

# Faithbuilders Devotional Series

Through the Bible in a Year  
A Daily Devotional

December

Pastors Mike Fast & David Curtis



There are a couple of statements in Second Corinthians 13 that I latched onto. One statement appears in verse eight, “stand for the truth at all times.” That is a terrific word of exhortation for every believer. It provides clarity and purpose for what we are involved in. The other statement is in verse five, “Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test.” If you pause long enough to examine what you are involved in, and then beyond that to examine your faith, you will learn much about your relationship with Christ.

I believe there are many who could stand to take this test more often and more honestly. Jesus says there will be many on the day their eternal destiny is determined who will say, “But Lord, I did this and that...” and Jesus will say “I never knew you.” Are you due for a spiritual checkup? Are you increasingly aware of Christ’s presence and power in your life? Are you actively seeking to grow closer to Him?

My Prayer List:

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Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Day 336 – December 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Acts 20:13-21:36 — Worth Nothing at All

What makes life valuable: good health, good self-esteem, having children, being married, being financially secure, being attractive or having lots of friends?

We have been reading about the Apostle Paul’s life, his conversion, his missionary journeys, his hardships, etc. Paul had a resumé that would impress most everyone, but did it impress him? Not a bit. In fact, he considered it rubbish and loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus as his Lord (see Philippians 3). Paul emphasizes the same point here in Acts 20:24, “But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God’s wonderful kindness and love.”

How do you measure the worth of your life? Does life’s value increase as you add things to it? Does it increase as you get more from it? Paul stressed its worth as he put into it, not took from it. What is “the work assigned you by the Lord Jesus?” Do you find worth in accomplishing it?

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Day 365 – December 31<sup>st</sup>  
Revelation 19:1-22:21 — The End ...Not Really

You have just finished reading through the entire Bible. You have read of the history of Israel, the history of the church, the account of Christ and the cross, the prophets and their devotion, instructions for believers and an enormous number of other things. Yet the ending of the book only shows us that there’s more to come, an eternity more.

As Heaven dawns, I’m going to have to find a new line of work. There won’t be a need for pastors and evangelists in Heaven. Satan will be defeated. Sin will be no more. In fact, there will be no more tears, sorrow, death, pain, sickness, hunger, judgment or night. God’s children will live forever in the presence of our Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It’s a place of beauty, holiness, unity, perfection and joy. It can’t get any better than that.

If you’re a believer, I pray you are greatly anticipating Heaven, stirred about being in the presence of our Lord, and excited about the future. We have reason to be, because we know the ending.

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Day 364 – December 30<sup>th</sup>  
Revelation 15:1-18:24 — Babylon

The Tenth of Tevet is one of four fast days that commemorate dark times in Jewish history. The Tenth of Tevet marks the onset of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia, and the beginning of the battle that ultimately destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon, sending the Jews into the Babylonian Exile. Saddam Hussein pronounced himself as the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, and dreamed of restoring the Babylonian empire to its former size and glory. If that was his desire, God gave him a similar outcome: driven out of his kingdom, hiding in a hole. In fact, Saddam Hussein was hanged on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Tevet, the eve of the Jewish fast day.

Revelation 17 & 18 discuss the end of Babylon both as a spiritual entity (ch. 17) and as a political one (ch. 18). The idea of a world religion is fast upon us as complacency and tolerance take root among us. We're afraid to discuss the differences between a nice works-based cult and the evangelical church. Truth is truth, and compromise and tolerance only makes us vulnerable to lies.

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Week 49 – December 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 21:37-28:31; Ephesians; Colossians

The theme for this week is the providence of God. While there are a number of different nuances to this theological concept, the devotionals are going to focus primarily on His care for you. We will observe God's providential care in the Apostle Paul's life and also consider ways that God providentially cares for you, His child.

### Bible Discussion Guide

When unexplained occurrences happen, are you quick to recognize God's hand in it or do you chalk it up to coincidence?

If we really believe that God has our days planned out for us in advance, then what do we have left to fear?

Do you find yourself trusting in your own strength during trials or trusting in the Lord?

Why is it so difficult for us to admit our weaknesses sometimes?

Have you ever been frustrated when God doesn't answer your prayers the way you want?

Read Matthew 6:5-18. What does it mean for God's will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven?

Are you first and foremost a Christian or an American? Why?

What do you trust in for your protection and provision in life? A job, the economy, the President?

How is the community of faith part of God's providential care for you?

How are you part of God's providential care for other people in your community of faith?

Day 363 – December 29<sup>th</sup>  
Revelation 11:1-14:20 — Harvest Time

Jesus said, "I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

The picture at the end of Revelation 14 of Christ swinging the sharp sickle over the earth is a solemn one. At that point, it will be "harvest time." In the Gospel of John, chapter four verse 35, there is a Gospel harvest explained: "The fields are white and ready to harvest." A continual harvest of people ready to be saved by the Gospel is out there waiting to hear from us. However, there is a time limit, an expiration date. And that is when this next harvest arrives—the harvest of judgment: "The harvest is the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39). For the believer, this harvest takes us home. For the unbeliever, it is every bit as grim as it sounds. "God will come ...with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know Him ...they will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from His glorious power" (2 Thes. 1:8-10).

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Day 362 – December 28<sup>th</sup>  
Revelation 7:1-10:11 — Praise God!

Everyone needs praise for his accomplishments, but few people make the need known quite as clearly as the little boy who said to his father: "Let's play darts. I'll throw and you say 'Wonderful!'"

The visions of Revelation often describe a great multitude in Heaven "too great to count" (7:9) shouting their praises to God and the Lamb (Christ). In a similar way, as the little boy throwing darts, we offer praise to God for His accomplishments, but they're not vain or empty praises as we consider who He is and what He's done.

Some Sunday mornings we've sung a song called *Who Am I*, by Casting Crowns. The bridge to the chorus says, "Not because of who I am, But because of what you've done. Not because of what I've done, But because of who you are."

I would encourage you to read Psalm 103. It expresses God's love for us and how what He does for us lets us know what He is really like. Just from this psalm, you will have enough reasons to shout your praises to God for a very long time.

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What do you expect God to do for you on any given day?

What assumptions have you made regarding God's providence in your life? Are you praying for His will in your life, or asking Him to agree with your will?

What relationships has God brought into your life that are part of his providential care for you?

Who has God called you to care for and serve as His instrument of providential care for their life?

Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Day 337 – December 3<sup>rd</sup>

Acts 21:37-23:35 — Coincidence? I Think Not!

We don't even know his name, but the role he played in Paul's ministry was as significant as any other. He was Paul's nephew, and he just happened to be in the right place at the right time. Was it merely coincidental that this young man overheard the plot to assassinate Paul, or was it divine providence and part of God's plan in Paul's life and the life of his nephew?

Now, because this story is recorded in the Bible, it may be easier for you to see and acknowledge God's providential role. So then I have to ask, "Do you acknowledge God's providential role in your life as well?" You may never be a famous missionary like the Apostle Paul, but that does not diminish God's love and care for you, nor is His plan for your life any less significant. Concerning God's plan and care for our lives, King David wrote, "Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed." (Psalm 139:16)

May you learn to acknowledge God's providential care as His plans for your life unfold.

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Day 361 – December 27<sup>th</sup>

Revelation 3:1-6:17 — Worship in Heaven

I love to imagine the scene in Heaven as God is worshiped. John describes it in so many places in this passage. Try and picture some of these scenes: "Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty ...they fall down and worship ...and they lay their crown before the throne and say, You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and praise ...then I looked again, and I heard the singing of thousands and millions of angels around the throne ...and they sang in a mighty chorus ...then I heard every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They also sang ...fell down and worshiped God and the Lamb."

Scripture describes our worship of God most often with falling down before Him or with our heads bowed. The scene we will witness will be so much beyond what we can imagine that we will surely be overwhelmed by God's glory and the scene of millions around us, all in worship of the Father.

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Day 360 – December 26<sup>th</sup>  
Jude 1; Revelation 1:1-2:29 — Hold Up the Light

I am intrigued by the messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). Each message has similar parts. Each message begins with an expression similar to “I know all your works.” Each message also begins with an introduction describing the Lord Jesus, yet in ways as are fitting to the message. Each message also offers a promise to “everyone who is victorious” or “overcomes.” Each message concludes with a sentence similar to “anyone who is willing to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The letters contain words of warning, as well as words of promise. Yet, note how the churches are first described; as lampstands (1:12,20).

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David called the Lord his “lamp” (2 Sam. 22:29). God’s Word is also identified as a “lamp” (Ps. 119:105). In Matthew five, Jesus describes Christians as “lights” that should shine in our world. Therefore, I can’t think of a better description of the church, God’s people, than a “lampstand.” Perhaps an appropriate question to ask would be: how effective are we at holding high God’s shining light in the world?

Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Day 33 – December 4<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 24:1-26:31 — Rescue

“So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials...” (2 Peter 2:9a)

The citizens of Feldkrich, Austria didn’t know what to do. Napoleon’s army was preparing to attack. It was Easter morning and a council was summoned to the church to decide what to do.

The pastor rose and said, “Friends we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord’s Resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands.

We know only our weakness and not the power of God to defend us.” The council accepted his plan and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.

Do you trust in God’s strength for your protection and in His providential care for your life, or do you trust in your own strength? May you know the power of God to rescue and defend you when trials come.

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Day 339 – December 5<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 27:1-44—Calm in the Storm

“Sometimes he calms the storm, sometimes he calms his child.” – Scott Krippayne

The text doesn't necessarily mention it, but I think that it is a fair assumption that Paul and his companions prayed for a safe journey on this voyage to Rome. So why was it that they encountered such a strong and terrible storm? Because God's plan was never to give Paul an easy journey, but rather to care for and use Paul in the midst of the storm.

You see, the providence of God is not like a get-out-of-jail-free card. God does not guarantee His children an easy life, but He does promise that He will always be with us (Matthew 28:20). In fact, sometimes God is even the one who brings the trials into our life in order to accomplish His plans and purposes in us and through us. Like with the Apostle Paul, God will not remove all the storms from your life, but He will use you in the midst of those storms.

Don't ask God to remove the trials and difficulties of life. Rather, ask Him for strength in the midst of it all.

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Day 359 – December 25<sup>th</sup>  
1 John 4:7-5:21; 2 John 1; 3 John 1 — What Kind of Love?

God's love for us could never be displayed greater than by what we remember at Christmas—God sending His Son.

This morning I was reading about another new world religion. It is called the Temple of Love. The followers believe all religions and peoples can unite under just the auspice of love. First John 4:8 intentionally reads “God is love” not “love is God.” Our world has so perverted and misinterpreted love. It is to them something that makes the world go around and makes it all happy and right. However, the love they describe is selfish, often freeing them from any kind of obligation or principle. God is not that kind of love. “Real love is like God, who is holy, just and perfect. If we truly know God, we will love as he does” (Life App.). So, if we are a child of God, who is love, what does it look like to love as He asks? God's love is holy, sacrificial and pure of motive. His love looks for ways to bring about our best: maturity, provision, protection, etc. So as we love one another, we are also to reveal that same kind of love.

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Day 358 – December 24<sup>th</sup>  
1 John 1:1-4:6 — A Child of Who?

We are enthralled by famous people. We cherish their autographs, mementos, pictures, books, and even their children. It's something special to be the son or daughter of so-and-so. Imagine being a foster child who is one day adopted by someone famous. It would instantly make you famous.

It is an unfortunate thing, but the children of God run the risk of taking their celebrated adoption for granted. You are not the child of a famous speaker, actor or politician, but a child of the God of the universe, your Heavenly Father who loves you tremendously.

Although somewhat hard to grasp but true, is that a child represents his/her parents. For instance, when the child of a prince or president makes a mess, we will soon hear about it through the media. There is a certain expectation and obligation that should be attempted to be met. As a child of God, we also have an obligation to live as a child of God should ("not living in spiritual darkness" 1:6, "obeying His commands" 2:4; 3:10, "loves other Christians" 2:10; 3:11, "keep themselves pure" 3:3).

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Day 340 – December 6<sup>th</sup>  
Acts 28:1-31; Ephesians 1:1-2:22 — Greatness of Christ

As I sit in my office and write, I am reminded that it is Veteran's Day and I am supposed to be appreciating the sacrifices made by American soldiers and the freedoms I enjoy as a result. Now don't get me wrong, I appreciate all that very much, but what bothers me are those individuals who are trusting in their citizenship as Americans more than the providential care of the God who created them and loves them.

Paul declared that Christ "is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come" (Ephesians 1:21). Wow! History has shown us that kingdoms and nations come and go. What would happen to your faith if the United States of America no longer existed? Would all hope for the gospel and our salvation be lost? Absolutely not! Christ is far greater than any one nation.

May you remember that, "The grass withers, and the flowers fall away. But the Word of the Lord will last forever" (1 Peter 1:24b-25a). God's providence will always be there.

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Day 341 – December 7<sup>th</sup>  
Ephesians 3:1-5:14 — Strength in Numbers

A while back, I was watching a documentary with my father-in-law on life in the ocean. A fascinating program, it was amazing to see how the schools of fish would swim circles in groups as tightly as possible to defend themselves against predators. On their own, these fish have no defense against these predators, but as a group they can survive with minimal casualties.

As I think about this phenomenon in nature, I see a clear connection with how the church functions as an instrument of God’s care for the believer. On our own, Christians can become lost, confused and vulnerable to spiritual attack.

However, God, in His infinite wisdom, has given us the community of faith, His Church, for our spiritual protection. He gives us pastors and teachers who instruct us in the truth of God’s Word; elders who care for us and watch over us; and ministries which afford us the opportunity to serve and meet people’s needs.

May you come to see your involvement in a church, not as a burden, but as a means for God to care for your needs.

My Prayer List:

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What does the end look like for you? You can KNOW that Heaven is your destination. If you don’t know that then make sure, because there is only one other option.

Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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What does it mean to be a “light?” I recently heard another believer tell me that we can shine too brightly and should be tolerant and careful not to offend anyone. Do you agree? Did Jesus say the world would agree with us?

What does worship look like?

How many things could you praise God for? Seriously try and think through a list like this.

If you knew “Harvest Day” (the final judgment of the world) was just one month away, what would you do differently?

Among other things, Babylon represents false religions of the world. Do you feel comfortable with what you understand about the differences between what you believe and what some of the false religions around you do?

Day 342 – December 8th

Ephesians 5:15-6:23; Colossians 1:1-23 — Armor of God

The truth that God providentially cares for His people does not guarantee that God will supernaturally intervene in our lives when trouble hits. It also doesn't mean that God will violate our own free will just to protect us in a given situation.

We have to own some responsibility for our lives and our actions. Often times I think that God's providence is a combination of appropriate actions taken by a sovereign God, and the utilization of resources made available to us by that same God.

This is where the illustration of the armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-17) comes into play. God, in His divine providence, has given spiritual resources for us in spiritual battles. It is inappropriate and actually quite arrogant for Christians to assume that God's providence means an easy life without having to prepare for spiritual battle.

May you see God's invitation to put on spiritual armor as one way in which He cares for you.

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Day 357 – December 23<sup>rd</sup>

1 Peter 5:12-14; 2 Peter 1:1-3:18 — Living by Faith

“We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor. – Alexander MacLaren

Have you ever found yourself stuck in your Christian life? You are trying to live for God, but you just are not getting anywhere. If you are anything like me, you have probably thought, “If I just tried a little harder, and prayed more, then I would be alright.” The problem with this thinking is that it is too focused on you. Instead of that approach, we must turn to Christ who has “given us everything we need for living a godly life” (2 Peter 1:3).

The means to living a godly life is not found in our personal determination not to sin, but rather in our faith in Christ.

May you see that, not only are you saved by faith, but you live by faith as Christ lives in you.

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Week 50 — December 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>

Philippians 1-4; 1 Timothy 1-6; 2 Timothy 1:1-4:18; Titus 1-3; Philemon; James 1-5;

This week’s passage focuses our attention on instruction, teaching and the power of the spoken word. The tongue has the power of life and death (Prov. 18:21). People have risen or fallen because of their spoken word. People have won or lost, have conquered or been defeated in life, have prospered or stagnated, depending on their spoken word. People have achieved great things or nothing in life because of the spoken word. We will learn the importance of discerning truth in what we hear and in making sure it is what we speak.

Bible Discussion Guide:

How do you weigh messages and motives (see Dec. 10)?

Are you more apt to find what’s wrong in a situation than you are what’s right?

Do you find yourself complaining, arguing and blaming?

Instead of asking how you would describe the way your walk matches your talk, try answering how you think your spouse would describe your walk matching your talk; how your children would describe it; how your parents would; how your best friend would; how your neighbor would; how the cashier or waitress would, etc.

Describe your prayer life (What do you pray most about? When is the last time you set aside an hour to talk and listen to God?).

How “studied up” are you in the Scriptures?

Why would Paul describe “endless speculation,” “arguing,” “talking foolishness,” or “wasting time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales” as false teaching?

List some of the perils you could avoid by studying, knowing, speaking and teaching the truth of God’s Word as opposed to anything differing even just slightly from the truth.

Day 356 – December 22<sup>nd</sup>  
1 Peter 2:4-5:11 — Suffering

“I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one.” – Jesus (John 17:14-15)

For the first-century disciples, like Peter, suffering for the faith was a constant reality. It did not bother Peter that Jesus neglected to pray that his followers wouldn’t have trials. Peter had witnessed first hand the persecution that the Lord endured. Why should it be any different for Christ’s followers? In fact, church tradition records Peter being crucified upside down, for he refused to die in the same manner as his Savior.

Did you notice 1 Peter 4:12-19? To live the word **is** to suffer. Christ’s life was marked by suffering, trials and persecution. He knew what awaited His followers. He knew the animosity of the world when confronted with the truth of the gospel.

May you come to view suffering, not as something to be avoided at all costs, but as an essential part of living the word.

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In the forests of Northern Europe and Asia lives a little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it.

Hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don't set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. The hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home, but doesn't enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life.

“But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God—who chose you to be his children—is holy” (1 Peter 1:15). How important is holiness to you? To live the word is to practice the pursuit of holiness. We have the living word (John 1:14) dwelling inside us (2 Cor. 11:10). This is not only what makes us holy, but it also calls us to holiness.

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Who are you mentoring and how is it going? As you pass on the torch, what will they receive from you?

Day 344 – December 10<sup>th</sup>

Philippians 1:1-2:11; Philemon 1 — Messages and Motives

“Whether or not their motives are pure, the fact remains that the message about Christ is being preached, so I rejoice” (Philip. 1:18). The Apostle Paul declared his imprisonment was a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel. With pure motives, he preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. However, others preached just to build up their own reputation, and out of jealousy, they used Paul’s imprisonment to try to make a name for themselves. It’s amazing how God can still use people and situations to bring Him glory that are truly not seeking His glory.

As with any topic, our motives should match the message we’re sharing. Perhaps even more so, our motives, our reason for sharing the message of Christ should match the truth and beauty of that message. It’s apparent that the beauty of the message of Christ had touched Paul’s life in such a way that he had joy even while imprisoned. Does your message match your motives? Knowing that the message of Christ was being preached caused Paul to “rejoice.” Does it cause you to rejoice?

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Day 354 – December 20<sup>th</sup>

Hebrews 11:1-12:29 — Fear Not

For a long time I read Hebrews 12:1-2 with fear. I had always assumed that the “cloud of witnesses” were there to judge us as believers as to whether or not we are living up to their standard. I was living a Christian life, constantly looking over my shoulder and concerned if I was doing it right all of the time.

Then one day, someone pointed out that the passage in Hebrews doesn’t imply judgment, but rather encouragement. The witnesses, those people of faith mentioned in the previous chapter (Hebrews 11), are not judging or critiquing us, but rather are cheering us on and encouraging us. They have been through the fire and know what it is to live by faith. The author of Hebrews is seeking

As you think about living a life of faith or living the word, do you live it out of fear and trepidation, or out of love and encouragement? Remember that you are loved and accepted as a child of God and that “perfect love expels all fear” (1 John 4:18).

May you live the word, knowing that there are many who have gone before who are cheering you on.

My Prayer List:

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Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Day 346 – December 12<sup>th</sup>  
James 1:1-3:18 — Speak Wisely

In just these three chapters, James has written volumes of material to consider pertinent to this week’s theme—the power of the spoken word. Yet he has also addressed the quandaries lying therein. He has informed us that “those who control their tongue can also control themselves in every other way,” but then, “no one can tame the tongue” (3:2, 8). He also tells us that Abraham’s faith was not the only thing that saved him, it was also by what he did (2:24). He adds, “Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless” (2:17). He also says it is more important that we are “quick to listen and slow to speak” (1:19). By nature we are more apt to do the opposite. And then he even starts off the letter telling us about all the good things trials bring into our life, but that God doesn’t tempt anyone (1:2-18). Temptations seek to create a fall, whereas trials seek to create an avenue for growth.

Perhaps the bottom line is this: if we are going to speak out, let’s make sure we know what we’re talking about.

My Prayer List:

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Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Day 352 – December 18<sup>th</sup>  
Hebrews 4:14-7:28 — Listening

“You are young only once, but you can stay immature indefinitely”  
– Ogden Nash

Hebrews 5:11-14 describes those Christians who are really not living the word in their daily lives. Actually, according to the author of Hebrews, not only were they not living it, they were not even listening to it (Hebrews 5:11).

This reminds me of the times when I give my children instruction. Often my instructions seem to fall on deaf ears only to receive a “I already heard you Dad,” when I repeat myself. What I now know as a father, and what I hope my young children will soon learn, is that truly hearing something implies a response with appropriate action, namely obedience.

So how do you respond to your Heavenly Father? Do you attempt to ignore Him as long as possible trying to fulfill your selfish desires? Do you listen and yet choose your own path? Do you listen and yet forget to do what He has asked of you?

Remember, to listen to the word of God without living out the word is not really listening at all.

My Prayer List:

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Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Day 348 – December 14<sup>th</sup>

1 Timothy 3:1-6:10 — False Teaching is a Waste of Time

The Apostle Paul gives young Timothy a great deal of instruction concerning false teaching. Most often, when we hear the term “false teaching” we think of descriptions such as “those who are teaching wrong doctrine” (1:3), “those who deny truth” (6:3), or “teachings that come from demons” (4:1). However, Paul actually spends a seemingly greater amount of time warning against those who “waste time in endless speculation over myths and spiritual genealogies” (1:4), or those who “spend their time arguing and talking foolishness” (1:6), or those who “waste time arguing over godless ideas and old wives’ tales” or those who don’t “spend their time and energy in training themselves for spiritual fitness” (4:7), or those who “have an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words” (6:4).

What we teach must have priority, meaning we need to spend our time and energy speaking what is of most importance. It’s easy for us to get sidetracked and begin spending time reading, studying or teaching things that “don’t help people live a life of faith in God (1:4) or “are not foundational for a godly life” (6:3).

My Prayer List:

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Read Jesus’ prayer in John 17. What does He pray for that is surprising to you? What does He neglect to pray for that is surprising to you?

What has been your approach before when you feel spiritually stuck?

What are the spiritual resources that Christ has made available to us?

Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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How does knowing that God’s law is written on your heart and mind impact your life? What about your decision-making?

Do you ever feel that you are living life constantly looking over your shoulder to see who is judging you?

Imagine the “huge cloud of witnesses” mentioned in Heb. 12:1. What are they cheering you on for? What might they encourage you about?

How closely connected is living the word with pursuing holiness?

How does knowing that Christ lives inside you motivate you toward pursuing holiness?

What has been your attitude toward suffering for the cause of Christ?

Day 349 – December 15<sup>th</sup>

1 Timothy 6:11-21; 2 Timothy 1:1-18; Titus 1-3 — Promote Right Teaching

The spoken word is powerful; yet, to be most powerful, it must ring true. It is vital that we speak and teach truth and only truth. The first portion of Titus 2 emphasizes the importance of promoting right teaching. “This is the content of our faith. Believers must be grounded in the truths of the Bible so they won’t be swayed by the powerful oratory of false teachers, the possible devastation of tragic circumstances, or the pull of emotions. Learn the Bible, study theology, apply biblical principles, and do what you learn.” (Life Application)

Being “grounded in the truths of the Bible” means immersing ourselves in Scripture. We must know the truth well in order to recognize the counterfeit. In the currency world, those who professionally recognize counterfeit money spend their time studying the genuine and when a fake comes along they quickly identify it. In order to promote right teaching we must be studying Scripture. The greater devotion you expend to study, the better you will know truth and the better you will promote right teaching.

My Prayer List:

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Day 350 – December 16<sup>th</sup>

2 Timothy 2:1-4:18 — Sending Forward the Spoken Word

Every time I read Second Timothy I can't help but be reminded that these were Paul's last words. I can't imagine how young Timothy must have read them over and over. As Paul sat alone in the cold Roman prison awaiting his execution, he knew they were his final words (4:6). It's wonderful to read Paul's conclusion: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful" (4:7). Try and picture yourself at the end of life. Could you look back and know as Paul did that you had been faithful to God's call and that you had finished the race well?

Paul's spoken word had been powerful, true and honoring to God. He finished well. However, the spoken word was to live on. Paul was passing the torch. As he wrote, he mentored young Timothy. Beyond that, Paul essentially mentors each of us through his teachings, words, examples, etc.

Paul's life has a way of emboldening each of us to live, speak and teach the Word of God for the glory of God.

My Prayer List:

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Taking every thought captive to Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Week 51 – December 17<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>

2 Timothy 4:19-22; Hebrews; 1 Peter; 2 Peter

For those of you who have been reading this devotional through the entire year, the end is almost in sight. It has been a joy to journey through the scriptures with you and to help you discover the riches that the Word of God has for you. My prayer is that your experience of reading through the entire Bible this year has been an exciting opportunity that has changed your life. When you turn the calendar to January, I hope that you will now Live the Word. James 1:22 says, "And remember, it (the word of God) is a message to obey, not just listen to. If you don't obey you are only fooling yourself." So our theme this week, and I hope for the rest of your life, is to Live the Word.

### Bible Discussion Guide

Read James 1:19-27. What does it mean to you to "Live the Word"?

What changes has your daily encounter with the Word of God brought about in your life?

What is your first response to God's leading in your life?

Does listening to God include action for you? Why or why not?