**THURSDAY:
WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN OUR HEART BECOMES
FALLOW GROUND**

Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

People of Jerusalem and Judah, don't be so stubborn! Your hearts have become hard, like unplowed ground where thorn bushes grow. Jeremiah 4:3

Continue with your development of the abiding principal. The “heart” of your tree would be found in the roots and the ground. As you see from these passages, a heart that becomes hard, just like fallow ground, impedes your relationship with Christ, thus “flattening” your worship. When does ground become fallow—dried out and flat? When does a heart become fallow? When does YOUR heart become fallow? What lesson would Jesus have for you regarding your worship and your fruit production?

We must be careful to spend time in rest and renewal when we've given out all we have to give. At that point we can become dry and hard. We also must be careful to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit whether it be about those things we shouldn't do or those things we should do. When our heart becomes hard to the gentle promptings of the Spirit then the “thorn bushes” of bad attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors are soon to follow.



FRIDAY: WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN SMALL THINGS BECOME BIG THINGS

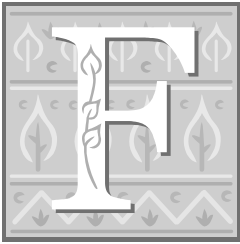
Read the following Scripture from *The Promise*:

Our vineyards are in blossom; we must catch the little foxes that destroy the vineyards. Song of Solomon 2:15

As you see from this passage, you can have the right ground, the right location for water, the understanding and daily practice of abiding, but if you don't have proper boundaries or fences in your life, you lose the fruit. What are the "little foxes" that steal the fruit Jesus is producing in you? As we've been working on the tree, we've been concentrating on the tree itself and what it needs: daily feeding, fresh water, abiding not striving. Now take a look at those things outside yourself that could take away your fruit production. What are you watching or looking at? What are you listening to or saying? What are you doing with your time? Think about these "little foxes" that will steal your fruit:

- tv, radio, internet, pornography, books
- gossip, lies, innuendos, crude language, crude joking
- busyness, poor eating and sleeping habits,
- anger and frustration with others
- bad influences of others

As you make decisions about these things, on your tree picture draw fences and boundaries that you need to put into place to keep the "little foxes" off your property. Remember that these come from the enemy and he doesn't respect fences or "no trespassing" signs, so you will need to be constantly alert to weak places and small openings. Fences need mending all the time!



SATURDAY: BREATHE

Use the song, “Breathe” as your devotion today. As you sing it or pray it, think about how breathing relates to abiding. Consider how thirsty and hungry you are for God. Ask Him to increase your hunger. Ask Him to make you desperate for a daily feeding and refreshing from Him each day.

This is the air I breathe,
This is the air I breathe,
Your holy presence living in me.

This is my daily bread,
This is my daily bread,
Your very Word spoken to me.

And I, I’m desperate for You.
And I, I’m lost without You.

This is the air I breathe,
This is the air I breathe,
Your holy presence living in me.

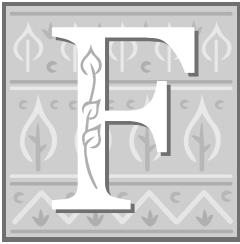
This is my daily bread,
This is my daily bread,
Your very Word spoken to me.

And I, I’m desperate for You.
And I, I’m lost without You.

And I, I’m desperate for You.
And I, I’m lost without You.

This is the air I breathe.

By Marie Bennett
1995 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing
CCLI # 1874117



**SUNDAY:
GALATIANS 5:16-25 (The Promise)**

If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires. The Spirit and your desires are enemies of each other. They are fighting each other and keeping you from doing what you feel you should. But if you obey the Spirit, the Law of Moses has no control over you. People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's Kingdom. God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in these ways. And because we belong to Christ Jesus we have killed our selfish feelings and desires. God's Spirit has given us life and so we should follow the Spirit. But don't be conceited or make others jealous by claiming to be better than they are.

From the above passage, make a list of the bad fruit and the good fruit that can be produced by a tree or branch in the King's Vineyard. Today, repent of the bad fruit and cast it out of the Vineyard. Mend your fences and take care of the broken down or weak areas of the fence. Thank God for producing the good fruit in your life. BE EVER MINDFUL that you don't produce the fruit, you just take care of the tree by abiding in the vine. In the two fruit baskets, label one with the bad fruit in your life and the other with the good fruit.





KEY OF "G":
GLORY

SHARPEN WORSHIP:

Gratitude

Gifts

FLATTEN WORSHIP:

Guilt

Grudges



MONDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN GOD GETS THE GLORY

Read the following Scriptures out of the *Promise*: (These Scriptures will be used over the following two days.)

“During the day the Lord went ahead of his people in a thick cloud, and during the night he went ahead of them in a flaming fire. That way the Lord could lead them at all times, whether day or night.” Ex. 13:21-22

“Suddenly a cloud filled the temple as the priests were leaving the most holy place. The Lord’s glory was in the cloud and the light from it was so bright that the priests could not stay inside to do their work. Then Solomon prayed: “Our Lord, you said that you would live in a dark cloud. Now I have built a glorious temple where you can live forever.” 1 Kings 8:10-13

On the day of Pentecost all the Lord’s followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. Acts 2:1-3

Further Scriptures: Ex. 24:12-18; Ex. 34; Ex. 40: 34-38; Luke 9:28

God made visits and showed His Glory throughout the Old Testament. He often showed His Presence through fire and clouds. Why fire? Why clouds? Couldn’t He show Himself any way He chose? Why not a waterfall? Why not a lion? Why not a flower?

What do we know about fire? It’s mesmerizing to look at. It appears to be alive as it continually moves in flames or smolders in ashes. You can only get so close to it. It warms an area and gives it a beautiful glow. It lights up the darkness. Here are a few observations I’ve made as I think of what there is in fire that would reveal God’s Character to us.

1. Just as God won’t share His glory with anyone, we can’t jump in a fire and share its work.
2. Just as God is unpredictable so is fire as we watch the flames jump and move.
3. Fire can hurt you; but it can also provide great comfort.
4. When you get close to it, your face will have a glow to it just like Moses’ did when he was in God’s Presence.

When was the last time you were near a fire? When was the last time you listened to its pops and crackles, watched the flames dance? When was the last time you sought God’s Presence and listened for Him and looked for Him? The next time you’re in front of a fire, remember God and His Glory.



TUESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE ARE AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

Read the Scriptures from Monday on page 60.

Okay, yesterday we looked at fire and what we can learn about God and His Character. Today, we want to think about clouds. Frequently, God would be cloaked in a cloud. So, what do we know about clouds and what would God have us learn from them?

- Just as there are different kinds of clouds and many different shapes and sizes to them, God is multi-dimensional as well. HE never changes, but He is able to be what we need when we need it.
- Just as clouds bring us life-giving water, we know Jesus brings us Living Water.
- Just as the clouds often bring a welcome shade and rest when we need it, God can become our rest and our shade when we need it.
- Clouds can be unpredictable. Their shapes can change quickly as they move across the sky. Our God is unpredictable in how He manifests Himself, sometimes in a burning bush, sometimes allowing a donkey to talk, or sometimes making impure water sweet with the touch of a stick.
- Certain clouds can cause fear and need to be taken seriously. They often predict threatening weather. God needs to be taken seriously and His warnings in Scripture need to be heeded.
- If you've even been on top of a mountain and had low-lying clouds surround you, you know that it blocks out things around you and there is a unique quiet. When we are in the presence of God, His presence blocks out the things of this world and we are often called to be still in His Presence.
- Just as clouds are always present in the storms of this world, so God's Presence is always with us when we have life-storms surround us.

Take some time to really reflect on the clouds in the sky. God put them there to teach us. What would He like you to learn about Him from the clouds and His Presence as we look at the clouds that He created and put above us?



WEDNESDAY: WORSHIP SHARPENS WHEN WE HAVE GRATEFUL HEARTS

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

*Shout praises to the Lord, everyone on this earth
Be joyful and sing as you come in to worship the Lord!
You know the Lord is God!
He created us and we belong to him;
We are His people, the sheep of his pasture.
Be thankful and praise the Lord
As you enter His temple.
The Lord is good!
His love and faithfulness will last forever. Psalms 100*

Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the Lord how thankful I am. Psalms 118: 19

There are so many Psalms that tell us that gratitude and thanksgiving are the keys that open the gates and the doors for God's Presence in our worship. Why is it so difficult to feel grateful for the many blessings God has given us? Why do we sometimes complain and criticize the very things that are supposed to bless us? When was the last time you thanked God for your church building and the freedom to be present? When was the last time you thanked God for the resources to praise Him—choir, praise team, instruments, voices, etc.? Do you think it is possible to worship God without an attitude of gratitude?

If gratitude is the key that opens the door to God's Presence and our worship of Him, what would be one of the locks that would keep Him out? There are numerous references in the Gospels of times Jesus, God Himself, was in the presence of people and they never even recognized it. I can think of nothing sadder than to have God's very Presence in the midst of my church or to be where I am and for me to miss it due to my busyness, my ingratitude, or my unbelief.

As you go through your day, think of the many things you have for which to be grateful, look around you for God's Presence and His gifts in your life, and then open the gates for His Presence to come in as you praise Him and give thanksgiving.



THURSDAY: WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN WE HOLD GRUDGES

Read the following Scriptures from *The Message*:

So if you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God. Matthew 5:23-24

Whenever you stand up to pray, you must forgive what others have done to you. Then your Father in heaven will forgive your sins. Mark 11:25

Jesus said: “ Don’t judge others, and God won’t judge you. Don’t be hard on others, and God won’t be hard on you. Forgive others, and God will forgive you. If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated.” Luke 6:37

When you come into the church building to worship, you need to make sure you are reconciled with other believers. The Scriptures are very clear on that. God wants us to be right with our spiritual family before we offer anything to Him. He doesn’t want our money offerings, He doesn’t want our prayers, until we’ve taken care of things in our relationships with others.

Do you have any wrongs that need to be made right? Do you need to forgive anyone? Do you need to ask forgiveness for any actions or words of your own? The Scripture says in Roman 12:18 that as much as it depends on you, you are to live at peace with all men. You need to do your part in each relationship and then God will take care of the other person as He knows is best.



FRIDAY WORSHIP FLATTENS WHEN WE HAVE FALSE GUILT

Read the following Scriptures from *The Promise*:

*None of us know our faults.
Forgive me when I sin without knowing it.
Don't let me do wrong on purpose, Lord,
Or let sin have control over my life.
Then I will be innocent, and
Not guilty of some terrible fault.
Let my words and my thoughts be pleasing to you, Lord
Because you are my mighty rock and my protector.
Psalms 19:12-14*

My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle towards what is ahead. Philippians 3:13-14

Children, you show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely talking about it. When we love others, we know that we belong to the truth, and we feel at ease in the presence of God. But even if we don't feel at ease, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if we feel at ease in the presence of God, we will have the courage to come near him. He will give us whatever we ask, because we obey him and do what pleases Him. 1 John 3:18-24

One of the greatest hindrances to worship is our own sense of inadequacy. Often, Satan will just about paralyze us from stepping out in faith by being an accuser. When you hear the words, "Who do you think you are?" or "Don't you remember last night when you got in that argument?" or "If people only knew who you really are" you can know that these words aren't from God. They might be from Satan or they might be old messages from your past or you might be your own worst enemy but rest assured, they are NOT from God.

Actually, we are inadequate. Actually, we are not worthy. We can't work hard enough for salvation or to be in God's Presence. We should worship knowing full well that we can only do it with God's Power and that according to the Truth of His Word, we are called, we are chosen, we are forgiven, we are complete when we accept Jesus as our Savior and put His robe of righteousness on. Of course, we've got to stay prayed up and confessed up and in a right relationship with God, but when God looks at us as we worship He sees us covered with Christ's robe of righteousness.

If you are troubled by those negative, condemning thoughts then you need to replace them with the Truth of God's Word. Reflect on the following promises:

"God treated them in the same way He treated us. They put their faith in Him, and He made their hearts pure." Acts 15:9

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“If you don’t confess your sins, you will be a failure. But God will be merciful if you confess your sins and give them up.” Proverbs 28:13

“It is never fun to be corrected. In fact, at the time it is always painful. But if we learn to obey by being corrected, we will do right and live at peace. Now stand up straight! Stop your knees from shaking and walk a straight path. Then lame people will be healed, instead of getting worse.” Hebrews 12:11-13

“Israel, you have rejected me, but my anger is gone; I will heal you and love you without limit.” Hosea 14:4

“But if we confess our sins to God, He can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away.” 1 John 1:9



SATURDAY: SHOW ME YOUR GLORY

Read this song written from the viewpoint of Moses. Make this your prayer as well, "God, show me your glory."

I caught a glimpse of Your splendor in the corner of my eye
The most beautiful thing I've ever seen.
And it was like a flash of lightnin' reflected off the sky
And I know I'll never be the same

Show me Your glory
Send down Your presence
I wanna see Your face
Show me Your glory.

When I climb down the mountain and get back to my life
I won't settle for ordinary things
I'm gonna follow You forever for all of my days
I won't rest till I see You again.

Show me Your glory
Send down Your presence
I wanna see Your face
Show me Your glory
Majesty shines about You
And I can't go on without You, Lord.
I can't go on without You, Lord.

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**SUNDAY:
1 KINGS 8:54-61 (The Promise)**

When Solomon finished his prayer at the altar, he was kneeling with his arms lifted toward heaven. He stood up, turned toward the people, blessed them and said loudly: "Praise the Lord! He has kept his promise and given us peace. Every good thing he promised to his servant Moses has happened. The Lord our God was with our ancestors to help them, and I pray that he will be with us and never abandon us. May the Lord help us obey him and follow all the laws and teachings he gave our ancestors. I pray that the Lord our God will remember my prayer day and night. May he help everyone in Israel each day in whatever way we need it. Then every nation will know that the Lord is the only true God. Obey the Lord our God and follow his commands with all your heart just as you are doing today.

I believe this should be our prayer personally, for our worship lifestyle, and for our churches. I pray that these worship keys will allow you to draw near to God and that we may all have the blessing of meeting God in our lives. I pray we would live a "LifeSong" in honor of Jesus Christ our Savior and that like Moses we would have a passion and a cry for God to "show us His Glory."



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