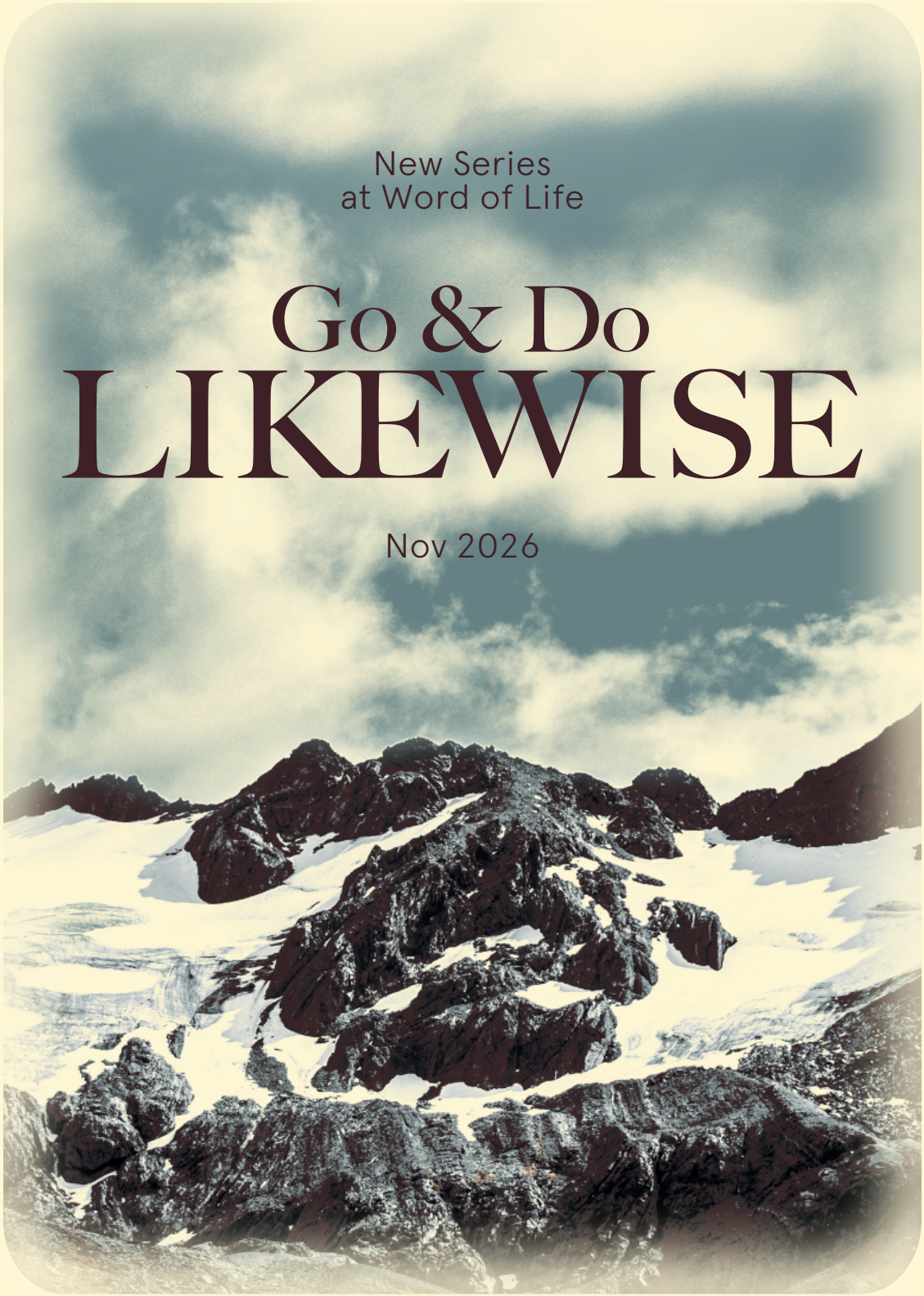
New Series
at Word of Life

Go & Do LIKEWISE

Nov 2026



Week 1:

SEE WHAT OTHERS MISS

Monday	Compassion Starts with the Heart	1
Tuesday	A Heart That Sees	3
Wednesday	Loving with His Love	6
Thursday	Receive It for Yourself	8
Friday	Walk Slowly Through the Crowds	11
Saturday	Compassion Is the Pathway to the Miraculous	13



Monday

COMPASSION STARTS WITH THE HEART

Key Scripture

"Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him."
— Luke 10:33 (NLT)

Devotional

This month, we are focusing on the story of the Good Samaritan. This was a parable Jesus told to teach us valuable lessons. Through these devotionals, we hope to highlight some of the truths Jesus was revealing through this story.

I remember being in children's church as a little girl and hearing this story. I was shocked that people could walk by a man who had been left half dead and do nothing to help him. I was always so touched when we reached the end of the story—that the Good Samaritan stopped for him, saved his life, and brought him to an inn where he could receive the care he needed.

I've often wondered what caused the Good Samaritan to stop while the others passed him by. Were they busy and simply didn't have the time? Were they having a bad day themselves and couldn't bear to help someone else who was hurting? Those things may have been true, but I believe the Lord was showing us something much deeper. I believe He was revealing the difference in the condition of these men's hearts.

The word compassion describes the deep place of our hearts where our affections reside. It can also be defined as "tender mercies." Compassion was the deep response the Good Samaritan had when he saw the wounded man. But notice that the story mentions two other people who also saw him, yet no compassion is mentioned.

When we gave our lives to Christ, we received a new heart. God took our stony hearts and gave us hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). What does that signify? A heart of flesh can feel; a heart of stone cannot. A heart of flesh can be touched. A heart of stone can walk past hurting people, remaining unconcerned and unmoved.

Although we have received a new heart of flesh, we now have a responsibility to guard it. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to "guard your heart, for from it flow all the issues of life." Not some issues—all of them. If we are not watchful over our hearts, there are things that can harden them and cause us to stop feeling.

Years ago, I began learning to play the acoustic guitar. I was so excited to learn my favorite songs and practice new chords. One thing I wasn't expecting was how sensitive my fingers would be to the guitar strings. I felt every bit of it. I couldn't deny the sensitivity. But I soon learned that the more you play, the more you develop something called calluses. A callus is a patch of thick, hardened skin caused by repeated friction or pressure.

Isn't that just how life can be sometimes?

Our hearts begin so loving, so tender, and so full of mercy. Then an offense blindsides us out of nowhere. A family member betrays us, and we never saw it coming. Someone wounds us deeply. If we're not careful, those repeated hurts can create calluses on our hearts. Over time, what was once tender becomes hardened.

The good news is that you are not powerless over the condition of your heart. As Proverbs 4:23 says, you can guard it. You can't always choose what happens to you, but you can choose how you respond to what happens to you. In that response, you can choose mercy. You can choose love. You can choose tenderness.

As you do, you'll become like the Good Samaritan. When you see someone in need, your heart will be moved with compassion.

Reflection Question

Are there any areas of my life where my heart has become hardened?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I surrender my heart to You afresh today. I want to be tenderhearted and compassionate toward those around me. I release every hurt, every wound, and every bit of bitterness I've been holding onto. I choose to do as You did—to pray for my enemies and refuse to harden my heart. Thank You that today my heart is softened once again, tender enough to hear Your voice and follow Your leading. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your life where He wants to soften your heart. Be encouraged—He is not mad at you. He is your ever-present Helper, and He delights in restoring hearts that are fully surrendered to Him.
- Read Proverbs 4:20-23

Tuesday

A HEART THAT SEES

Key Scripture

"By having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the hope to which He has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints (His set-apart ones)."
— Ephesians 1:18 (AMPC)

Devotional

Years ago, my mom and I took a trip to the beach. The water was beautiful, and we even went on a dolphin cruise where we got to see them up close. It was a wonderful trip, and as we were getting ready to leave, we decided to finish it off with Dippin' Dots. After all, what vacation is complete without ice cream?

As I walked up to the counter to order my ice cream, the young man behind the counter caught my attention. I had never met him before, yet compassion suddenly rose up within me. I noticed something about him—or you could say I saw something about him—but not with my natural eyes. He seemed sad, burdened somehow, as though he were carrying a heavy weight.

Did you know your heart has eyes?

In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed that the eyes of the believers' hearts would be enlightened so they could know and understand the hope to which God had called them.

I would love to tell you that I was brave and boldly walked up to him, but the truth is, I was so nervous that I didn't say a word. I simply took my ice cream and went back to the car.

As I sat there, I realized we were about to drive four and a half hours home, and I would most likely never see this man again. I told my mom, "I feel like the Lord wants me to tell him something."

She looked at me and said, "If you don't go back in there, you're going to think about it the whole way home."

I knew she was right.

So I asked the Lord for help and walked back into the store. I wish I could tell you I immediately marched up to the counter, but I chickened out again and hid in the bathroom for a minute. Then God's strength rose up in me, and I finally walked over to him.

I simply looked at him and said, "I don't know if you believe in God, but I really felt like the Lord wanted me to tell you that He loves you."

I wish I could fully explain what happened next.

It was as though a weight lifted off of him—not with my physical eyes, but with the eyes of my heart. To me, it seemed he had been carrying depression or some kind of heaviness. How could I have known that? I couldn't have. But the Lord knew.

His eyes seemed brighter. He looked at me and simply said, "Thank you."

We talked for just a few moments after that, but I've never forgotten that encounter.

I think back to it often. What if I had left without ever speaking to him? I know God wouldn't have been angry with me, but I would have missed a God-ordained opportunity to encourage someone. When your heart is tender, it becomes the perfect place for God to work through you.

Just as you can't plant a garden until the soil has first been tilled, it's difficult for God to get our attention when the ground of our hearts has become hard. But oh, what miracles He can accomplish through someone with a tender heart.

When your heart is tender, your spiritual eyes become open to see the hurting. You'll begin to notice the wounded. You'll stop for the people you once would have walked past without even realizing it.

Just as the Good Samaritan stopped when everyone else passed the beaten man by, you'll begin to stop for the people others overlook.

Your heart will begin to see more clearly the hope of your own calling, and you'll begin helping others discover theirs as well.

What wonderful adventures await when you walk through life with a tender heart and open eyes. You'll begin to see people the way the Father sees them, feel what the Father feels for them, and love them the way the Father loves them.

That is what it means to see with spiritual sight.

Reflection Question

How can I become more aware of the people around me and more sensitive to what God may want to say to them through my life?

Prayer

God, I want to love people the way You love them. I want to see people the way You see them. Thank You for giving me fresh sight. Renew my heart toward Your children. Help me to love with open arms just as You do, so that when people look into my eyes, they see You. Teach me to yield more fully to Your love so You can work through me the way You desire. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Listen to "For the One" by Jenn Johnson.
- Read 1, 2 and 3 John.

Wednesday

LOVING WITH HIS LOVE

Key Scripture

"Such hope [in God's promises] never disappoints us, because God's love ***has been*** *abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*
— Romans 5:5 (AMP)

Devotional

Imagine this: A long-lost family member leaves your name in their will. In that will, they leave you a million dollars and make you the full beneficiary of their estate. There is only one problem—you never read the will.

The inheritance is yours. Your name is on it. It was left specifically for you. But because you don't know what has been made available to you, you never walk in the benefits of it.

The Lord lovingly helped me see one day that this is how many of us live spiritually. Jesus died for us and made us beneficiaries of everything He accomplished through His victory. But if we don't know what has been made available to us, how can we walk in it?

One of the greatest gifts the Lord has given us is His love—His very own love. God's love is so unique and powerful that Scripture uses the word *agape* to describe it.

There are four types of love that are often discussed. *Eros* is romantic love. *Philia* is loyal, brotherly love. *Storge* is familial love. Then there is *agape*—the God kind of love. It is selfless, nurturing, and always seeking the good of others above itself.

The beautiful part is that Romans 5:5 tells us this exact love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit. God has already given us access to His love.

To be honest, I think this is where many of us have missed it. We hear God's commandment to love, and we try to use our own natural, human love to love others. We try to muster up enough strength to "do better"

and "be better," instead of simply yielding to what the Holy Spirit has already placed within us.

We have been given a new heart, and we have the ability to love others with the very love of God.

When you begin to meditate on what has already been made yours through Christ, you will begin to walk in it more freely. Just like the inheritance in the will, if you were trying to earn that million dollars and acquire the estate yourself, it would be impossible. But if it has already been given to you, your response changes. You don't strive for it—you receive it.

That is how it is with God's love.

If you have made Jesus the Lord of your life, His love has been poured into your heart. Now, do you always *feel* that love? No. But feelings are not always an accurate reflection of truth.

Just because you do not feel God's love does not mean you do not have it. God's Word is truth, and Romans 5:5 tells us that His love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

So how do we walk in it?

It becomes easier to access something when we know it has already been made available to us. Reading Scripture about God's love helps us understand what He has given us. As we spend time with Him and yield to the Holy Spirit, we become more aware of His love flowing through us. Praying in the Spirit also helps us stir that love up.

Instead of trying harder, I pray that you begin to yield more to what has already been made yours. It will not be by your might or by your power, but by His Spirit within you (Zechariah 4:6).

So today, yield to His love and allow His love to flow through you to the world around you.

Reflection Question

How can I yield more to the love of God that has already been poured into my heart?

Prayer

Father, open my eyes to see what has already been made available to me through Jesus' sacrifice. No more striving, only surrender. No more straining, only flowing. No more stress, only rest. Teach me to live from my spirit and allow Your love to flow through me more than ever before. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read 1, 2, and 3 John.

Thursday

RECEIVE IT FOR YOURSELF

Key Scripture

"We love, because He first loved us."
— 1 John 4:19 (NASB)

Devotional

As we discussed yesterday, imagine a long-lost family member who left you an inheritance in their will. If you never knew about it, it would be difficult to walk in the benefits of what was already made available to you.

But consider this from another perspective: if you didn't personally know that family member, it may take time to trust that what they said was true. You may have the inheritance, but without a relationship, it could be difficult to fully receive it.

In a similar way, God deeply desires that we love others, but His heart also longs for us to personally know and receive the love He has for us. One of the Scriptures I often pray over my life is found in Ephesians 3:19 (AMPC):

*"That you may really come to know [practically, **through experience for yourselves**] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!"*

The reason I first felt called to ministry was that, around the age of 12, I had a very real and tangible encounter with the love of God. That moment changed everything for me, and I can honestly say I have never been the same since.

That encounter fueled my passion for the Lord for many years, and I still think back to that moment often. But what I didn't realize was that I needed to continually stay refreshed in my heart by His love. I needed to continually meditate on His love for me.

I do this by spending time in Scripture, but I don't want to simply read words on a page. I ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of my heart so that I can truly see His love—not just know about it, but experience the reality of it for myself.

Over time, I began pouring out to others so much, which is a beautiful thing, but I wasn't being replenished at the same rate I was giving out. I began to notice that my heart felt distant. Distant toward God and distant toward His people. I was becoming complacent—not intentionally rejecting Him, but no longer deeply pursuing Him the way I once had. I still loved Him, but life had taken a toll.

Thank God for His goodness that continually draws us back to His heart. One night, while sitting in a service, the Lord reminded me of Revelation 2:4:

"But I have this [charge] against you, that you have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me]."

This was Jesus speaking to the church at Ephesus. He acknowledged all they were doing for Him. They had persevered, endured hardships, and remained faithful to His name. But Jesus was looking deeper. He was looking at the condition of their hearts.

They had lost the depth of love they once carried.

I love that even when Jesus corrects us, He does it with such kindness. His response to them was not condemnation, but an invitation back:

"So remember the heights from which you have fallen, and repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, your sinful behavior—seek God's will] and do the works you did at first ***[when you first knew Me]****." - Revelation 2:5 (AMP)*

"When you first knew Me."

What a powerful reminder.

Knowing Jesus is what fueled their love for Him, and knowing Jesus is also what fuels our love for others. When we truly know Jesus—not just know about Him—it changes the way we love.

Did you know God does not want following His commandments to feel like a burden (1 John 5:3)? He desires for obedience to become a delight. We have been given a new heart, and that heart longs to follow His will.

So, if you have found yourself struggling to walk in love, or struggling to display the fruit of the Spirit, the answer is not simply to try harder. The answer is to spend time in the presence of Jesus.

Knowing Him is what causes your heart to burn again.

I love Luke 24:32. Jesus had risen from the dead, but His identity was still hidden from His disciples. They were walking and talking with Him, but they didn't recognize Him yet. Once their eyes were opened, their response was:

"And they said to one another, 'Were not our hearts greatly moved and ***burning*** *within us while He was talking with us on the road and as He opened and explained to us [the sense of] the Scriptures?'"*

Knowing Jesus. Walking and talking with Him. Experiencing His presence. These are the things that cause our hearts to burn for Him and for others. There is nothing like His presence, and there is no one and nothing that can truly satisfy our hearts except Him.

Following Him was never meant to be a burden.

It was always meant to be a life that burns with love for Him.

Reflection Question

How can I receive more of His love this week?

Prayer

Lord, I want to love the world around me the way You do. But I also want to know the depths of the love You have for me. Open the eyes of my heart so that I can see Your love and experience the wonderful depths of how far-reaching it is. Help me know You more, so that I may burn with passion for You all the days of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Listen to "Closer" by Bethel.
- Read John 15.
- Read 1, 2, and 3 John.

Friday

WALK SLOWLY THROUGH THE CROWDS

Key Scripture

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."
— Matthew 9:36 (NIV)

Devotional

Years ago, I was reading a leadership book, and a quote stood out to me that I have never forgotten. John Maxwell said, **"Walk slowly through the crowds."**

To dive deeper into that thought, he was reminding us that it is easy to become so consumed with our own responsibilities, schedules, and daily lives that we forget we are surrounded by people who are hurting. God cares about everything we have to accomplish, but He will also often invite us to slow down and notice the people He places in our path.

Jesus is our greatest example of this.

In Matthew 9:36, it says, *"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them."*

He saw them.

He truly saw them.

And did you know that He sees you too?

Jesus longs to fellowship with you, spend time with you, and walk with you through every season of your life. He longs to heal the wounds you carry, and then He longs to show you how to help bring that same freedom and healing to others.

When Jesus looked at the crowd, His heart was moved with compassion. His eyes were pure, and His heart was full of love. He saw what the Father saw. He saw people who were hurting, weary, and in need of a Shepherd.

He saw because He took the time to walk slowly through the crowd.

He was never so busy that He missed the heart cries of the people around Him. Even with the many people who came to Him each day, He still saw each person individually. He cared about their stories. He cared about their lives. He cared about their hearts.

And He cares about yours too.

He cares enough to sit with you, listen to your story, and lead you toward healing.

When you walk with someone, you show them that you care. Jesus walked with His disciples for three years. He ate with them, laughed with them, taught them, and ministered to them. He gave them His time because they mattered to Him.

He was never too busy to love others.
And as the Savior of the world, His schedule was certainly full. Yet somehow, He always made room for people.

Sometimes we may have to lay down our own plans and agendas, but God's agenda is always better. Learn to be still and listen to the Holy Spirit. Ask Him where He may be leading you to slow down.

We cannot love everyone at once, but with the Holy Spirit's help, He will show us who He has placed in front of us in this season.

So today, let's choose to walk slowly through the crowds.

Reflection Question

Where in my life have I been moving too fast?
How can I slow down and love others more intentionally?

Prayer

Father, help me slow down and hear from You before I move. Help me see people and not simply pass them by. Teach me to listen to Your voice, even in my conversations with others, so I can recognize what You want to say through me. Give me the boldness to respond when You lead me to encourage someone. Help me walk slowly through the crowds.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read Mark 1:41 (NLT).

Saturday

COMPASSION IS THE PATHWAY TO THE MIRACULOUS

Key Scripture

"And a leper came to Him, begging Him and falling on his knees before Him, saying, "If You are willing, You are able to make me clean." Moved with compassion [for his suffering], Jesus reached out with His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." The leprosy left him immediately and he was cleansed [completely healed and restored to health]."
— Mark 1:40-42 (AMP)

Devotional

Years ago, during a staff meeting, Pastor Joel prayed out a phrase that has stayed with me for over a decade. He said, **"Compassion is the pathway to the miraculous. Jesus was moved with compassion, and miracles followed compassion."**

A pathway provides a route. It connects one point to another and guides a process.

At the heart of why Jesus performed miracles was love. John 3:16 tells us, *"For God so loved the world that He gave..."*

I remember being sick as a child and my dad coming to lay his hand on my head, praying and commanding sickness to leave in the name of Jesus. I remember him telling me that if he could take that sickness from me, he would rather be the one who was sick. His love for me was so great that he would willingly take my pain if he could.

That is only a glimpse of the love Jesus has for us.

Jesus loved you so much that He gave His very life for you. He was bruised so you could be made whole. He endured suffering so you could walk in freedom. He carried the weight of sin, sickness, and brokenness because of His great love for you.

And why did He do it?

All for love.

His love for you.

His compassion became the pathway that opened the door for the miraculous to move in people's lives. Jesus was not content to leave people trapped in their pain. He made a way for them to experience freedom, healing, and restoration.

In Mark 1:40, a man with leprosy came to Jesus, begging Him for healing. He said, *"If You are willing, You are able to make me clean."*

Then Scripture tells us that Jesus was moved with compassion
"for his suffering."

Sickness and suffering were not things Jesus looked at with indifference. They moved His heart.

The NIV translation says Jesus was "indignant." The word *indignant* means feeling or showing anger because something is unfair, wrong, or unjust.

Was Jesus angry with the man?

No.

He was moved with righteous anger toward the sickness and suffering that had brought pain into this man's life.

Jesus loves us too much to be content with seeing us remain bound, broken, or hurting. His compassion moved Him to the cross, where He made a way for us to experience new life, freedom from sin, and restoration through Him.

As you spend time with Jesus and discover more of His heart toward you, that same compassion will begin to rise within you for others. Your heart will be moved to action. You will begin to see people the way He sees them and love them the way He loves them.

His compassion becomes the pathway for the miraculous to move into people's lives.

Reflection Question

Who do you have in your life that you feel a great sense of compassion toward? Ask the Lord what He would have you do for them.

Prayer

Lord, help me be a vessel of Your compassion to a lost and hurting world. Let Your compassion flow through me so powerfully that signs, wonders, and miracles follow my life. Let Your love and mercy pour out of me and bring healing, hope, and freedom to those who need it.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Listen to "All for Love" by Hillsong.

Sunday

SERMON NOTES

Week 2:

COMPASSION THAT MOVES

Monday	Compassion Begins with Seeing	19
Tuesday	Compassion Interrupts Convenience	21
Wednesday	Compassion Gets Close	23
Thursday	Compassion Gives What it Has	25
Friday	Compassion Creates Places of Restoration	27
Saturday	Go and Do Likewise	29



Monday

COMPASSION BEGINS WITH SEEING

Key Scripture

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he encountered robbers, who stripped him of his clothes [and belongings], beat him, and went their way [unconcerned], leaving him half dead. Now by coincidence a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also came down to the place and saw him, and passed by on the other side [of the road]. But a Samaritan (foreigner), who was traveling, came upon him; and when he saw him, he was deeply moved with compassion [for him]..."

— Luke 10:30-33 (AMP)

Devotional

Recently, I went on a trip where everyone seemed to know everyone – except me. It was a familiar place, but one that carried memories I had never fully processed. I had unintentionally tucked those emotions away, hoping they would stay buried. But sometimes God brings us back to places not to reopen wounds, but to bring healing.

As the week unfolded, I found myself praying a simple, honest prayer: *Holy Spirit, do You see me?*

Maybe you've prayed a prayer like that before. Not because you doubted God, but because you felt overlooked. Forgotten. Like everyone else belonged while you stood on the outside looking in.

By the end of the week, I didn't just know the answer — I had experienced it.

He is **El Roi**, the God who sees.

Throughout Scripture, God has always been attentive to the overlooked. He saw Hagar in the wilderness. He saw the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus saw the crowds, the blind, the grieving, and the forgotten. Our God is never too busy or too distracted to notice His children.

What's remarkable is that He often chooses to remind us that we're seen through the compassion of His people.

As I looked back over the week, I realized something beautiful had happened. Several people paused long enough to check on me. They asked how I was doing. They prayed with me. They sat with me. They may not have known my whole story, but they noticed something beneath the surface and chose not to keep walking.

They saw, and they stopped.

That's exactly what we find in our key passage. The priest saw the wounded man. The Levite saw the wounded man. The Samaritan saw him too. The difference wasn't their eyesight; it was their response. The Samaritan allowed what he saw to move his heart, and his compassion became action.

How often do we see people without really seeing them? We pass coworkers, neighbors, church members, and even family carrying burdens we know nothing about. We can be so focused on our schedules, our responsibilities, or our destinations that we miss the very people God has placed directly in our path.

Compassion begins when we allow God to open our eyes to people instead of rushing past them. Today, ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes that see beyond appearances. You may never know someone's whole story, but you don't have to know every detail. That's where compassion begins — seeing.

The same God who sees you is inviting you to become someone who helps others feel seen.

Reflection Question

Is there anybody that I have overlooked that I need to see the way the Samaritan saw the wounded man and the way God sees us?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for seeing me and loving me so completely. Open my eyes to truly see the people You place in front of me, and give me a heart that is moved with compassion. Help me to slow down, stop, and love others the way You have loved me, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read Genesis 16:13
- Read John 4:5-40
- Read Matthew 9:35-38

Tuesday

COMPASSION INTERRUPTS CONVENIENCE

Key Scripture

But a Samaritan (foreigner), who was traveling, came upon him; and when he saw him, he was deeply moved with compassion [for him], and went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]
— Luke 10:33–34a (AMP)

Devotional

Yesterday we read that seeing is where compassion begins. The priest saw, the Levite saw, and the Samaritan saw — *and stopped*.

Compassion begins with seeing, but it doesn't end there. Before the Samaritan ever gave his money, he gave something else. He gave his time, his attention, his comfort, and his energy. Love in action almost always costs us something. It requires us to slow down, make room, and be willing to let our plans be interrupted.

Isn't that how Jesus lived?

In Mark 5, Jesus was on His way to heal Jairus' daughter when a woman who had suffered for twelve years reached out and touched the hem of His garment. Jesus could have kept walking. After all, He was on an urgent mission. Instead, He stopped. He looked for her. He spoke to her. He gave her more than physical healing – He restored her dignity by calling her "Daughter."

What looked like an interruption was actually an opportunity for compassion.

How often do we miss opportunities for compassion because we're so focused on what's next? Our calendars tell us where we need to be, and our watches remind us when it's time to get there. We move from meeting to meeting, errand to errand, and conversation to conversation, often leaving little room for the Holy Spirit to interrupt our plans. Yet some of the most impactful moments of ministry aren't found on our schedules – they're found in the unexpected pauses where God invites us to stop and love the person in front of us.

Most of us won't encounter someone lying on the side of the road today. Our opportunities for compassion are often much quieter. They're found in the coworker who lingers after a meeting, the friend who says, "I'm fine," but doesn't seem to be, the cashier who looks exhausted, or the neighbor you've been meaning to check on. These moments rarely announce themselves as ministry opportunities. More often, they look like interruptions to our carefully planned day. What if the interruptions we try to avoid are actually divine appointments? What if God is less concerned with how much we accomplish in a day and more concerned with how faithfully we love the people He places in our path?

Jesus never treated people as distractions from His mission because people were His mission. Everywhere He went, He made room for the hurting, the overlooked, and the forgotten. As His followers, we're invited to live with that same posture — holding our schedules loosely enough that when compassion calls, we're willing to stop.

Today, let's ask God to make us available. The interruption we didn't expect may be the very person He's asking us to love. May we be people who stop when everyone and everything else keeps moving.

Reflection Question

Is there something I may be viewing as an inconvenience that God is saying is an opportunity?

Prayer

Lord, help me to see the moments I often dismiss as inconveniences or interruptions through Your eyes. Change my perspective so that I recognize them as opportunities to love, serve, and exemplify Your compassion. Give me a heart that is willing to slow down, make room for others, and follow wherever You lead. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read Mark 5:25-34
- Read Philippians 2:3-5

Wednesday

COMPASSION GETS CLOSE

Key Scripture

"And went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him."
— Luke 10:34 (AMP)

Devotional

One of the greatest gifts you can give someone isn't the perfect words or the perfect solution — it's your presence.

The Samaritan reminds us that compassion doesn't stop at noticing someone's pain. It moves closer. He didn't simply pause his journey; he crossed the road, knelt beside the wounded man, and bandaged his wounds.

We live in a world that often encourages us to keep a comfortable distance, much like the priest and the Levite did. We can scroll past someone's pain, leave a comment or send a text that says, "praying for you," or assume someone else will step in (which may have been the priest's and Levite's exact thoughts). While those things have their place, the Samaritan — and ultimately Jesus — modeled something much deeper. They drew near. They entered into the pain of others instead of observing it from a distance.

I remember being a little girl after a very traumatic day. I sat alone in our music room, staring out a large window as rain streamed down the glass, crying silent tears. My grandmother walked into the house, found me there, wrapped her arms around me, cried with me, and quietly whispered, "Lord, help us."

She didn't have all the answers that day. She couldn't immediately change what was happening. But she did something I haven't forgotten — she came close. In the middle of a messy, complicated situation, she met me where I was, and her presence reminded me that I didn't have to walk through it alone.

That's what compassion does. It doesn't always remove the hurt, but it doesn't let someone suffer in isolation. Sometimes we don't have to have the right words — we simply have to show up, sit beside someone, and remind them they are not alone.

The Samaritan got close, and he got messy. There was blood and dirt, and still he knelt beside the wounded man and touched his wounds. What a beautiful picture of Jesus.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus consistently moved toward people. He touched the leper while everyone else kept their distance. He defended the woman everyone wanted to stone. He invited Himself into Zacchaeus' home when no one else wanted to be associated with him. He stopped for Bartimaeus when the crowd told him to be quiet. He wept with Mary and Martha before raising Lazarus. Again and again, Jesus showed us that compassion isn't afraid to get close.

The greatest expression of that compassion was the cross. Jesus didn't remain distant from our brokenness — He stepped into it. He took on our sin, carried our shame, and met us in our deepest need so that we could be made whole. Because He first drew near to us, we can now draw near to others.

As His followers, we're called to reflect that same heart. We may not always have the perfect words or the power to change someone's circumstances, but we can offer what Jesus so often offered: our presence. Sometimes the most powerful act of compassion is simply choosing to move toward someone instead of keeping our distance.

Reflection Question

Is there someone whose burden I need to step into instead of observing from afar?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for never keeping Your distance from me. Thank You for meeting me in my brokenness and loving me right where I was, and loving me enough to not leave me there. Give me the courage to move toward those who are hurting, even when it's uncomfortable. Help me to see, stop and be present, to love well, and to reflect Your compassion to everyone You place in my path. Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Mark 1:40-42
- John 8:1-11
- Luke 19:1-10
- Mark 10:46-52
- John 11

Thursday

COMPASSION GIVES WHAT IT HAS

Key Scripture

"...and went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii (two days' wages) and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I return."

— Luke 10:34-35 (AMP)

Devotional

Have you ever felt like you didn't have enough to offer someone? Maybe you wanted to help, but all you could think about was what you lacked – enough money, enough wisdom, enough time, or even the right words. It's easy to believe that if we had just a little more, we could actually help. But throughout Scripture, God reminds us that He isn't limited by what we lack. He simply asks us to surrender what we've already been given.

The Samaritan never stopped to take inventory of what he wished he had; he simply reached for what was already in his grasp – oil, wine, and bandages. The compassion that moved him to act wasn't measured by the resources he had or didn't have, but by his willingness to use them. He didn't wait until he was better equipped. He simply offered what he had in that moment, and God used it to begin someone's healing.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus rarely asked people to bring Him what they didn't have. Instead, He often asked them to surrender what they did have. Five loaves and two fish. Empty water jars. A willing boat. Again and again, God demonstrated that He specializes in multiplying surrendered resources.

The same is true for us today. We often believe we need to have all the answers before we can help someone, but sometimes what people need most isn't our expertise — it's our availability. A meal dropped off at someone's door. A handwritten note of encouragement. An hour spent listening. A ride to an appointment. A prayer spoken in faith.

Sometimes, what we have to offer isn't something we can hold in our hands at all. As we spend time with the Lord, the Holy Spirit faithfully reminds us of God's Word and gently prompts us toward people who need encouragement. He may bring a specific person to mind, impress a Scripture on our hearts, or nudge us to send a text, make a phone call, or speak a timely word of hope. Those moments are not interruptions — they are invitations to join God in what He is already doing. We don't have to come up with the perfect words. We simply need to be attentive to His voice and willing to respond.

What may seem small in our hands becomes significant when placed in God's hands. God delights in using ordinary people who are available to Him.

Don't let what you don't have keep you from using what you do have. God isn't asking you to meet every need you encounter. Like the Samaritan, we are simply called to stop, notice, and offer what God has already placed in our hands. As compassion leads, the Holy Spirit guides, and surrender follows, God can accomplish far more than we ever could on our own.

Reflection Question

What has God already given me that I can offer someone today?

Prayer

Jesus, help me to stop focusing on what I lack and trust You with what You've already placed in my hands. Give me a heart of compassion, ears that are attentive to the Holy Spirit, and the courage to respond when You call me to someone. Use my simple acts of obedience to bring Your hope, love, and healing to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Acts 3:1-8
- John 6:1-13

Friday

COMPASSION CREATES PLACES OF RESTORATION

Key Scripture

"...and went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii (two days' wages) and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I return."

— Luke 10:34-35 (AMP)

Devotional

I've learned that some of the greatest healing in my life didn't happen in a single moment – it happened because someone kept showing up.

Restoration usually isn't dramatic. It's built through repeated acts of faithfulness. A friend who keeps checking in. A church that continues to pray. A mentor who keeps making time. A family member who refuses to give up. Healing often grows in places where people choose to remain.

For me, it was one pastor who saw beyond the surface and chose not to walk away. She sought me out, patiently walked with me through counseling, and became one of the people God used to begin healing wounds that had been open for years. Looking back, I realize my healing wasn't the result of one conversation — it was the fruit of someone faithfully showing up again and again.

The Good Samaritan understood that kind of compassion. After cleaning the wounded man's injuries with oil and wine and bandaging them, he didn't leave him on the side of the road with a few words of encouragement. He lifted the man onto his own animal, brought him to an inn, stayed with him, and paid for his continued care. The Samaritan knew that while rescue can happen in a moment, restoration often takes time.

That kind of compassion reflects the very nature of God's love. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reminds us that love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" and that "love never fails." Biblical love

doesn't walk away when healing takes longer than expected. It doesn't lose hope when progress seems slow. Love remains. It keeps praying, keeps encouraging, keeps believing that God is still at work even when we can't yet see the outcome.

Isn't that how God has loved us? He has never abandoned us in the middle of our healing. His love is patient with our growth, faithful in our failures, and steadfast through every season. While He certainly has the power to heal instantly, He often chooses to restore us little by little. He heals layer by layer, teaching us to trust Him as He gently mends places that have been broken for years. His goal isn't simply to get us through the crisis but to make us whole. As we become more like Christ, we're invited to reflect that same enduring love to others.

Sometimes the greatest act of compassion isn't doing something extraordinary – it's choosing not to give up on someone. It is continuing to show up, continuing to pray, continuing to love, and trusting God to bring restoration in His perfect time.

As followers of Jesus, we're invited to reflect that same kind of compassion. Sometimes God uses us to meet an immediate need, but other times He invites us into the slower work of walking alongside someone as they heal. That kind of compassion requires patience. It chooses to check in again, pray again, encourage again, and show up again. It understands that healing rarely follows our timeline, and love doesn't give up when progress feels slow.

The Samaritan didn't just rescue a wounded man – he created a place where healing could continue. What if God is inviting us to do the same? Our homes, our churches, our small groups, and even our everyday conversations can become places where people encounter the grace, truth, and steady presence of Christ. Compassion doesn't just respond to pain; it creates space for restoration.

Reflection Question

Is there someone God is inviting me to walk alongside, creating space for restoration instead of expecting instant healing?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your patient and faithful love that never gives up on me. Help me to reflect that same compassion by faithfully showing up for others and creating places where they feel safe, seen, and loved. Give me the patience to trust Your timing, the courage to walk alongside those who are hurting, and the wisdom to point them to You, the One who brings true restoration. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (AMP)
- Galatians 6:1-2
- Ephesians 4:15-16

Saturday

GO AND DO LIKEWISE

Key Scripture

Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbor to the man who encountered the robbers?" He answered, "The one who showed compassion and mercy to him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and constantly do the same."

— Luke 10:36-37 (AMP)

Devotional

This week we've watched compassion unfold one step at a time. It begins with seeing. It allows itself to be interrupted. It draws near instead of keeping its distance. It offers what it has instead of focusing on what it lacks. And it creates places where restoration can begin.

Taken individually, these may seem like small acts. But together, they paint a picture of the heart of Jesus. Compassion isn't simply something we do from time to time; it's the posture of a life that has been transformed by the love of Christ. Every act of compassion, no matter how ordinary it seems, reflects the heart of our Savior.

It's one thing to read the story of the Good Samaritan. It's another thing to realize Jesus intended for us to become part of it.
When Jesus finished telling the parable, He simply said, "Go and do likewise." The story was never meant to end with admiration. It was always meant to lead to imitation.

The Samaritan wasn't simply the hero of the story. He pointed us to the greater Samaritan – Jesus Himself. We were the ones wounded and

helpless because of sin, unable to save ourselves. Jesus crossed the distance that separated us from the Father. He met us in our brokenness, bound up our wounds, paid a debt we could never repay, and made a way for us to be restored to God. His compassion didn't just rescue us; it completely transformed our future.

Now, having received that kind of mercy, we're called to extend it to others. We don't love people so that God will love us — we love because He first loved us. His compassion becomes the source of our compassion. As we abide in Him, the Holy Spirit shapes our hearts to see people the way He sees them and to love them the way He loves them.

Every day we have a choice. We can rush past people, consumed by our own agendas, or we can become the kind of neighbor Jesus described. We don't have to change the whole world. We simply have to be faithful to love the person God places in front of us today.

So wherever God leads you, carry His heart with you. See people. Stop for people. Draw near to people. Give what you have. Help create places where healing and restoration can begin. As you do, may others catch a glimpse of Jesus through your compassion, and may your life become a living reflection of the One who first showed compassion to you.
Go and do the same.

Reflection Question

Which step of compassion: seeing, stopping, drawing near, giving, or creating space for restoration, is God asking me to grow in? As I go about my week, how is Jesus inviting me to "go and do likewise"?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for showing me compassion when I needed it most. As I go today, help me reflect Your heart in the way I see, love, and serve the people around me. Fill me with Your Spirit, make me attentive to the needs of others, and give me the courage to follow wherever You lead. May my life point others to You as I go and do likewise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 5:14-16
- Colossians 3:12-17

Sunday

SERMON NOTES



Week 3:

OIL, WINE, AND POWER

Monday	You Carry Something	35
Tuesday	Be the Bandage	39
Wednesday	Title	42
Thursday	Wine That Washes	46
Friday	Power That Heals	50
Saturday	When the Power Runs Out	53

Monday

YOU CARRY SOMETHING

Key Scripture

And went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
— Luke 10:34 (NASB)

Devotional

My mom used to carry everything in her purse...like enough to make Mary Poppins blush.

As a kid, I would watch in awe as I asked for something...anything.
Then Mom's eyes would widen with joyful illumination as she uttered one of the most common phrases of my childhood – "I think I have some in my purse!"

Of course she did. She carried everything.
Mom always knew what she had, and she was ready to dive down to the depths, with two hands (!), to get it for you.

I'm sure the Good Samaritan didn't have loose cassette tapes and old church bulletins in his purse (er, manbag) like my mom, but when he saw the wounded man, he reached in nonetheless, and pulled out what he had.

Have you ever wondered why he didn't just immediately take the man to the inn? Clearly, the inn had what was needed to care for the man.
But the Good Samaritan knew that **healing started with him.**

Luke tells us another interesting detail:
The Good Samaritan was on a journey. Travelers on a journey often carried basic provisions, and it just so happened that this Samaritan had exactly what the wounded man needed: oil, wine, and bandages for wounds.

Perhaps experience had taught him to pack those things. Maybe he had suffered a few wounds of his own along the way. Whatever the reason,

when the moment came, he didn't focus on what he lacked.
He reached for what he knew he carried.

Now we arrive at the question we always ask when reading scripture:
What about you?
What do you carry?
Do you know?

Maybe it's not a mom purse or a manbag...but friend, if you are a child of God–your bag is full! If you are going to cross the road and help the hurting, you need to know that you carry three things that can heal:

1. God's Presence
2. God's Word
3. Your testimony

Here's the key — each of these isn't limited to one job. God's Spirit, God's Word, and your testimony can each act as oil to comfort, wine to cleanse, or power to heal. We're going to talk this week about how God has equipped you with these gifts to use like the Samaritan to care for those around you. But first, you must know what they are!

First, you carry **God's presence.**

You need to know that God didn't just come to save you...**He came to save AND fill you with His Holy Spirit!** He took a life broken by sin and made it a holy dwelling place for His Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).

You now carry the presence of God into every room, every conversation, and every roadside encounter.

And 1 Corinthians 12:7 says that the Spirit's manifestation in your life is given "for the common good." In other words, God's presence in you is meant to become God's help through you.

When you KNOW that you know you have the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead INSIDE of you (Romans 8:11)... wow.
You'll be as bold as Peter and John in Acts 3:6.

When they saw a similar hurting man in need, they said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene–walk!" And he did!

The **second** thing you need to know that you carry is **God's Word.**
Proverbs 4:22 says God's words are "life to those who find them and healing to all their body."

More than people need your advice, they need God's Word.
Psalm 107:20 says that God "sent His Word and healed them, and saved them from their destruction."

God's Words carry life and healing!

Paul had to remind Timothy that he had everything he needed in the scriptures:

> "All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17)."

The Word of God that you carry inside of you equips you to go and DO good works!

If you have been feeling like you lack what you need, I have no higher recommendation for you than to dive into God's Word!

God wants you to be FULLY EQUIPPED!
So open the Word. Take it into your heart.
Let it fill your mind and come out of your mouth.
God wants you fully equipped!

The **third** thing that you carry packs quite the punch–**your testimony.**
In Revelation 12:11, when John describes the saints overcoming Satan, he mentions two devastating weapons that were used to defeat the enemy.
One was the blood of the Lamb–Jesus. Makes sense!

The second weapon is "the word of their testimony–that "their" is YOU!"
Whoa.

Like the Samaritan, you've been on some journeys where you may have been beaten up too. So when you open your mouth to testify about what God has done for you, it drives away the enemy, not just in your life, but in the lives of those around you.

God will take the pain of your past and turn it into a history that heals.

Listen and remember this:
The enemy can't take any of these things away from you–God's Spirit, His Word and your testimony...
But he can try to distract and discourage you so that you forget you have them.

Let compassion rise up in you today for the lost and broken on the side of the road.

Renew your commitment to remember what you carry.
And ask God to show you somebody that you can cross the road and bring healing to, in Jesus' name.

Your bag is full. Reach in. Cross the road. And give what you have—in Jesus' name. You got this.

Reflection Question

What has God placed inside you that someone around you may need today—His presence through prayer, His Word through encouragement, or your testimony of what He has done? Who might God be inviting you to cross the road for?

Prayer

Father, thank You for giving me everything I need to serve the people around me. You have filled me with Your Spirit, equipped me with Your Word, and given me a testimony of Your faithfulness. Forgive me for the times I have focused on what I lack and forgotten what I carry. Open my eyes to the hurting people along my path today. Let compassion rise within me, give me courage to cross the road, and show me how to offer what You have placed inside me. Use my hands, my words, and my story to bring Your healing and hope to someone else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Before the day ends, intentionally offer one thing you carry — a prayer, encouragement, testimony, skill, or practical act of help — to someone who needs it.
- Read **Acts 1:8** — The Holy Spirit comes upon you to show people what Jesus is like!
- Read **1 Corinthians 12:7** — The Holy Spirit wants to move through you to show goodness to others.
- Read **2 Corinthians 4:7** — The Holy Spirit is like a treasure that shines through you to glorify God.
- Read **John 7:37-38** — The Holy Spirit is like a river that brings life to you and those around you.
- Read **Ephesians 5:18-19** — The Holy Spirit wants to speak through you to strengthen and encourage others.

Tuesday

BE THE BANDAGE

Key Scripture

But a Samaritan (foreigner), who was traveling, came upon him; and when he saw him, he was deeply moved with compassion [for him], [34] and went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
— Luke 10:33-34

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord anointed me to bring good news to the humble; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim release to captives and freedom to prisoners;
— Isaiah 61:1 (NASB)

Devotional

Before any sin, pandemics, tornados or wars were in the world, there was one thing God said was not good... loneliness.

God created Adam with His own hands, perfectly and wonderfully.
He placed Adam in a perfect garden where God would fellowship with him daily with His perfect presence.

Still, astonishingly, something was missing.
Turns out, that "something" was actually a "someone"–a physically present companion–to complete God's perfect design for creation.
So God gave him Eve.

The battered man in Luke 10 was in quite the opposite of a perfect garden. Not only was he robbed, beaten, and left for dead – he was alone.
He needed a neighbor!

The Jews had always defined "neighbor" around ethnic and religious boundaries so that the "love your neighbor" commandment was as low as it could be. Through this parable, however, Jesus brilliantly redefines the word "neighbor" to be someone who crosses those boundaries to show mercy.

There, on a dusty road with no perfect garden in sight, a Samaritan crossed the boundary and showed mercy to a Jew, his ethnic enemy.

We know from the garden that the first bandage the Samaritan applied wasn't simply a piece of cloth - it was his presence. **He not only applied the bandage–he WAS the bandage.**

Research on physical presence and touch consistently shows it accelerates healing. **The healing began when the Samaritan arrived.**

Maybe you have hurting people around you, but you aren't sure how to help. Be sure of this–**your presence matters.**

And as a child of God, you don't just bring your presence, you bring His! We can't heal in and of ourselves, but we can help stop the bleeding so that He can start the healing.

Just like a bandage protects wounds from invading bacteria, God gives us relationships to wrap around us as a form of protection. God's presence does the same. In Psalm 139:5, David testifies about God's presence, "You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me." That's the language of protection and healing.

Finally, wounds require the pressure of physical touch to stop the bleeding. God can use your presence to stop somebody's bleeding.
Better yet, God can release His presence through you to heal the wound! Just like the woman with the issue of blood in Mark 5, just believing in Jesus at a distance wasn't enough–she needed His physical presence and touch! Jesus couldn't just send prayers from heaven to free us from sin and heal our bodies.

He had to physically come near.

Isaiah 61:1 tells us why He came:

> "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
> Because the Lord anointed me
> To bring good news to the humble;
> He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
> To proclaim release to captives
> And freedom to prisoners"

Now that we've received His nearness, we are called to go be "neighbors" and extend mercy to those around us in need.

There is healing power in physical presence.
Go start the healing in somebody's life with your presence.
You'll open the door for God to finish the healing with His!
Go be the bandage!

Reflection Question

Who do you know who's isolated right now — not necessarily in crisis, just alone — who needs your presence more than your advice? And what's kept you at a distance: busyness, not knowing what to say, or not realizing that just showing up is enough?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for not loving me from a distance. You came near, entered my pain, and bound up my wounds. Open my eyes to the people around me who are hurting and alone. Give me the courage to cross the distance and become their neighbor. Let Your healing presence be felt through mine. Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Before the day ends, go sit with someone in person — no fixing, no advice needed, just your presence — and trust that showing up is its own kind of healing.
- Read **Genesis 2:18** — "It is not good for man to be alone." Presence was part of God's design before sin ever entered the picture.
- Read **Exodus 33:14** — "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Presence isn't just comfort, it's what carries you.
- Read **Hebrews 13:5** — "I will never leave you nor forsake you." The promise behind every act of showing up.
- Read **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** — God comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others with the same comfort we've received.
- Read The Wounded Healer by Henri Nouwen.

Wednesday

THE MERCY THAT HEALS

Key Scripture

And went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
— Luke 10:34 (NASB)

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much.
— James 5:14-16

Devotional

My heart was beating so loudly that I wasn't sure if I would be able to hear the voice on the other end of the phone.

"Hello?"

The dreaded moment was here.

That morning during our weekly prayer service at Bible College, I had been on my knees asking God to show me any unrighteousness that He wanted to cleanse. Dangerous prayer!

In the next moments, He began to peel back some layers of shame until it revealed a wound.

Where there is shame, there's usually a wound.

I had been hiding the wound so nobody could hurt it. But what I hadn't realized is I had been hiding it from God, who wanted to heal it.

This wound happened in a classroom.

It was fall in my senior year of college. I had worked towards medical school for 3 years before realizing that deep down I didn't want to be a doctor. There I was, in a spiritual valley, with no direction, battling depression.

But I still had an insanely difficult test to take that day, with one of the hardest professors at the university.

I made a B, which happened to be the same grade as the person seated right next to me.

Turns out she didn't cover her paper very well.

Yep. I cheated.

While protecting a wound on my GPA, I actually opened up a gash in my soul.

That's the trick of sin. We think we're avoiding pain on the outside, but we're causing even greater damage on the inside.

But thank God, the "Shepherd of my soul," wanted to lead me into healing (1 Peter 2:25).

But that meant a phone call.

Right after the professor said hello, I unloaded it all. It came pouring out, and I felt myself getting lighter and lighter as I talked. It was like all of the poison was leaving the wound. I had already graduated by that time, but I knew that he could revoke my diploma. I pushed back those thoughts because the healing I was experiencing in this moment was worth it.

I finally finished, bracing myself for the reply.
But to my amazement — he forgave me.

I learned a lot that day about the power of mercy. It wasn't just about the professor's mercy, although that was restorative as well, but I was marked that day by the mercy of God.

God had every right as a just God to punish that sin.

Yet, He chose to come pour the oil of mercy into that wound to heal and restore me in a way that was worth any earthly consequence.
We have been forgiven much — our sin put the Son of God on a cross.

But God, "who is rich in mercy...made us alive with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5).
In doing so, God not only freed us from the eternal bondage of sin, but He presently heals us from the ongoing effects of sin. His healing comes in the form of His living and active Word, according to Hebrews, and His abiding Holy Spirit (Hebrews 4:12).

God's Word and Spirit, among many uses, are like oil in the ancient world that people would pour into wounds to soothe and bring healing. This is the active mercy of God in our lives.

But God's Word and Spirit are not just oil for our lives.
They are the oil that we carry for others.

James tells us to "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16, NLT).

God often brings His healing into our lives through other people. That means the people around you have the potential to wound you — but, through Christ, they also have tremendous power to help you heal.

This is what Jesus points to in Luke 10. The Samaritan saw a wounded man, moved toward him in mercy, and poured oil into his wounds. Then Jesus said, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

In the ancient world, oil was used to soothe and protect wounds. It gives us a beautiful picture of the active mercy of God, ministered to us through His Word and His Spirit.

But the oil is not only for you.

God comforts you so that His comfort can flow through you.
God speaks truth to you so that you can speak truth to others.
God pours mercy into your wounds so that you can pour mercy into theirs.

That is the gospel:
Our sin put the Son of God on the cross, yet through that very cross, we received mercy. God made us alive with Christ, filled us with His Spirit, and continues healing and renewing us through His Word.

Now that this healing oil is in your hands, how could you keep it to yourself?
Text a friend a verse for the painful season they're walking through.
Pray for the coworker God keeps bringing to your heart.

Keep butting heads with someone? Take them to lunch and listen for the wound underneath the fight.

Sit with someone who has just received a diagnosis.

You carry the presence of the Comforter. Let Him use your presence, your prayers, and your words to soothe someone's soul.

You received mercy. Now carry mercy.

Now, go and do likewise.

Reflection Question

Is there a wound you've been hiding out of shame, afraid that bringing it into the light would mean judgment instead of healing? And who in your life is carrying a wound right now that only your mercy — not your advice, not your silence — can reach?

Prayer

Father, thank You for being the Shepherd who goes after what's hidden instead of leaving it buried. Thank You that You don't wait for me to clean myself up before You come near — You come with oil in Your hands, ready to heal what shame has kept in the dark. Forgive me for the wounds I've protected instead of surrendering to You. Give me the courage to bring what's hidden into the light, the way healing requires. And once I've received Your mercy, don't let it stop with me — give me eyes to see who around me needs that same oil poured out, and the courage to pour it. I received mercy I didn't deserve. Let me carry it to someone who needs it today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read **Psalm 32:3–5** — David on what silence costs the body and soul, and what confession releases.
- Read **Proverbs 28:13** — God has mercy ready for those who bring sin to light.
- Read **1 John 1:9** — God's faithfulness to forgive is tied directly to our willingness to confess.
- Read **Luke 15:20–24** — the father who runs before the son even finishes his confession.
- Read **What's So Amazing About Grace?** by Philip Yancey

Thursday

WINE THAT WASHES

Key Scripture

And went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
— Luke 10:34 (NASB)

But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.
— 1 John 1:7 (NASB)

Devotional

"Time heals all wounds...but not the ones you leave infected." – Laura Steven

As a kid, I never feared a knee scrape. I always feared what came after the knee scrape.

I dreaded the moment — leg hoisted over the kitchen sink, gaping wound filled with blood and dirt, and my mom...with one hand holding a cotton ball and the other holding a bottle of liquid pain — AKA hydrogen peroxide.

What a rollercoaster of sensations those 5 seconds brought!
"Hey that feels kinda good"...
"OUCH, THAT STINGS!!"
"Oh look, bubbles!"

The Samaritan didn't have peroxide, but he did have wine.

Travelers would carry wine for several reasons, one of which was to act as a cleansing agent. The Samaritan used what he carried to wash away the blood and dirt that could lead to infection.

Why was that important?
Because infection is always more dangerous than the cut itself.

Nobody goes through life without scrapes and cuts.

Jesus promised us in John 16:33, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Sin sent this world on a downward tailspin into brokenness. As believers, we've been rescued from the literal fall into destruction and are heading upward, towards a heavenly hope of perfect peace. Hallelujah.

But as we go against the current of the world, there are plenty of wounds along the way.

Some are just life circumstances that come from injustice, greed, lust, and selfishness. The worst kind are from people close to us — betrayal, gossip, and jealousy.

Those are the kind that leave you on the side of the road crying out for help.

Thankfully, God has not left us empty-handed when someone needs healing. As we talked about on Day 1, God has equipped you with His Spirit, His Word, and your testimony to bring oil (comfort, peace), wine (cleansing, protection), and power (healing, restoration) to those around you.

Today, let's talk about the wine that washes out wounds.

If life, people, and yes, friends, sometimes cause us wounds, the enemy wants to infect those wounds with lies. And like we said–infection is way more dangerous than the wound.

Remember this: the wound of someone hurting you isn't what will kill you–it's the lie that you believe that will kill you.

It's not the diagnosis that will kill you–it's believing that God wants you to have that cancer to teach you something (LIE!)
It's not losing your job that will ruin your life–it's believing that God is punishing you for not going to church as much as you should. (LIE!)
It's not your child running away that will throw you into depression–it's believing that God doesn't care as much about your kids as you do. (LIE!)

Thankfully, we are fully equipped to fight that infection!
Remember from Day 1 about the 3 things you carry?

First, you have the wine of the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13) to wash out all of those lies. As you cross the road and come near the wounded, the Holy Spirit will help you recognize the lies that they are believing.

Second, the Holy Spirit will lead you to pull out your other tool–God's Word! The only thing that will wash out that lie is TRUTH! 2 Corinthians 10:5 says to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

If it doesn't line up with who Jesus is and who He says you are–it's dirt that has to go!

The third thing you have is your testimony. Do you have a story of how God healed you from pain or mistreatment? Stories make the best disinfectants. Know this: you always have the story of how Jesus took a spear to His heart to take on the heartaches we would experience.

Isaiah 53:5 says:

> "But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed."

After all, wine in the New Testament represents the blood of Jesus poured out for our healing. Pouring in that truth will heal every wound.

Just a warning, though: it might sting.
Truth can be painful.
When you're hurting, it can feel good to hold on to offense and bitterness.
But don't take that bait.
What feels good in the moment can kill you over time.

When others are hurting, giving them time and space is important.
But friends don't let friends get infected. God will have you "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). That might feel painful in the moment, but it will bring healing in the end.

Take a moment and think of somebody fighting off an infection in your life.
What truth might God be asking you to pour over that wound?
Or what wounds need to be treated with truth in your life?

You carry wine that washes.
You have truth that treats.
Let the Spirit of Truth bring His healing through your hands today.
Pour away.

Reflection Question

What lie might you be believing about a wound in your life—that God caused it, that you deserve it, or that He's stopped caring? Who around you is carrying an infected wound right now that needs you to speak truth to them in love?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the wine of truth that washes every wound I carry. Thank You for Your Spirit, Your Word, and my testimony—tools You've given me to fight off the lies the enemy wants to infect me with. Forgive me for the times I've believed a lie about You, about my pain, or about myself instead of running to what's true. Show me the lies I'm still carrying, and heal me with truth, even when it stings. Give me courage to speak truth in love to the people around me today. Thank You that Jesus was pierced for my wounds so that by His stripes I am healed. Use my hands and my story to pour truth over someone's infected wound today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Before the day ends, name one lie you've believed about a wound in your life, then write down the truth of God's Word next to it—let Scripture have the last word.
- Read **John 8:32** – "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- Read **John 8:44** – Jesus calls Satan the father of lies—reminder of where infection actually comes from.
- Read **Psalm 51:6** – God desires truth "in the inward being," not just on the surface.
- Read **Romans 12:2** – Renewal starts with the mind—truth doesn't just inform you, it transforms you.
- Read **Hebrews 4:12 – God's Word is living and active, able to discern the thoughts** and lies of the heart.
- Read **Winning the War in Your Mind** by Craig Groeschel
- Read **The Bait of Satan** by John Bevere

Friday

POWER THAT HEALS

Key Scripture

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth."
— Acts 1:8 (NASB)

Devotional

Have you ever given up on something because it took too long?

A diet. Learning a language. Playing Monopoly (my 11 year old loves it...I do not).

If we give up, it's usually because we make a decision that our time is worth more than the required effort and the resulting benefits. Or we question whether or not there will even be a benefit at all...

Will the diet work? Can I even learn the language? Do I know that I'll finally beat my son in Monopoly? (probably not)

Have you ever given up on God for the same reasons?
Maybe you feel like if it's gone on this long, maybe God just wants it that way. Or maybe you're just not the kind of person that God wants to show His power through.

All week we've been talking about what you carry–God's Spirit, God's Word, and your testimony. God uses these gifts to do the same thing Jesus did when He walked the earth: "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to captives and freedom to prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1).
These things are the bandages that wrap, the oil that soothes, and the wine that washes.

What's fascinating about this is that sometimes power comes through a process.

Jesus is telling this story in Luke 10. Like He's literally coming up with the story. He could've said, "The Good Samaritan took the wounded man by

the hand, lifted him up, and he was perfectly whole." That would make sense that the Son of God would tell a story about the supernatural, instantaneous power of God, right?

Instead, Jesus tells a story about healing that came through a process. Understand the context here.

Luke 10 begins with Jesus sending out 70 disciples who go two by two and just completely ransack the enemy. The story reads like a superhero movie, where all of a sudden these ordinary men are given extraordinary power to heal the sick (v9) and cast out demons (v17).

They came back on a massive high, having set the whack-a-devil record and feeling invincible.

They tasted the instant, miraculous power of God that their forefathers talked about. And it was real.

But all of a sudden, a lawyer asks Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

The disciples must have been thinking–we know all about eternal life! Just do what we do! We'll show you the magic words, then BAM!
Then Jesus starts telling a story about a man showing mercy to his enemy, and through a process of slow, methodical steps, loves this man back to life.

Why?
Because God's power isn't just revealed in the suddenlies — it's also revealed in the slowlies.

Praise God for the instant healings. We believe in those!
But the disciples performed those and then left.

The wounded man in Luke 10 experienced a gradual healing that left him with something that he didn't have at the beginning–a friend. He started off isolated and alone, now he was in an inn with shelter and community.
I believe that Jesus was making a point about power.

God's power may not always be spectacular, but it's always working.
You may not be able to see it, but don't think for a second that it's not effective.

Diets sometimes don't work. Maybe you're not cut out to learn a language. My 11yo son will probably beat me in Monopoly every time.

But God's love never fails.
And His power rides in on His love.

In at least 4 instances of Jesus's miracles, the Bible says He was "moved with compassion" for the hurting before He healed them.

So, do you want to see more power flow from you?
Try letting more love flow through you.

Isn't that the point of Luke 10?
Where His love flows, you will find power every time. It might be instant. It might be gradual. But one thing is for sure–it will never fail.
It's the power behind the oil and wine.
And it's the power that you carry.

So don't ask who God is asking you to heal today.
Ask who He is asking you to love.
And the power will follow.
Every time.

Reflection Question

Where have you given up on God moving, not because He failed, but because it took longer than you expected? And who is God asking you to love today — not fix, not heal, just love — trusting that the power will follow?

Prayer

Father, thank You for power that never fails — in a moment or over a lifetime. Forgive me for quietly giving up on You when things took longer than I expected. Teach me to chase love first and trust that power follows. Use my presence, Your Word, and my story to carry Your power to someone today, however You choose to send it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read Philippians 1:6 — He who began a good work in you will carry it to completion. Graduality is still guaranteed.
- Read Zechariah 4:6 — "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit." Power was never meant to be about your strength or your timeline.
- Read Mark 1:41; Matthew 20:34; Luke 7:13; Matthew 14:14 — four places compassion directly precedes a healing miracle.
- Read Ever Increasing Faith by Smith Wigglesworth.

Saturday

WHEN THE POWER RUNS OUT

Key Scripture

Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.
— Isaiah 40:31 (NASB)

Devotional

If you could pick any two athletes in history to face off, who would you choose?

For everyone who didn't pick MJ vs LeBron...we'll give you another chance.

Can you imagine the insane level of talent on the floor at one time if MJ's `96 Bulls faced LeBron's 2013 Heat? Of course MJ would win (!), but really, every sports fan watching would be the real winners.

No matter who won that game, there is one opponent that neither MJ, LeBron, nor any other athlete will ever be able to defeat...

Time.

There comes a moment for every athlete where the performance just isn't the same. The talent is still there, for sure, but the strength to deliver the talent has waned.

This is the human experience.

We arrive at the end of a week where we've been talking about the oil, wine, and power that you carry as a Christian filled with God's Spirit and equipped with His Word.

Forgive the crude analogy to athletics, but if what you carry spiritually could be measured in athletic talent, you would dunk on MJ & LeBron all day.That's the "exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Eph. 1:19).

However, we must be careful not to become weary in well-doing, according to Galatians 6:9.

In essence, our strength needs to be continually renewed in order to deliver God's power and love to those around us.

That's where we differ from MJ & LeBron (besides height, of course).

God has not only supplied us with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3) for every good work He has prepared for us, but He has extended to us an open invitation to come renew our strength in Him.

Jesus says that we're like branches who need the life-giving strength of the vine to produce the fruit the branch is capable of. You may be the best looking, top-producing branch around, but apart from the Lord, you can do nothing (John 15:5).

To prove this point, right after Jesus finishes the story of the Good Samaritan who poured out what he had to serve the wounded man, Jesus takes the disciples to Mary & Martha's house.

There Jesus lovingly corrects Martha as she's serving. He clearly had just praised the Samaritan who selflessly served, so He's not against serving.

He corrected Martha because it wasn't time to serve–it was time to sit.

When we don't recognize our limits and make time to sit, we start living out of our strength and not God's.

We become the savior.

We keep trying to give the same supply, but now that stream is tainted with pride, which can actually harm the very people we're trying to help.

Jesus frequently recognized when He needed to sit.

Sometimes it was in a boat in a storm (Mark 4:38; Matt 8:24).
Sometimes it was a mountain (Mark 6:45-46; Matt 14:23; Luke 6:12).
Sometimes it was just a deserted place (Matt 14:13; Luke 4:42; Mark 1:35).

In each case, He left the many needs around Him to go sit with His Father.

Why?
Because as a man, Jesus knew He needed power to bring the power. He needed His strength to serve.

Jesus knew Isaiah 40:31:

> "Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

So don't live like MJ with the Wizards or LeBron with the 76ers (probably).

Stay in your prime by staying aligned.
Stay plugged in to your source of strength.
Refuse to give out of your own strength.
Go sit and replenish with His strength.

What time do you protect in your week to Sabbath with Him?
How does your life reflect your dependence on His strength?

My friend, you have so much to give.
Do it in His strength.
Sit. Serve. Then sit some more.
After all, He is the Greatest Of All Time.

Reflection Question

Where have you been serving out of your own strength instead of His — and what would it look like this week to actually schedule time to sit with God, protected on your calendar the same way you'd protect any other commitment?

Prayer

Father, thank You for the strength that never runs dry, even when mine does. Forgive me for the times I've kept serving from an empty tank instead of coming to sit with You. Teach me to abide before I act, so what I give comes from You and not from pride or exhaustion. Help me protect real time to rest in Your presence this week. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Before the day ends, block time on your calendar this week to sit with God — not to pray for something, just to be with Him — and protect it like you would any other appointment.

- Read **Matthew 11:28-30** — "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." The invitation behind the whole devo.
- Read **Mark 6:31** — Jesus tells His own disciples, mid-ministry, "Come away by yourselves and rest a while." Even they needed to be told.
- Read **Psalm 23:2-3** — "He makes me lie down... He restores my soul." Rest isn't optional, it's shepherding.
- Read **Exodus 20:8-11** — Sabbath as commandment, not suggestion.
- Read **The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry** by John Mark Comer.

Sunday

SERMON NOTES

Week 4:

THE INN - BUILDING A HOUSE THAT HEALS

Monday	What's Better Than Grandma's House	59
Tuesday	Bring Someone	61
Wednesday	A Little TLC	64
Thursday	Never Show Up Empty-Handed	67
Friday	Mi Casa Es Su Casa	70
Saturday	Be the Church	74

Monday

WHAT'S BETTER THAN GRANDMA'S HOUSE

Key Scripture

But a Samaritan who was on a journey came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you."

— Luke 10:33-35 (NASB)

Devotional

In the story of the good Samaritan, after the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he was moved to action and bandaged up his wounds; he then used the tools he carried with him and poured oil and wine on the wounded man. Once he had done all he could on his own, he then brought the wounded man to an inn, gave the innkeeper enough money to cover him, and instructed the innkeeper to take care of him, promising to bring more money if needed (Luke 10:33-35). In this parable, the Samaritan embodies someone who loves their neighbor as themselves—one of the commands that Jesus said was essential to inheriting eternal life (Luke 10:25-28)—and the inn represents the church. After seeing the wounded, being moved to action, and using the spiritual tools we carry (oil and wine), the last step in being a good neighbor, then, is to bring the wounded to church.

Rather than thinking of our church as a building, or even a campus, it can help to think of it as a house—and not just any house, but God's house. When you think of the best memories you've experienced in someone's house—maybe your grandma's house, your parent's house, or even the house of a childhood friend—what usually stands out is not the structure of the house itself, but the feeling of always being welcome, loved, and cared for by the people there. For some, going to Grandma's house requires no invitation: the door is always open; the house is cozy and inviting; warm hugs and comfort food await; Grandma provides an attentive ear and speaks words of love and encouragement over you, but is also ready to go to war for you and approach the throne of grace with boldness to

intercede on your behalf; and there's always dessert ready. When you think of how well-loved you would feel there, and how many good gifts you would receive in a house like that, consider how much more our Father in Heaven will give good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11).

God's house is far better than Grandma's house, and His house is not limited to those who already have a close relationship with Him: everyone, including total strangers are welcome and embraced all the same. If you suddenly ran out of gas or had car trouble and had to choose between knocking on the door of a random stranger's house or knocking on the door of Grandma's house to seek help, the choice would be easy. How much easier should the choice be for someone to come to God's house when they need help?

The church is God's house: we go to His house to enter into His presence, to commune with Him, and to sup with Him (Revelation 3:20, KJV). The word "sup" simply means to eat: it is derived from the words "soup" and "sip," and has evolved into the word "supper." To sup, one would usually dine slowly, taking food into the mouth a little at a time. To sup is not to rush, but to savor. Imagine going to Grandma's house but keeping one foot out the door and leaving your jacket on—she would insist you come in, take off your coat, and stay awhile so you could enjoy your time together. What more does our heavenly Father desire from us? He wants you to sup with Him, stay awhile, savor your time together, even linger.

Wonderful things happen in God's house: a place where you gather with fellow believers to be fed, restored, and sustained. We come together corporately to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, encouraging one another in the faith (Hebrews 10:24-25). We do not forsake the assembly because where two or three have gathered, something miraculous happens: God Himself is in our midst (Matthew 18:20). If Jesus Christ suddenly descended on a cloud and appeared in the flesh in the middle of our sanctuary on Sunday morning, I can't imagine anyone would be rushing to leave service early just to beat the lunch hour traffic; yet, the inerrant Word of God says He is in our midst when we gather corporately—He is, in fact, in the middle of our sanctuary, right there with us every Sunday. God longs to draw near to you, but He will never force you to stay with Him: you must first choose to draw near to Him in order for Him to draw near to you (James 4:8). Come to His house, take off your coat and plan to stay awhile. Don't rush your time in God's house when you can savor every moment, lingering in the presence of the Lord.

Reflection Question

What sacrifices would you have to make to truly savor your time in God's house?

Prayer

Father, thank you for being in our midst wherever two or three of us have gathered. Help me to savor every moment of our time together, to crucify every distraction and every pull from the world just to linger in Your presence. Remind me of what an honor it is to dwell in Your house, and what a gift it is to be restored and sustained in Your midst. Convict me with a desire to love my neighbors as You have commanded me to do. Let our church be a place that brings You honor and glory, in Jesus's name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read **Luke 10:25-27**
- Many of us can confidently say we love the Lord, but what about our neighbors? Do you love your neighbors as yourself? Take a look around at the people who surround you in church: do you know and love them? Make a decision to get to know your neighbors in church and to show love to them as God commands us to do.

Tuesday

BRING SOMEONE

Key Scripture

And some men were carrying a man on a stretcher who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. But when they did not find any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. And seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."
Luke 5:18-20 (NASB)

Devotional

It is a sign of maturity when we learn to share: to move from simply delighting in good gifts to wanting to share those good gifts so others might enjoy them as well. When you were very young, if you have fond memories of going to Grandma's house, you were likely solely on the receiving end of fun experiences with your grandma. As you got older and began to mature,

perhaps you thought to bring a friend with you so they could experience a fun afternoon at your grandma's house as well. At that point, your friend became a beneficiary of both your and your grandma's graciousness; after all, they never would have been able to come to her house if you had not invited them. While God's house is far better than Grandma's house, one thing they both have in common is that most people would not show up to either place unless they were invited.

In 1987, Roy Oswald's book The Inviting Church revealed that 86% of active church attendees trace their initial visit back to a personal invitation from someone they knew. Although nearly 40 years have passed since that publication, the statistic has remained largely unchanged: most evangelism research continues to report between 80 and 90% of churchgoers begin attending because of a personal invitation. Just think about that for a moment: the vast majority of people in God's house are there because someone was bold enough to personally invite them! Armed with this knowledge—**that your invitation has the power to bring someone into God's house**—why on earth wouldn't you wield such power every single day? Although these statistics should embolden and encourage us, Thom Rainer's 2008 book, The Unchurched Next Door shockingly revealed that only 2% of church members invite an unchurched person to church in a given year. **A congregation that is not bringing in unchurched people is a church that is missing its assignment.**

The good Samaritan is a parable about the unchurched: Jesus commands us to love them as we love ourselves, which is to love them as He loves them. The unchurched are the wounded of this world: disconnected from the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), they are living outside of the will of God (1 Corinthians 12:18). The good neighbor first tends to the wounds of the unchurched himself, seeing him, feeling compassion for him, going to him, pouring oil and wine on his wounds and bandaging them (Luke 10:33-34). But the story does not end with the Samaritan doing everything independently: after ministering to the man's wounds personally, he then brings the wounded man to an inn where he could be cared for and continue to heal (Luke 10:34). The inn represents the church, a place where we take care of the wounded. The church is a place of comfort, healing, and restoration, a place where the love of Jesus abounds as we abide in Him and follow His lead. **Church isn't just a place we go—it's a place we bring others.** Jesus Himself said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). To do as He does, we must love like He loves. Just as Jesus will always search for the lost sheep, so should we (Luke 15:4-7).

The Lord re-emphasized our assignment once again in the testimony about the four friends who were carrying a paralyzed man to bring him to Jesus

(Luke 5:18-20). **Those four friends understood the assignment: bring the wounded to the house where people were gathering to meet the Lord.** So convicted by the assignment, they were undeterred by the crowd blocking their way into the house and ultimately tore off the roof to lower their wounded friend and place him directly at the feet of Jesus. What is especially notable in this testimony is that Jesus identifies the faith of the four friends as the source of the paralyzed man's healing: seeing **their** faith, the man was healed (Luke 5:20). **What friends are you helping with your faith?** As followers of Christ, we are called to not only reach people, but to bring them into a place where they can be restored and sustained.

The story of the good Samaritan reveals your assignment. The testimony of the four friends reveals the power of your faith. The evangelism research that reveals the power of your invitation is confirmed by the Word of God that says life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21), and teaches us to call things into being (Romans 4:17). Knowing the power of your invitation has activated an assignment: it's time to start bringing people to church.

Reflection Question

Knowing that my personal invitation has the power to bring someone to church, what is stopping me from inviting someone every single day?

Prayer

Father, in Jesus's name I ask for eyes to see lost sheep wherever I go, and for the boldness to extend a personal invitation to all who need it. Whether it's a friend or family member I know well, the desk clerk at the gym whom I see every day, a cashier at the grocery store whom I see only occasionally, or a waitress at a restaurant whom I am encountering for the first time, I ask You to nudge my spirit whenever I encounter a lost sheep. Give me the conviction to act with no hesitation, Lord. I am an ambassador for Christ! Help me to walk in love and obedience, in Jesus's name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- The only opportunity we have to witness to our friends and family is during our time here on earth. Ask yourself: **Are you making the most of the time God has given you to bring people to Jesus?**
- As you meditate on the following descriptions of the eternal torment of hell, ask the Lord to grant you greater conviction to tell people about Jesus and invite them to church: **Luke 16:23-24, Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 22:13, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 5:22, Matthew 5:29-30, Mark 9:43, Mark 9:48, Revelation 20:10, 14-15.**

Wednesday
A LITTLE TLC

Key Scripture

And let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
Hebrews 10:24-25 (NASB)

Devotional

If you think of Grandma's house as a place where warm hugs and comfort food await, you might have a desire to go there when you're in need of a little TLC (tender loving care). But what if you needed more than just comfort and hugs—where would you go if you actually needed a miracle?

If our church announced today that someone had discovered the cure for cancer, and it was free, unlimited, ready, and waiting for anyone who wanted it at a research hospital located right here in Jackson, with whom would you share this information first? The question is not if you would share it, because of course no reasonable person would hesitate to share information that could potentially save someone's life. You would likely first share the information with those you know personally, such as loved ones and friends who would benefit from the treatment. But I imagine you would also freely mention it to anyone you encountered who revealed they were battling cancer and needed healing. It would be a "no-brainer" to share the good news about the cure even to complete strangers—the moment you learned about their affliction you would likely not even be waylaid by nervousness, awkwardness, or anxiety—when their very lives depended on this information, good news like this would be easy to share!

Yet, the Word of God teaches us that we do have a healer: His name is Jehovah Rapha and He is the Lord who heals us (Exodus 15:26). God's will to heal us is so strong that He sent His one and only Son to bear our sicknesses and carry our pains (Isaiah 53:4), so we don't have to bear them again. Jesus was pierced, crushed, and punished for our sins, so that by His stripes we could be healed (Isaiah 53:5). Healing is available to us, and Jesus repeatedly taught us that it comes by faith (Mark 5:35, Luke 5:20, Matthew 8:10, 13). So if someone is in need of healing, how do they build

their faith? Scripture tells us that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). One of the best places to come for God's miraculous healing, then—especially for unbelievers or even new believers who may not yet be in the habit of hearing the Word and building up their faith consistently—is the church, where the Word of God is spoken, taught, and prayed out regularly. When people come to our church and hear God's Word, faith comes. Because faith that heals is free, unlimited, ready, and waiting for anyone who wants it, we need to be bringing people to church like their lives depend on it!

The Word of God promises that where two or three have gathered together in Jesus's name, He is right there in our midst; moreover, if two of us agree on earth about anything we ask, it shall be done for us by our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 18:19-20). What a promise! No wonder God tells us not to forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25). What the body can accomplish when it assembles corporately is far more powerful than what any individual member of the body can do on their own. When we give our lives to Christ, we become one body, individually members of one another (Romans 12:5). The NIV translation explains that each member belongs to all the others. When we belong to one another, we bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). We sharpen one another (Proverbs 27:17), we teach one another and fellowship together (Acts 2:42), we serve one another (1 Peter 4:10), we sing together (Colossians 3:16), and we go to the house of the Lord together (Psalm 122:1).

The church is a place of healing and restoration, a place where people come for a little TLC, where God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3). It is also a place where believers are sustained, where the truth of God's Word is spoken and taught, and where faith comes by hearing. We come to God's house to eat and be filled—not with just any meal, but with food that endures to eternal life (John 6:27), with the bread of God that comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world (John 6:33), with bread that ensures we will no longer hunger and water that ensures we will never thirst (John 6:35, 4:14). In God's house, we feast on the Word. As the prophet Jeremiah declared, "Your words were found and I ate them, and your words became a joy to me and the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16). God fed His people manna to make them understand that man should not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4). New believers taste the kindness of the Lord and grow by the pure milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2-3), whereas solid food or meat is for mature believers (Hebrews 5:14, NASB). The love of Christ desires for us to be filled to all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). We come to church empty in order to be filled, and the milk and meat of the Word sustains us throughout the week.

This is a picture of the church: a place where we come to be healed, restored, sustained, and filled, a place where God establishes His name and gives us new wine and fresh oil (Deuteronomy 14:23). With all that the church has to offer, we must be actively seeking opportunities to share it with others. To live like Jesus, we must be the ones who go into the highways and byways; we must be the ones who interrupt our schedules for someone else's need; we are called to go, to see, to stop, and to bring people into this space where they can be restored. When we understand all that the body has to offer, we are compelled to invite people into it—just like a miraculous cure would be information we could not contain to ourselves, the miracle-working God sitting at the head of our church is a gift we should not be keeping to ourselves. Being Kingdom-minded means bringing others along to be restored and sustained—giving to others as God has freely given to us. As the Word tells us: give, and it will be given to you, for by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return (Luke 6:38, NASB).

Reflection Question

Does thinking about the church as a place of healing and restoration instead of a building where you go to sing and hear a sermon each week stir your heart to invite more people?

Prayer

Father God, in Jesus's name I ask You to give me a heart that is Kingdom-minded. Help me to see the wounded and the lost as You see them, and to be moved with compassion to bring them to church for healing and restoration. Help me to give as it was given to me, and to bring others into the body of Christ just as You brought me in, Lord. I pray all of this in Jesus's name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Study **Acts 2:37-47** - The description of the Acts church concludes by revealing that the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). How wonderful! Meditate on the detailed description of the early church and reflect on how God intended the body to function. What can you do to help our body become more like the church in Acts?

Thursday

NEVER SHOW UP EMPTY-HANDED

Key Scripture

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.
— Matthew 10:8 (NASB)

Devotional

One of the lessons my mother drilled into me from a young age was to never show up to someone's house empty-handed, and the earliest memory I have of applying that lesson was when we went to Grandma's house. My mother understood something that I had yet to learn as a child: behind all the magic I felt at Grandma's house was a woman who worked hard to make every visit special. Grandma would spend time planning a menu of our favorite foods, shopping and buying ingredients, preparing a meal and making dessert; she often bought us little presents, things she knew my brothers and I would take delight in and enjoy long after we left her house; she would sit with us for hours, catching up on family news, sharing stories, and learning about the latest events in each of our lives. She would dedicate her day to us—her time, her heart, and her resources—and it would bless us all. Given all the effort involved for my grandma—or for anyone—to host, the very least we could do is to bring something. Whether it was a dish to contribute to the meal, flowers, or a gift for Grandma, we would always bring something to express our gratitude and to recognize and honor all the effort she had put into hosting us in her home. "We will not just show up and receive," my mother would say. It wasn't until I had reached adulthood myself that I discovered the biblical principle behind my mother's lesson: scripture teaches us that as freely as you received, freely you give (Matthew 10:8). When we receive a blessing in someone's house, we are called to give a blessing as well.

The same principle applies to God's house: when you go to church, you receive and are blessed. You receive the message, the teaching, a word, and sometimes conviction, correction, or revelation. You are blessed by the presence of God that comes where two or more are gathered in His

name (Matthew 18:20), by the worship, the fellowship in a community of believers, the power of two or more in agreement (Matthew 18:19), the faith that comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17), and the opportunity to serve. Behind everything that blesses you at church are servants who were anointed and appointed by God to give their time, their hearts, and their resources to help make it all happen, for every house is built by someone, and the builder of all things is God (Hebrews 3:4). So as freely as you receive in church, freely you should give (Matthew 10:8).

The early church sets the standard most churches aspire to reach, and one of its hallmarks is that the church of Acts was undeniably generous. Believers had all things in common and would sell their property and possessions and share them with all who had need (Acts 2:44-45). Scripture tells us that the very reason God blesses us in the first place is so we may use our blessings to serve the Kingdom; in the chapter on Living for God in the book of first Peter, God instructs that each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace (1 Peter 4:10, NIV). He teaches this concept again through Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, which explains you will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:11 NIV). God blesses us so we can bless others: he gives to us so we can give. He ensures we are well equipped for Kingdom work, promising to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19).

In the story of the good Samaritan, when the Samaritan brought the wounded man to the inn and asked the innkeeper to take care of him, he did not just drop him off at the inn and absolve himself from further care or responsibility for the wounded; on the contrary, the Samaritan gave the innkeeper two days wages to care for the man, and even promised to repay any additional expenses the innkeeper might incur on behalf of the wounded man (Luke 10:35). Since the inn represents the church, the parable of the good Samaritan teaches us that we, as good neighbors, are to give to the church to help care for the wounded. To build a house that heals, a space where we carry what others cannot carry, we must give unto others as God has freely given unto us.

The story behind someone's wounds should not factor into our desire to lead all who are lost or hurting into freedom and healing: God doesn't heal us because we deserve to be healed, He heals us because He is merciful, gracious, and good (Psalm 103:8, 145:9). The character of God is revealed in the story of the Prodigal Son: although the son's wounds are self-inflicted, the Father does not hesitate to bless him. He saw his wayward child while he was still a long way off and felt compassion for him, ran and embraced him and kissed him, quickly brought out the best robe and

put it on him, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, slaughtered a fattened calf to eat and celebrate the son who has come home (Luke 15:20-24). Thank the Lord that the Father's love is not merit-based: He gives us good gifts because He loves us (John 3:16). And we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19), so we use whatever gift we have received to serve others as well (1 Peter 4:10, NIV), even considering others' needs as more important than our own (Philippians 2:3-4). God composed the body so that the parts would care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:24-25), and Jesus Himself encouraged us to serve others by explaining that whatever we do for the least of His brethren, we do for Him (Matthew 25:40).

Remember, Jesus called the Samaritan good because he was the one to stop and care for the wounded while others were refusing responsibility and even crossing to the other side of the street to avoid taking up the burden. Scripture advises us not to withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in our power to do it (Proverbs 3:27), and specifically tells us not to neglect doing good and sharing, for such sacrifices please God (Hebrews 13:16). It's not a coincidence when you see a need: the Lord is showing you that need for a reason. He gives you eyes to see because He is assigning you to intercede— to pray, to serve, and to give. You can choose to be the priest or the Levite in this parable, seeing the wounded, yet going out of your way to avoid getting involved; or you can choose to be the one that Jesus called good.

Reflection Question

Reflect on the scripture that explains God enriches you so that you can be generous (2 Corinthians 9:11, NIV). Have you been generous to God, or have you been showing up to his house empty-handed, just expecting to receive?

Prayer

Father, in Jesus's name I ask you to give me eyes to see the needs of the body, ears to hear how you have called me to be generous, and a heart that understands the burdens of your Kingdom. Thank You for enriching me so that I can be generous on every occasion. Thank you for supplying all my needs, and for reminding me to use the gifts I have received to serve others, for Your Kingdom, Your power, and Your glory. Stir in me a conviction to be a good neighbor, generous and with a servant's heart. I pray all of this in Jesus's name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Meditate on **1 John 4:19**
- Read **Romans 5:8, Galatians 6:2, Galatians 5:13-14** - we love because He first loved us. God did not wait for us to be good to love us: while

we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Our love is a reply to Him who loved us first: He gave us His love and we give it back, not just to Him but to everyone because God loves all of His people. To love God, we must love others, bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and serving each other well.

- Ask yourself: **When was the last time you took on the burdens of another member of the body, ministering to them, bringing them to church, and even giving up some of your wages to provide for their care?**

Friday

MI CASA ES SU CASA

Key Scripture

from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
— Ephesians 4:16 (NASB)

Devotional

Mi casa es su casa is a phrase my grandma used often: it's Spanish for make yourself at home, and the literal translation is "my house is your house." When we would make ourselves at home at Grandma's, we would not sit around and wait to be served—that might be what strangers or guests do, but not family. When you're a member of the family, the phrase "my house is your house" is literal. There is a sense of ownership in the family home, which prompts you to take your place and do your part. In Grandma's house we helped to set the table, pour the tea, bring out the food, clear the plates, put up leftovers, do the dishes, take out the trash, and wipe down the table. Everyone pitched in, because many hands make light work (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

When you are in Christ, you are no longer strangers, but members of God's household (Ephesians 2:10), adopted into the family of believers (Galatians 6:10). Fellow church members are often described as "church family" because we are all brothers and sisters in Christ (Hebrews 2:11). As a child of God, you are His heir (Romans 8:16-17), set to inherit all He has for you. Here too, there is a sense of ownership in the God's house, which prompts

you to take your place and do your part. In God's house, we should not sit around and wait to be served—that might be what strangers or guests do, but not family. The church is the body of Christ, and each of us have an individual part to play in the body (1 Corinthians 12:27). Every part of the body is fitted and held together by one another, and every joint brings a supply to ensure the proper working and the growth of the body (Ephesians 4:16). In the body of Christ, you are called to bring your supply. Everyone has a place in the body, which God Himself arranged just as He desired (1 Corinthians 12:18); this means if you are not fulfilling your role in the body, you are living outside of the will of God. Each part of the body is crucial to the success of the whole, so if one part of the body is lacking, the entire body suffers (1 Corinthians 12:26).
It's a beautiful thing to be a member of a Spirit-filled church. But scripture tells us the manifestation of the Spirit is not given to each of us solely for our own benefit—it is given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). We are to serve one another (Galatians 5:13), for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). To take your place in the body, you must serve one another as good stewards of the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10)—in an abundance of grace, God blessed us each with special gifts, and to steward those gifts well we must use them in service to His Kingdom. Jesus Christ Himself set the example when the Word became flesh: rather than coming as a King, the greatest among us came as a servant to all (Matthew 23:11).

Sunday mornings may look different for everyone, but most people navigate the church parking lot with the assistance and direction of someone on the parking team, and everyone is greeted by someone from our church family as they enter the doors to our church. Signs, banners, and sandwich boards will direct you where to go because someone set them out that morning. If you want to grab breakfast in the café, someone takes your order and someone else prepares it; if you order a specialty coffee drink, there is someone who has trained as a barista to make your order, and if you would prefer to help yourselves to the complimentary brew offered by the Kidslife check-in desk, someone has prepared the coffee station for you. Many of your children attend NextGen services, whether it's Littlelife, Kidslife, or Momentum Bible Study, where someone at the check-in station is ready to assist; someone cares for and ministers to your children with truth and love; someone brings the Word to your children; and someone meets with them in small group to help them apply and understand that Word. If it's a holiday, you might pause for family photos at a holiday photo display someone has beautifully decorated, and you might even be handed a small gift in honor of the day that someone has arranged for you. If you bring a guest, someone will greet them and make them feel welcome, and give both you and your guest a gift prepared by someone else. As you enter the sanctuary, someone might hand you

a service guide or a flier with a QR code announcing an upcoming event, then someone will help you find seats for your family as a video starts playing on the screen that someone has filmed and edited. You will know which seats are unavailable because someone has placed reserved seating cards in certain sections. Someone on the worship team will begin leading, while someone accompanies in alto, someone else in soprano, someone in tenor, and someone in baritone or bass; someone will be playing lead, someone rhythm, and someone bass guitar; there will be someone playing piano, someone on drums, and maybe even someone on violin or flute that day; you will be able to join in with praise and worship even when the song is new to you because someone is putting the lyrics on the screen. Someone is circulating taking pictures while someone else is taking videos, both working with someone on the production team to ensure we can stream the service to all campuses, to our online viewers, and even to you if you're out of town. Long before Pastor preaches the message, someone on a team of volunteers has laid hands on him and prayed for him, also praying over every seat in the sanctuary and every member of the body they were expecting to see—which means someone has been praying for you. During the sermon, someone is putting up scripture on the screens so you can follow along. Someone starts playing the keys when Pastor starts to close. If you felt conviction and made a decision to come down to the altar for prayer, you will find someone trained and ready to pray for you and offer you resources that someone else has prepared to help you continue to grow; if appropriate, they will refer you to Next, Following Jesus, or Healing School, which are classes taught by someone in the church. If it's a baptism Sunday, you will find that someone has prepared everything for you—even a change of clothes if you need it. Once service ends, someone takes up all the reserved seating cards; someone puts away the signs, banners, and sandwich boards; someone cleans up and puts away the supplies at the altar, the welcome desk, and the coffee station; someone straightens up all the rooms in NextGen; someone cleans up and closes down the café; someone picks up forgotten materials to bring to the lost and found; and someone shuts down all check-in stations.

None of these parts of your Sunday experience could happen without church members taking their place in the body. From the parking team, and the first impressions team greeting you, handing out materials, and serving at the welcome desk, to the café team, the NextGen teams, the ushers, the production team, the photography team, the online team, and the prayer team—the church only functions when members of the body take their place. Even the "free coffee" isn't free: besides the obvious cost of the supplies to brew it, it also costs someone's time to make it, replenish it, and keep the area clean and the supplies stocked. There is a role for each member, and no assignment is too small. We are the church, each of us members of the body, with Christ as our head (Ephesians 1:22-23). When

we take our place, we each have a role in building the house of God. You might think your contribution is unnecessary, but if you have not yet taken your place it's akin to removing one body part; the Lord Himself addressed this misconception in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, declaring it is not true that we have no need of even one member of the body, for each individual member is necessary for the healthy functioning of the whole (1 Corinthians 12:21-22). You are someone whose contribution is vital for the body to function. You are necessary for the health and growth of the church. The Church was never meant to be a place we attend—it's a people we become. Stay in the will of God and take your place.

The same principle applies to God's house: when you go to church, you receive and are blessed. You receive the message, the teaching, a word, and sometimes conviction, correction, or revelation. You are blessed by the presence of God that comes where two or more are gathered in His

Reflection Question

If everyone has a place in the body, which God Himself arranged just as He desired (1 Corinthians 12:18), have you asked Him lately where He would like you to take your place?

Prayer

Father, in Jesus's name, I ask you to give me eyes to see the needs of the body, ears to hear my assigned place, and a heart that understands the call to serve. Tell me where to serve, Lord, for I am your willing and obedient servant and I don't want to miss a single assignment you have intended for me. Stir my heart with a conviction to take my place according to Your will, and make me servant-minded, in Jesus's name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Read Galatians 5:14 - If loving our neighbors fulfills the whole law, it should be a priority, not an option. Jesus showed His love to us through service and sacrifice. Meditate on this law and ask the Lord what you should sacrifice to better serve the body of Christ.

Saturday

BE THE CHURCH

Key Scripture

And let's consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
— Hebrews 10:24-25 (NASB)

Devotional

Over the past week, you have seen a picture of Grandma's house that might not have reflected your own experience: maybe you never had a chance to know your grandma, were unable to visit her often, or perhaps your encounters with her just didn't match the ones described in these devotions. God's house is far better than Grandma's house, for where she has limits God has none (Matthew 19:26), and He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Much more important than your relationship with even your own grandma is your relationship with the living God. Grandmas are human and even they can fall short of our expectations at times. But what happens when the church falls short of your expectations? What should you do when you feel disappointed by what's going on in the house of God?

The first thing you should do is remember whose house it is, and set a guard over your mouth and keep watch over the door of your lips (Psalm 141:3). Life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21), so take care not to speak curses over God's house. In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, God commands us to let no unwholesome word or corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edification or building up, according to the need of the moment, so it will give grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29). When you recognize a need or identify something lacking in the moment, instead of indulging in corrupting talk that can sow discontent and spread like poison in the body, remember that we are the church. It is entirely possible God gave you eyes to see the need because He has also equipped you to fill that need. Choosing to build up the body with a spirit of love instead of a spirit of criticism means taking ownership for the health of the body. Be the church you want to see, and take your place to help edify the body.

Scripture gives us multiple warnings not to stand in judgment of others: the gospel of Matthew tells us do not judge, so that you will not be judged, and warns us that in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1-2). James, the brother of Jesus, tells us not to speak against one another, brothers and sisters (James 4:11), and warns us that our flesh is the source of quarrels and conflicts among us, our pleasures that wage war in our body's parts (James 4:1). James asks "who are you, judging your neighbor" (James 4:12), and the apostle Paul also asks "Who are you to judge the servant of another?" (Romans 14:4). Paul reminds us that we are not the judge, for to his own master each servant stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4). If we are expecting grace and forgiveness on judgment day, we ought to be extending grace and forgiveness towards others today: "for if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses" (Matthew 6:14-15). So the Word is clear: we are not to stand in judgement of others or bring a spirit of criticism into the body.

This does not mean there is no room for improvement in the church— quite the contrary— as any healthy body does not just maintain itself but continues to build, renew, and adapt. This is one of the reasons why church growth is good: new members bring new strengths and a new supply to meet new and changing needs. In Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, God explains we all have different gifts, but the same spirit; similarly, we all have different strengths that bring a variety of effects, but the same God works in all things and all persons (1 Corinthians 4,6). There's always room for new ideas, when offered by the leading of the Holy Spirit. But it is speaking truth in love, not in condemnation, which causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:15-16). Moreover, scripture tells us not to love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). We love in deed because we are doers of the Word (James 1:22). If you see an area of the church that needs love, what are you doing about it? God's instruction is very clear: we are to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another (Hebrews 10:24-25). Instead of leaving the church (abandoning meeting together, as is the habit of some people), try being the church. In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, God reminds us that we are not strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household (Ephesians 2:19). Christ Jesus Himself is the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20-22), and we also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). Paul describes the church body as being fitted together, growing into a holy temple in the Lord, being built

together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22). Each of these phrases demonstrates that we are all works in progress: being built up, being fitted together, growing, and being built together. None of this progress happens without grace, and none of this growth happens without each member of the body taking their place (Ephesians 4:16).

The book of Hebrews explains that "Christ was faithful as a son over His house—whose house we are" (Hebrews 3:6). Let that sink in for a moment: we are God's house. We are also temples of His Holy Spirit, who lives in us (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19). We are the church. We are the ones who pray, who believe, who act, who speak Words of Life, and who see God's examples and go and do likewise (Luke 10:37). We are the ones who steward God's house to ensure that it becomes a place of restoration where people are cared for, discipled, and brought back to life, a place where people are healed, filled, and sustained. The church is not a place we attend, it's who we are. It's time to stop attending church like an observer who is watching, and start being the church as an identity you're stepping into— as one of the living stones being built up as a spiritual house.

Reflection Question

Have you ever felt a spirit of criticism come upon you, tempting you to stand in judgment over the church? How does the recognition that you are the church help you to walk in grace and love?

Prayer

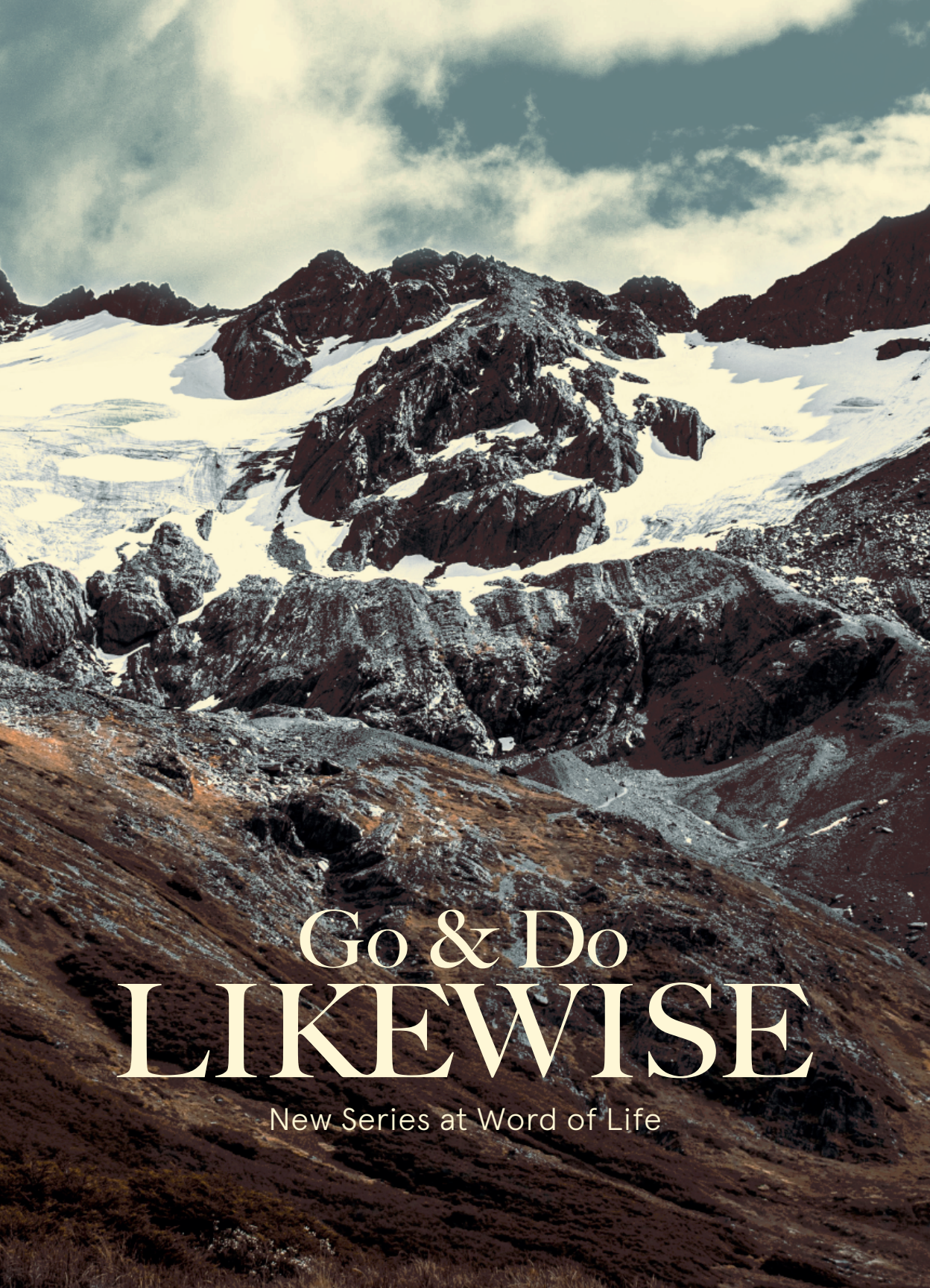
Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any judgement, or any spirit of criticism in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24). Father, in Jesus's name I ask you to remind me that I am Your house; my very body is a temple of Your Holy Spirit. Help me to set a guard over my mouth and keep watch over the door to my lips so no unwholesome word or corrupting talk comes out of my mouth. Convict my spirit to be the steward of Your house that you made me to be, Lord. Help me to be the church. I pray all of this in Jesus's name, Amen.

Diving Deeper

- Meditate on **1 Corinthians 13:13** and **Luke 10:37** -
- Jesus concluded the parable of the Good Samaritan by telling us to go and do likewise; He was leading by example and instructing us to love our neighbors as ourselves. To be the church that Christ desires, we must have faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.
- Meditate on the story of the good Samaritan in **Luke 10** and ask God to reveal what you, personally, need to do to help **be the church that prioritizes love.**

Sunday

SERMON NOTES


Go & Do
LIKEWISE
New Series at Word of Life