

CREATE
IN ME
A CLEAN
HEART!



A 52-WEEK
MOTIVATIONAL DEVOTIONAL
FOR THE DISORGANIZED

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART! Devotional

by Amy Verlennich

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

JOSEPH, NIKOLAS, IZAK, GABRIELLE, IZABELLA, JEDIAH, JUDAH – My gifts from heaven, you are the reasons I continue each day. I know you are watching and learning from me, and while I pray you will do better than I've done, I want you to love your children as much as I love you. May you seek the Lord with all of your heart for all your days and find joy in glorifying Him while on earth by fulfilling His purpose(s) for you.

MICHAEL – My best friend and love. The road we have traveled has been far more chaotic than we ever could have imagined... and far more wonderful than we would have dared believed. I thank the Lord every day for you and how blessed we are that He took two sinners and made something so wonderful. May our marriage glorify the Lord always. Only you and God know how much I truly love you.

ELOHIM – How can I ever thank You for all You've given me? Through trials and joys, You have been there always and You've never given up on me. You've always had a plan, and a purpose. Lord, it's my prayer to glorify You in all I do. May my life be what You desire, and may my desire always be for You above all else. I love you.

...AND TO SO MANY MORE ALONG THE WAY - I wish I could list everyone who has been helpful in the creation and completion of this devotional, however, just like my life, it's been in a constant state of change and continual growth, and so there are too many people to name without forgetting someone (unintentionally). So, "thank you" to those of you who have helped me in one way, shape, or form in my life... because in doing so, you have also made this devotional possible. You may be family or a friend, or someone unnamed in an encouraging email or comment on my blog... but you have made a difference in my life, and I thank you.

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JUST A LITTLE NOTE...

I began writing what you're now reading when I was struggling with order in *my* home. I had tried to get things back "on course" with schedules and routines (I was organized *before* children), but I just couldn't get it together. I'd read good books and tried *many* things. Each time I would begin with a new attitude, and even get off to a great start... but after awhile, something (or some-little-one) would interfere and I would get discouraged, fall behind, and eventually... give up. I was missing something.

I cried out to the Lord *many* times to save me from my *turmoil*. That may seem like a strong word, but for those who have been there (or *are* there), you know what I mean. The embarrassment, shame, and self-loathing that had become a part of who I was and what I saw in the reflection in the mirror was paralyzing.

Then, as the Lord spoke, I began typing out His inspirations to me. What is written on these pages is what God led me to write. It helped me through my disorganization *and* my walk with Jesus. He pulled me through, as He always has, and it is *only because of Him* that this devotional has been brought to your eyes.

I'd like to tell you that when I finished writing this, my home was clean and organized... but to my surprise, that's not how the Lord answered my request. Instead, he had made me take a deeper look to the root of the problem... which was my heart. I learned many things throughout my journey... about myself, my home, my family, and my Lord. Even now, after adding three more babies and now another on the way, I know that I may never have the organized house I once did... and I'm okay with that. But, I can never stop cleaning out my heart and making sure that it's the best it can be for my Lord.

WARNING: As you draw nearer to God and begin to clean your heart, expect difficult times and frustration... and *be encouraged!* Remember, the enemy doesn't pay attention to those who aren't threatening. He would like nothing more than for you to continue to feel worthless and to drown in your disorganization forever. As you become more of what the Lord created you to be, satan (not capitalized intentionally throughout the book) will be doing all he can to discourage you... so STAY STRONG! This is a fight, and the Word of the Lord is sharper than any sword (Hebrews 4:12), so put on your armor and fight the good fight! ... *put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:13-17(NIV).*

With all that said, I pray that these pages will bless you, and that you'll find yourself anticipating spending time with the Lord each day. He wants you to know, **you are a person of worth** and YOU CAN DO THIS! Little by little, day by day, week by week, you will see the "big picture" unfold, and God will reveal His plan for you. It took you more than one day to get you in the state you're in, and it will take more than one day to get you out. Don't look ahead and try to see the finished product, for just like me, you have no idea what that really looks like. Don't look at the past because with each passing moment, you can't undo what's been done. Instead, remember: *this very moment* is a part in your journey. Lean on Him, and pray for guidance... He will direct your path! I pray that in reading this, you will not only find yourself one step closer to being better organized but, *more importantly*, that you will be closer to the Lord as you walk with Him.

Still Seeking,
Amy Verlennich
December 2007

BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

This is not *just* a devotional. It is an *experience* that will tell a story by the time it's finished while revealing to you many things about yourself, your heart, and the Lord Himself.

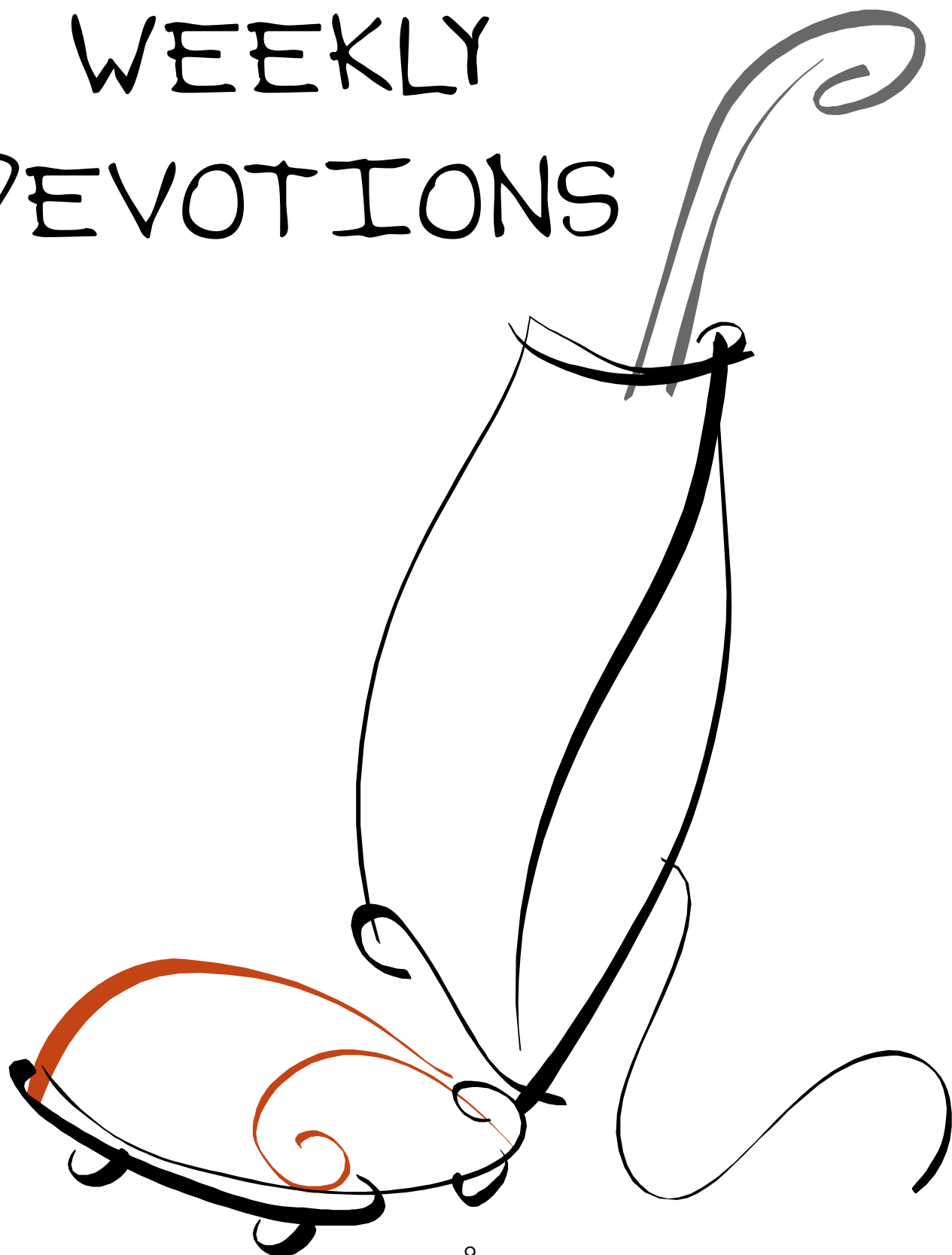
There are fifty-two devotions, one for each week through the year. Because this is a weekly devotional, you won't feel behind by missing a day if (when) it happens! Having a verse a week will help keep you on track and focused, but NEVER BEHIND! If you're gone for a few days, it's okay. Remember, it's a weekly devotion, so do what you can for the week, and maybe you'll even find time to meditate on the verse while you're gone (bring your devotional in case). Or, if you need to take a week off for whatever reason, then do so (without guilt!) and just start where you left off.

Begin the week by sitting down and reading the devotion on Sunday and then, throughout the rest of your week pay close attention to how the Lord is speaking to you and guiding you through each verse. Meditate on the bible verse each day for a week as you work on getting things done in your home. You may want ***A Clean Heart Scripture Verse Posters*** to hang in a place, or places, that you will see and serve as an aid in not only meditating on the verse, but also memorizing it as well. By meditating on each scripture *and memorizing them*, they will be kept not only on your mind, but in your heart as well, to help you through the difficult times of frustration and discouragement. ***A Clean Heart Journal*** is also available. You may do this daily, once a week, or sporadically throughout the week, but however you choose to use these pages, they are to keep a record of your thoughts and feelings as well as your self-evaluations and revelations about yourself and your heart throughout your 52-weeks. Keeping a journal will enhance your walk with the Lord as you draw nearer to Him throughout this cleansing time and serve as a reminder of your struggles and triumphs.

Most importantly, remember, this process is about more than the end result of your home... it's about the refining of your heart.

Now, let's get started!

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS



WEEK ONE: TRUSTIN' HIM

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

Have you ever played the game where someone stands behind you, and then you free fall back into the safety of their arms? It requires a lot of trust to be prone to getting hurt. After all, if that person behind you isn't ready for you, isn't paying attention, or is much smaller than you, chances are good that you're going to get hurt!

Now imagine that God as the one standing behind you. It changes *everything* doesn't it? There's no reason to worry that He isn't ready to catch you... He *knows* when you're going to fall. There's no reason to worry that He's not paying attention... He's *always* listening. And it's obvious that there would be no reason to worry about Him being too small to catch you!

Think back on the times when you trusted in *someone*, or *something* else. Were you ever disappointed? Did you ever fall and there was no one there to catch you? God will be there to catch you. Put your trust in Him... ALL of your trust, *with ALL of your heart*. God doesn't just want a little. He isn't okay with the "left-overs". He wants you to trust Him *completely*. "*Lean not on your own understanding...*" He doesn't even want you to *try* and solve the problem. He doesn't expect you to come up with the answers on your own. He just wants YOU. Put your trust in Him. Look to Him for the answers. Acknowledge Him in *everything*. He will direct your paths today, tomorrow, and forever.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

There is so much to be done and the task seems so overwhelming. I pray that You would give me the strength to start, and finish, what needs to be done. I give myself to You to make the changes in me that need to begin. And as I go about each day this week, I pray that I would not drift from You, but lean on You for understanding and for You to direct my path. I submit myself to You and trust You with my life and with all of my heart. Direct me Lord. Be there to catch me when I fall, and give me the strength that I need to continue on. I trust You Lord. Be with me now and throughout this week, and the rest of the year, as I look to You to finish the tasks that are ahead of me.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK TWO: YOUR CONFUSION... OR HIS PEACE?

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace... 1 Corinthians 14:33 (NKJV)

Mountains with cool streams running through snow-capped rocks...
An infant sleeping in his cradle...
Waves slapping on the beach with the sun melting into the sea...
Total silence...

What comes to *your* mind when you think of "peace"? Go ahead... think... Think of something until you actually begin to *feel* yourself relax.

Okay, that feeling you have? That *calmness*? That sense of *peace*? That's *nothing* compared to what God can give you. His peace is like no other.

Have you been feeling as though a *little* confusion has slipped its way into your life? (Okay, maybe a lot of confusion?!) Then relax... Relax in knowing that in a world full of confusion and chaos, there is Someone who still remains in control. Someone who *is* peace.

God will be the peace that you seek, *when* you seek Him. He *is* peace. He also likes order, and wants us to come to Him for direction. So, before you go another step, before you spend another moment trying to plan what it is that you *must* do next on your "list of things to do", seek Him *first* to find peace in the midst of confusion.

Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
There is confusion in my life right now, and even though I've tried to make sense of it and tried to fix it, I can no longer put "bandages" on a wound that goes deeper than what I can see on the surface. I pray this week, as I come to you to get out of my state of confusion and chaos, that You would guide me and bring me peace.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

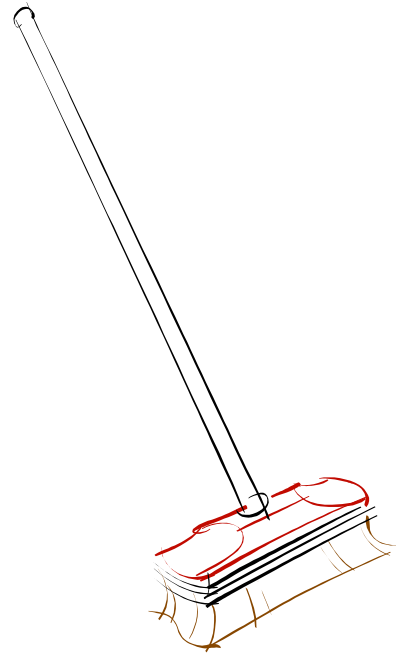
WEEK THREE: ONE STEP FORWARD

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely..." Hosea 14:4 (NKJV)

Have *you* had a little "backsliding" in your life? Does it seem for every step you take forward, there are two more you take backward? Do you feel as though you will *never* get caught up, let alone, get AHEAD?!

The Lord promises to heal your backslidings, your mistakes, and your struggles. Not only that, but He promises to love you *freely*! Imagine for a moment, buying a month's worth of groceries, getting to the cash register and then watching everything you bought ring up *FREE*? You did nothing to *deserve* free groceries! What a generous gift! The Lord's love is an even better gift than that. You certainly did nothing to receive *that* kind of a gift, yet "Mr. Perfect", the Creator of all things, gives His love freely to you!

Remember this week that no matter what has happened to bring you to this point, the Lord loves you *freely*. You can do nothing to deserve it... and you don't need to because He does it just the same. Rejoice in knowing that He will "heal" your backsliding, *AND* all the while, love you freely!



Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that You will pull me ahead and help me to remain focused on You so that I will not continue to backslide further and further. Bring me to where I need to be so I no longer struggle daily from my past faults and inadequacies. Restore me at last! Let me feel the love that You give freely. Help me remember I am special and loved even when I don't feel lovable. Thank you Lord.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK FOUR: DIAL "G-O-D"

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. Psalm 116:1-2 (NIV)

You know the kind of mess you're in. You know how you feel about it too. But even if no one else knows or can understand, there *is* Someone who does. You can not hide from Him; He knows everything. He knows *how* you got here and the reason *why*. He knows all the answers. So why not *ask*? Have you tried? He *IS* listening. He *does* hear you cry out to Him. He hears your voice... and He *does* answer. Sometimes it's not as we would have imagined or in our timing, but He *does* answer. And here's something you may not have thought of before... *He loves to have you need Him*. Hear that? *He loves to have you need Him*.

Maybe you've drifted away. Maybe the Lord is allowing this time of brokenness to lead you back. Maybe the Lord just needs you to "pick the phone up and call." You don't need to worry about a long distance charge. He's already paid that with His Son. For you it's free. All you have to do is pick up the phone and dial. There will be no busy signal. He will not put you on hold to answer the other line. You don't have to leave a message. He is there, waiting with great anticipation for it to ring. He will be excited to hear you, and will love to have you need Him. Call upon Him today. Call upon Him tomorrow. Call upon Him as long as you live. He has been there before, and will be there again... now and forevermore.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Hello? I'm calling because I need You. I just flat out need You. My heart is longing to have You. My life, the way it is, cannot go on in this disarray. I need You to help me out of this. I need You to give me the answers. I pray that You would give me those answers in Your timing. I pray that You will use this time as a time of growth for me, and that I will learn the lessons You have for me. And even though it may not be easy, I know that You will be here with me through it all as you have always been in the past, and that all I have to do is call.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

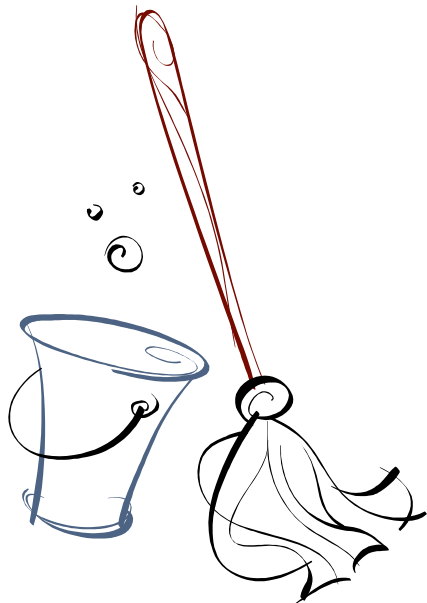
WEEK FIVE: THE LORD'S DISCIPLINE

Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak... My soul also is greatly troubled... Psalm 6:1-3 (NKJV)

Boy, doesn't *that* sound like a child begging not to be disciplined?! How many times have *you* done wrong, maybe even *knowing* that it's wrong while doing it, and then cry out to *not* be disciplined afterward? Acting *just like a child* pleading not to be punished, how many times have *you* done the wrong thing, unknowingly or knowingly, and then *prayed* that the pain would be gone, or better yet, that it would never begin?!

You are the Lord's child, and like a child needing correction in order to learn, the Lord disciplines his children in order for them to learn or they would never change... never learn... never grow... and *certainly* never become more like Him.

The troubles you are enduring now are a result of something you *must* face and learn from. If you remain faithful, the Lord will use these trials to His glory, and you will learn from it all *if you keep your heart open to hear Him speak*. Remember, if you use this time to draw nearer to God, He has a plan, and maybe even a lesson, for you to learn from this time of struggle. Admit to the Lord that you are weak and draw closer to Him for your strength. He will get you through, and bless you along the way.



Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
I cry out to You, for I feel too weak to carry the burdens I
bare. I feel so helpless and discouraged. I am so
troubled by my disorganization and the tasks that need
to be done. I pray that this week You would have me
see some light at the end of all of this as I look to You for
hope and peace. I know that I have let things get out
of control, yet don't want to suffer the consequences. I
am ready now to learn what lessons You would have for
me throughout these tough times. I come with a willing
heart. I am listening to your discipline, and accept it,
knowing that I will be a better person because of the
lessons learned along the way. Thank You for loving me
enough to teach me how to be more like You.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

WEEK SIX: "GET OUT, DOUBT!"

"...Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Matthew 16:23 (NKJV)

"You? Organized?!"

"Haven't you read every self-help books, and look at your house... it's still a disaster!"

"When are you finally going to get organized?!"

"I'll believe it when I see it..."

Have others doubted you? Have you tried to get your act together many times before, but come up short with others looking on? It's tough *feeling* like a failure, let alone someone *telling* you that you are.

So, now answer the question, do *you* doubt *yourself*? Have you given into those thoughts that are telling you, "You're never going to get it done"? STOP right now! Those thoughts are *not* of God, and are certainly *not* going to help you in your quest to overcome your obstacles! Those thoughts are of satan, and there is *no* room in the heart of Christ for the enemy!

Every time you feel yourself slipping, say this verse aloud... scream it if you have to! When any thought that comes to mind making you doubt yourself, remember that you are doubting God. Now, that just sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Doubting the Creator of the Universe?! If the Lord will give you the strength you need for each moment of every day (and He will), and certainly will give you the power to defeat the enemy (including those degrading thoughts) than any negative thoughts you allow yourself to believe is essentially doubting God (whom, by the way, believes in you).

Don't forget, with the Lord, you can do *all* things, so don't doubt yourself, for He made you, and you are a work in progress... a progress in which He is with you in all the way!

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Release me from my thoughts and feelings of doubt. I give them to You in place of Your love and hope. I want to be mindful of You and all the precious gifts You've given me. I pray that I will not feel overwhelmed and give into thoughts that undermine my abilities, therefore undermining You. I trust You to help me get the tasks that lie ahead of me done. I know that I can succeed. Let me draw my strength from You and not allow the things of men and this world to swallow me up, but instead, rely on You to free me once and for all.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK SEVEN: WAKE UP CALL!

Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food. Proverbs 20:13 (NASB)

"Beep... beep... beep... beep... beep... beep... beep..."

Don't you hear that?! It's your alarm clock, and it's been going on (and off because you keep hitting "snooze") and you're accomplishing *nothing*! You have a have a "good" excuse you say? Up late?... and with good reason to be sure, but by *not* starting the day out right, you've begun the day on the wrong foot before even stepping out of bed. You're "points behind" on your daily tally, and chances are good that once you *feel* you are behind, you'll get tense, more frustrated, and that will lead to anger and biting someone's head off; which leads to feelings of guilt and despair. It's a horrible cycle that you want out of, and it's why you're trying to get organized in the first place!! All this from getting a little extra shuteye!

Hitting "snooze" on your spiritual life will do the same thing. Eventually you will feel so behind that you will cry out from helplessness instead of exclaiming shouts of joy and thankfulness from hope and faithfulness. Don't "sleep in" on the Lord by not spending the time He longs to be with you. Don't get so overwhelmed with the things of the day and world, that you miss out on what He's given you in your life; this day... at this very moment.

To be certain, there are days it would be easier to sleep in. Hey... there are days it would be nice to just *stay there*! But that is *not* in God's plan to get you organized. You can not ignore the tasks that lie ahead or keep putting things off. They will never get done that way. And, in the process of getting organized, you can't put off the Lord either. Open your eyes and seek Him *first*, and then, you will receive the Lord's portion of life, hope, and strength for the day, and all the days to come.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for this beautiful day that You've made. It is beautiful if for no other reason than that. Please give me the strength to wake up each day with the mind set that it will be a wonderful day. I pray that I will not give into laziness or procrastination, but remain focused on the tasks that lie ahead of me for each day. Lead me in the way that I should go. The tasks may seem overwhelming and not my first choice on my "List of Fun", but I pray that I will remain faithful to my goal and that I will seek You to give me the "food" of Your Word to continue on and be fruitful in my efforts to get organized. I also pray that I would not get so caught up in what needs to be done, that I put You on hold. Help me to see all the blessings You've showered on my life.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK EIGHT: A HEART OF GOLD

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts. Proverbs 17:3 (NKJV)

The following is a drama... (You may even be familiar with it.)

The Cast: The Teacher – God
 The Student – you

SCENE OPENS TO A PLACE SOMEWHERE IN TIME ON EARTH.

THE TEACHER: Today we'll be having a test.

THE STUDENT: (*flabbergasted*) A test?! But I didn't know about a test! I didn't study! Wait a minute... what's the test on?!

THE TEACHER: I can't tell you.

THE STUDENT: (*in disbelief*) What?! You can't tell me?! You can't even give me a *hint*? I need the answers! How can I pass a test if I don't even understand the question?!

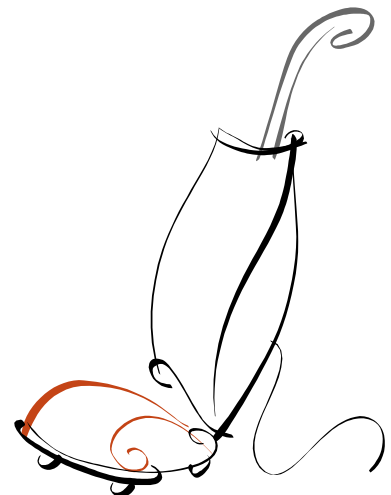
THE TEACHER: You'll have to trust Me to help you find them.

THE STUDENT: FIND them?! Can't you just GIVE me the answers?

Sound familiar? Whether you've had tests in school, getting your driver's license, or college boards, tests can be difficult and get our heart pumping, especially when there's a lot at stake. Maybe you've had a moment in time when you were invited into a conversation and felt like you just didn't have enough information to contribute any thoughts of your own? Or, how about being in a new place, seeing new faces and knowing *none* of them? In all of those circumstances a feeling of awkwardness comes into play because something is missing... something like knowledge and understanding!

God's "tests" for us can make us feel the same way. Proverbs 17:3 talks of silver and gold. *The Nelson Study Bible (NKJV)* explains: "*The refining of silver and gold is an exacting process, involving skill and considerable heat and stress. The refining work of God on His people often requires stress too.*" (*Underlining mine.*)

Are there days when you think, "*Hey wait a minute... I don't even know the answers to this one! How can I get it right if I don't even understand the question?!*" You may be missing the point, however. In your fear of not being prepared, don't forget



one very important thing. The answers that you're looking for may lie solely in the *process* of answering the question. The answer *may* not really matter at all. It may be that God is using the time that you're seeking answers to grow you into someone better; someone with a better understanding, and someone closer to Him. Through the heat and pressure, let Him refine you, and your heart into something priceless.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that any of the things You give to me as lessons to grow, will bring me closer to You. Help me to not get stressed when I don't know the answers, and to remain calm and faithful in You. And through the times I struggle, help me to remember while I'm being refined, I will be "like silver... when I feel the heat, I will result in becoming "like gold". I know through the tests of my heart, if my focus remains on You, and not the test itself, I will be okay. Please help me to not get so caught up in the "test" that I forget the only answer I need is You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK NINE: DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

"Seek first God's kingdom and what God wants. Then all your other needs will be met as well. Matthew 3:33 (NCV) Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." Matthew 6:34 (The Message)

Does your mind ever drift to bad things that *could* happen? Do you spend time thinking about the "what ifs" of life? Does it show in your attitude or the lines on your forehead (there from frowning)?

Worrying comes as naturally as breathing for some. Some are obsessed by the uncertainty of everything around them. Others hide it better and it comes out only when there seems to be a full load of insecurity. There may be different "degrees" of worry, but no matter how *you* might rank as a "worrier" on a scale of one to ten, worry is worry... and Jesus tells us not to do it. He states it in such a way that it seems ridiculous to worry. He says there's no reason for it. Seems plain and simple... *"Don't get worked up, don't lose sleep, and don't worry... period."* There are no "what ifs" or "buts" to that.

"But the bills are overdue and we're not getting paid until next week!"

"Don't worry."

"What if I never get married?"

"Don't worry."

"But I'd been working that job my whole life... how am I ever going to get hired somewhere else now?"

"Don't worry."

"What if the cancer doesn't go away?"

"Don't worry."

"What if I die before my children?"

"Don't worry."

Jesus commands us to not worry about tomorrow... to "take one day at a time". Tomorrow has enough to deal with and you'll just go crazy thinking about it. There's no point in questioning it because you don't know the answers. It's a waste of time wondering about it because you could never fully understand God's plan, even if He explained it to you. There's so much more to our life than what we see here on earth.

Can you imagine saying, "Hey God... I'm not sure what *You* had in mind for this, but I came up with this GREAT idea and thought *You* might like to hear it. Maybe *You* hadn't thought of it before." Sound ridiculous? Well, that's exactly what worrying is to a Christian... ridiculous. If you believe in a God who can come to earth as a man, die on a cross for the sins of the world, and then rise again after three days, certainly you can believe that He can take of you and any problems you might encounter! And, if *He's* taking care of things, why are you worried?!

He tells us that all we need to do is "seek the kingdom of God and what He wants FIRST". That's it. That should be our only concern. *"Come to Me first. Think of Me first. Before you take another moment to begin to worry about something else, think of ME",* He says. Are you getting the picture? *"Then, everything else will fall into place",* he says. *"AFTER you've put Me first, then I will take care of everything else, in MY way."*

What if He doesn't answer how you want? Well, you *do* have a choice on that one... it's "simple". You can keep worrying about *how* the Lord will answer all your needs, or you *could* just relax and rely on the fact that He will.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I confess that I have worried about too many things and today I give them to You. I release those worries, breathe in Your peace, and relax in knowing that You have everything under control. Please help me to remember the next time I begin to worry, to seek You first. In all the areas of strife in my life I come to You and give up the "what ifs" and "buts" and trust You completely. I don't know how I'm going to get the tasks that lie ahead of me done, but I will no longer worry about it, and instead look to You for the answers and guidance, and watch Your plan unfold in my life. Thank You for reminding me that worrying is a futile response to the Creator of Everything.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

WEEK TEN: DO YOU NEED A "TIME OUT"?

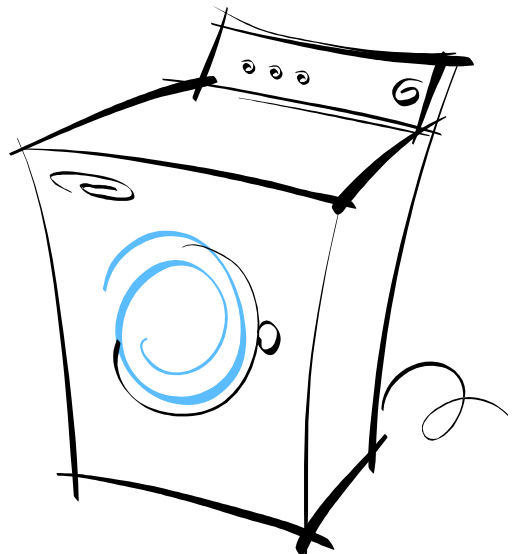
As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me." But the Lord said to her, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42 (NLT)

Now that you've begun your "quest" to be more organized, it's time to be reminded of something more important than your home... *people*. In Luke 10:38-42, Martha was so busy in trying to make things "perfect" that she forgot WHO was there! Jesus was there in *her* very own home, and in her "quest" to have everything *perfect*, she was missing an opportunity to sit with the Son of God!

Mary sat to listen, but Martha had other plans... she had a "*list*". You know, a schedule, a "to do" list, routine... whatever you might call it in *your* life, Martha had one too, and she wasn't putting it off *just* because she had company. In fact, she became even *more* intent on getting it all done while Jesus was there! Wouldn't want the company to see a mess and think she was lazy! (Sound familiar?) She may have had good intentions, but when things started to go "against HER plans" she lost focus on what was *really* important.

While it's important not to lose the ambition to get the things done on the "list" that you've made to get organized, it's even *more* important not to forget that life still happens. It will not stop, or even slow down and wait until you've gotten your life in order. You are in the *process* of getting things organized. In that process, don't get so caught up in "getting it all done" that you forget what's important... The friend on the phone needing companionship... The friend at the door wanting fellowship... The precious lives of your children asking to be held... The man of your dreams home earlier than you'd anticipated... Don't look at these moments that stop you from your "mission of cleanliness", but as gifts from God. You can choose how you will look at these interruptions and they will be missed opportunities if you decide to get too wrapped up in *your* list.

It took time to get to the state of "chaos" that you're in right now, and it will take time to get out of it. Don't get yourself worked up. It's a work in process, just like you are. Look at your mess as the Father looks at you. See the potential and how wonderful it will be when it's all



done, but until then, don't forget to allow the blessings in that God is choosing to send your way each day. He sends them *not* to discourage you, but to give you hope and remind you of what's *truly* important.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Please help me to get done the things that You want me to accomplish for the each day this week and help me to handle any interruptions to my schedule in a manner that is pleasing to You. Give me peace in knowing that I will "get it all done" but only in Your timing. I pray that through this process I will not take the people in my life for granted, or the precious moments that I have to spend with them, and when I begin to loose that focus, I pray that You would remind me of the story of Martha and Mary. Please help me to be like Mary, not Martha, and chose Jesus over the house cleaning. Remind me that my mess will be here tomorrow, but the people in my life may not. Thank You for the precious lives and relationships You've blessed me with.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK II: WRITTEN ON YOUR FOREHEAD

...Make Your way straight before my face. Psalm 5:8 (NKJV)

So you're well on your way to getting things organized, but it probably hasn't been easy. You're doing something different than normal, and that certainly affects everyone around you. It's not easy changing what's "normal", even when you're making a positive change. It takes time to make something new a habit, but don't give up! You're doing the right thing by trying to get things back on track and in order.

Don't feel lost and helpless in your quest either. No matter how far behind you are, the Lord will make a path for you (no matter how much clutter needs to be cleared!). Take a moment to visualize God taping a note to your forehead... on it is what *He* wants you to accomplish. What does it say? You will be able to see it *if* your focus remains on Him. Keep your focus on Him in ALL the things that you do this week. Seek His will for your life, and if at any point you begin to lose sight of Him, refer back to that note taped on your forehead that reads, "His way *EVERY* day!"

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your goodness and caring enough for me that You would have a plan for me to seek. Make Your way straight before my face. I pray that Your Will would be clear to me as I go about each day this week. I know that You have a plan for me, and that plan is not just for the future but for today as well. Make it as clear to me as a note taped to my forehead, and if I diverge from Your plan, feel free to "slap" another note on (gently)!

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK TWELVE: STRENGTH TO BRING THE HOUSE DOWN

Then Samson called to the Lord, saying, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray..." Judges 16:28 (NKJV)

Does the state of disarray that you're in feel like it's weighing you down? Does it feel as if you're being pressed? Do you feel overwhelmed and as if it's just too big to conquer? Think of Samson (and if you're unfamiliar with this particular story, take a moment to read Judges 16 beginning at verse 13). He was a mere man... a strong man, but still just a man. And no matter how much he could "bench" he still knew he needed God for the strength to bring a temple down. He called on the Lord for help. God heard his cry and gave Samson the strength he needed for the task at hand.

God will give you strength too, whether it's physical or emotional, for the task that lies ahead of you. No matter how overwhelming it may seem, have faith and know that God will give you the strength you need. Samson brought the house down... literally. That's a pretty big, and unbelievable task... but only for an unbeliever.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Remember me today and give me strength. I have faith that You will deliver me from the overwhelming tasks that I'm facing. I know of Your great works in the Bible, and I'm reminded of Samson and what You allowed him to do. Give me strength Lord, physically to stay well and fit to finish my task, and emotionally to keep healthy thoughts about it along the way. Thank you for answer to prayer Lord. Thank You for giving me strength in You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 13: PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me... forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12&14(NKJV)

Whether you're willing to admit it to others or not, you are not perfect. (After all, there is *some* reason why you're reading this devotional!) Here's the good news though... *No one is. Not one person...* only God. So, you know that mother that brings picnic lunches to the park for her children that look as if they just got cleaned up to come and get dirty?... *Not perfect.* That man that brings his wife flowers or a card every day?... *Not perfect.* That woman with a body that could stop traffic during rush hour in New York City?... *Not perfect.* That family that always smiles with children who sit quietly during church?... *Not perfect.*

You've struggled because you are "drowning" in your lack of organization. There are days that are better than others, but over all, you're anything *but* perfect in this area, and even though things are *not* perfect, you still need to press on. Regardless of what may be going on in your life, people need to look at you and see Christ in your attitude *no matter what your present circumstance is* with your goal to be complete as a Christian.

Wow, what volumes that would speak, huh?! Can you imagine being so focused on reaching *that* goal that everything else would just pale in comparison? *Everything* else would seem insignificant. *Everything* else wouldn't seem so overwhelming. To want Jesus Christ as badly as... you want your home to be clean? To want completion as a Christian as badly as... you want to be organized? Wow, now *that* would really speak volumes, wouldn't it? You know how much you want a clean and organized home... is the desire to win God's race the same?

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I admit that in the past I have gotten caught up in my disorganization and lost what I should be focusing on. Instead of desiring to become complete as a Christian, I have desired other things; a clean house, good children, a doting husband, or just a "wonderful life". Please forgive me Lord and help me to not loose my focus on what it is You desire me to be. I long to have You touch me this week Lord. Reach me each day so I can feel Your presence. I yearn to be complete, even more than I need to have my tasks completed. Help me to stay true to that. Thank You for Your patience and love through all of my imperfections.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 14: "BE STILL"

Be still and know that I am God... Psalm 46:10 (NKJV)

Ever seen an old car in the junk yard go into the Crusher? The car is pressed, glass breaks, and the body of the car comes out looking flat as a pancake.

Have *you* ever felt like that? Have you ever felt as if you were being "pressed"? Even so much as to the point of breaking like the glass? The "crusher" in your life could be anything... unpaid bills, neglectful spouse, disobedient children, crying baby, laundry pile, messy house... anything that gives you the feeling that there is no way out... that there is no hope... that *you need to do something* to get yourself out of the pit. The more overwhelmed you feel, the more you try to do, and the more the crusher falls on you and *s-l-o-w-l-y* you feel as though you can no longer breathe. You're ready to break.

Now imagine the Lord's hands in-between you and the Crusher as a shield protecting you from it pressing you to the point beyond repair. His hands around you, covering you, touching you and preventing the Crusher from completely squeezing you.

That's what the Lord does. His hands safeguard you. No matter how far behind you are... no matter how hopeless it seems... no matter how pressed you may feel... the Lord is there. He will protect you from harm. Now, that does *not* mean you won't have struggles. That does *not* mean you will not be "pressed". It *does* mean, however, that the Lord is your shield and protector. *He* determines how much pressure will be applied to your life. *He* decides how far the Crusher will go. *He* is in control. *You* are in His hands. The more you struggle to get out, the more you fight... the Lord allows the Crusher to slowly squeeze, until you are willing to just lay there, to "*be still*", in His hands, allowing Him to shield you, letting Him be in control... and to just listen to Him.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm tired of fighting. I'm tired of struggling. I'm willing to listen and "be still". I need You and I admit that as things have gotten worse, I may have asked for your guidance, but did not always remain patient in waiting for You to answer. Help me to be still Lord. Calm my fears and give me peace. Thank You for protecting me from being squeezed too much, and thank You for allowing me to be pressed enough to remind me that it isn't me that can make this better but You, for You are in control. I submit myself to You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 15: THROUGH THE DARKNESS

I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. Isaiah 42:16 (NKJV)

Until you experience something first hand, you will never have a true understanding of it. If you were to try and explain "blindness" to a child, he wouldn't understand what it would be like to be blind until you put him into a completely black room and he "saw" darkness. Only then, *after the experience*, would the child have a true idea of what it would be like to be blind and appreciate the gift of sight.

Times of trouble, confusion, chaos, distress, and sadness can be your own kind of "blindness". There are times no matter how hard you try to understand your circumstances; you just can't see an end. You just can't figure out why. You feel as if you're in a sea of blackness and it can appear as if there will never be a way to get out. You feel blind. However, if you never experience darkness, you will never truly appreciate light.

Your blindness can be anything that you just hadn't planned on, anything you just didn't see coming, or the time period of not knowing what the Lord wants for you. It's possible that the "blindness" you're experiencing right now is to gain a better appreciation of the times when you will see clearly again. It could be for you to have a better understanding of what being "blind" and relying on someone else is like or... maybe you're being made blind so you **have** to rely on Someone else. Take comfort in knowing that the Lord will lead you through the times you cannot see your way.

"Hey Lord! I can't see! I'm blind! I guess I really have no other choice than to turn to You!"

Hmmmmmm... Maybe that's the plan.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for making me "blind" so I can see nothing but You. Today I will rely on You for everything, as I blind man relies on his seeing-eye dog. Lord, make the darkness light before me, and my crooked places straight. I pray that I will continue to seek You for the answers. Thank You for being there Lord.

In Jesus' name,

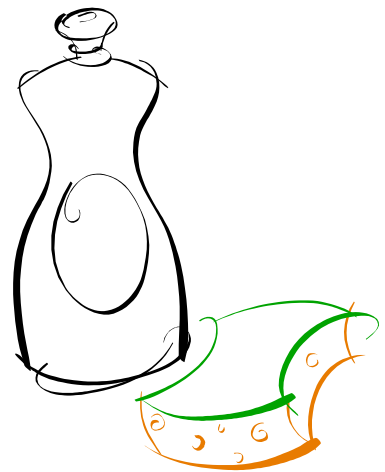
Amen

WEEK 16: CAST YOUR BURDEN

Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily... My heart is severely pained within me... "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wonder far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you. Psalm 55:1-2;4;6-8;22 (NKJV)

Have you ever felt like running away? You know, take off and not tell anyone where you're going? Not forever necessarily, just long enough to remove yourself from the "daily grind"? How many times have *you* felt like "wondering off into the wilderness" to "escape the windy storms and tempests" in your life?

We've all had "those days". Some have even turned into weeks, months, or longer. You eventually get to the point where "running away" to escape (even if it's just behind the locked door of the bathroom!) is the only way you will *ever* be at peace! It's a draining feeling. To feel so hopeless... so desperate... to have so much to bear... with no where to escape... and no one to turn to...



"Excuse me..."

"Yes?"

"I couldn't help but over hear your thoughts..."

"What?"

"I said I couldn't help but hear what you were thinking. It comes with my job description. I hear everything, and I couldn't help but hear what you were just thinking. Anyway, I heard you thinking that there was no where to turn and no one to turn to."

"Yeah, that's what I was... hey, how did you know that?"

"People may feel as if there's no where to escape and no one to turn to, but there is. There's Me. I am an escape. I am the One to turn to. Cast your burden on Me, and I shall sustain you... every time. I don't promise that you will never have tough times, but I do promise to continue to sustain you. Give Me your burden my child. Don't keep it to bare it alone. Give it to Me. Let Me be your escape. Let Me be your relief... let Me."

He's calling you to cast your burden on Him. Why won't you give it to Him? Why would you want to keep it? He can't take it unless you're willing to give it up. Don't hold on any longer. Give it to Him today. He will sustain you.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I feel so overwhelmed and have wished for an escape from all of it. I have thought of what it would be like to not have my burden and it just makes me feel more overwhelmed at the thought of never being able to get ahead. Today I cast my burden on You. I pray that You will sustain me to get through this. I lean on You for strength. Thank You for wanting my burdens. Thank You for loving me so much that You sustain me through it all. Thank You for being my escape. Today I pray that I would find a great peace in knowing all of this.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 17: "W.U.K." IN YOUR HOME

Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. Proverbs 24:3-4 (NKJV)

Wisdom, understanding and knowledge... have *you* been looking for them... in the piles of papers on the desk? ...under the laundry pile? ...somewhere in your purse? ...or possibly in the dirty dishwasher? Are these three things eluding you in your house? Are you wishing you had even *one* of them on any given day, let alone *all three*?

Are you thinking, "*I can't get organized the way it is! How am I supposed to bring in wisdom, understanding and knowledge?*" Guess what... *you're* not. He is.

You can't achieve it on your own. You need help, and when you ask for it *and* seek the Lord you will begin to see what He has for you. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a home blessed with wisdom from the past experiences the Lord had you go through to share with others? How about understanding through God's eyes and the knowledge to learn from the Lord's teachings? Build, establish, and fill your home with these riches. Through this struggle in your life right now, the Lord may be trying to do just that.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the house that You have blessed me with. I'm so sorry that I haven't been as faithful with it as I should be. Help me to get through this trying time. Help me to stay focused with my eyes on You. I long to have wisdom, understanding and knowledge in my home. I look to You for these precious riches Lord, and wait on You to provide them in Your way. May my mind, eyes and heart remain open to You to speak to me. Through all of this, bless me with increasing wisdom, understanding and knowledge, so my home will be overflowing with Your goodness and love.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

WEEK 18: ORDER IN YOUR HEART

Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14:40 (NKJV)

de-cent (adj.) 1. Respectable; worthy. 2. Adequate; passable. 3. Of reasonable attractive appearance.

or-der (n.) 1. a condition in which each thing is properly disposed with reference to other things and to its purpose; methodical for harmonious arrangement 2. prevailing course or arrangement of things; established system or regime.

These are some of the definitions behind “**decent**” and “**order**” in Webster’s American Family Dictionary. Wouldn’t it be nice if these two words could be used as descriptions for *your* home? Can you imagine your home being “respectable” and “of attractive appearance”? Are there days you’d settle for just “adequate and passable”?! How about everything having an “established system”? Can you fathom any kind of “harmonious arrangement” in your home as you look around you *right now*?

This isn’t just about your home, however. This is about your life and the way you live it. It’s about more than a clean house or organized schedule. This is getting straight to the heart of who you are. In the midst of your chaos, have you let your heart go so long that *it* is no longer “decent” and in “order”?

Your heart needs to be right before anything else can be. As you look at your home today, think of your heart first. What does *it* look like?

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I am struggling with my lack of organization. So many things are suffering because of it, but the one thing that has suffered the most is my heart. Lord, I pray today that You would help me to bring my heart back to the place where it needs to be so my whole being will be “decent” and in “order”. I know that when this happens, other things will begin to fall into place. I know that I will be better throughout my struggles if my heart is how it’s supposed to be. Create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit in me today Lord.

In Jesus’ name,

Amen.

WEEK 19: LET HIM LEAD YOUR HEART

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Proverbs 16:9 (NKJV)

Have you ever been witness to a toddler not getting his way? The toddler is told "no", something is taken away, or something isn't given to the child and as a result, the child cries. Embarrassingly enough (especially if it's *your* child), cries turn into screams that turn into a tantrum and the demanding toddler becomes *extremely* unruly. Now, as the adult in this situation, it might just be easier to just give the child his heart's desire (especially if it's in front of many over seeing and judgmental adult eyes)!

Now, suppose the young child wanted to touch the "pretty" candle light. You wouldn't want the toddler to do that. He would get burned. "Hot" you would say. But what if the tears continued and the screams persisted? You may decide the only way the child will truly understand what you're trying to prevent is for him to experience what you're trying explain... so you decide you will let the child *briefly* touch the fire to know what "hot" is. It is only then that the toddler understands what you were trying to explain all along, and while the touch of the flame may have been brief, it still hurts. You nurse the "owee" with kisses and gentle, loving words explaining you were trying to prevent any hurt from the beginning, for you knew what was best all along.

So, how often are *you* like that child, begging to have your own way until finally your heavenly Father says, "Alright... this is going to hurt but you will have a better understanding of what it feels like because of it"? How many times have you pouted until you got what you *thought* you wanted only to find out that it wasn't what you'd planned? How often do you then cry out to God to nurse your "owees" from broken pride and all the painful experiences He tried to spare you from, but allowed you to go through, all because of your own stubbornness? More than your fair share? Too many to count?

The Lord is Mighty. He is Everything and All, but He is also your Father and you are His child. He will direct you. Let your heart's plans allow you to do so.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I admit I have wanted my way too many times to count. I have made plans of my own without Your leading. I have cried and pouted until You allowed me to get hurt so I would learn and be reminded Your way is the only way. Today I open my heart for You to direct my steps. Lord, lead me in the way I should go. I come to You for advice and Your wisdom. I come to You for Your love as my heavenly Father. Thank You for loving me, your child, so much that You are willing to teach me so I will learn and grow into the person you have planned me to be.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 20: PATIENCE THROUGH TRIALS

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. James 1:2-3 (NKJV)

Wishin' Cinderella's Fairy Godmother would pay a visit to your home? Thinkin' the *only* way the work ahead of you is going to *ever* get done is if it happens by hearin' a little "bibbity... bobbity... boo"?

That *would* be the fastest way, but in waving a wand that cleaned your home, organize your life, change your spouse, shed unwanted pounds, or anything else you fancy, something would *still* be missing. Your *problems* would disappear, but the time and effort (and sometimes down right struggle) to get it all done would be gone as well, and you would never gain something truly valuable... patience.

Traffic jam... waiting room at the doctor's office... line for the women's bathroom... check in the mail... through your trials, you are to be joyful. Do you realize you can't get patience any other way? You're not required to have it any other time. You don't need patience when you're running on time. Patience isn't necessary when there's enough money to pay the bills. You don't have to have patience when everything is going well. You may possess other qualities like love, compassion, generosity, thoughtfulness, faith, humility, humor, or gentleness that you can "take out and use" at any time, but patience... patience is different. Patience is only gained *through* trials and struggles. It's called on *only during difficult times*. Now, that doesn't mean that it always makes an appearance during a struggle. After all, it's still up to us whether we *choose* to let ourselves be patient through a difficult circumstance. You can choose to wallow in your struggles and be miserable or, you can rejoice knowing that the Lord is giving you the chance to become more patient. It's a chance that comes by no other way than through trials and difficult times. How are you responding?

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the trails that I go through to help me become patient. Please give me strength during the times that drag on so that I would be able to endure them. Remind me that while going through those times, You are allowing me the chance to grow into a more patient person, and for that I'm grateful. Patience is a wonderful virtue, and I know there are many times that others have been patient with me. Help me to remember that when I feel myself being anything but loving toward another. Help me to wait on You in the answers to my struggles. Thank You for being patient with me Lord. I know that I just couldn't do this on my own. Only through Your strength and help will I get it all done... in Your timing.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

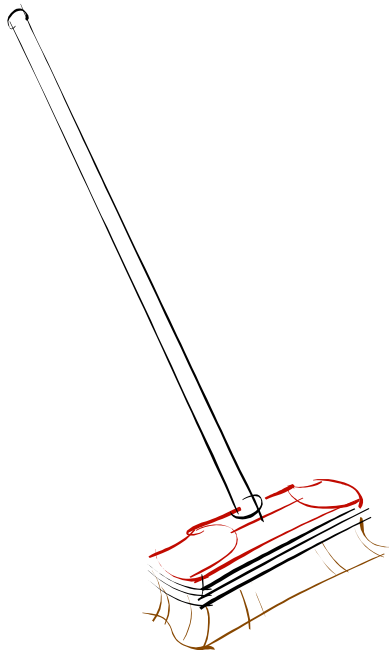
WEEK 21: LESS IS BEST

Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife. Proverbs 17:1(NKJV)

Going through possessions can certainly be a “freeing” experience as you get rid of things that you no longer have a need for, but it can also be stressful as you try and reason why you should or shouldn’t keep them. Pictures, yearbooks, the first outfit you brought your baby home in, or the ticket from the first concert with your spouse can each have some meaning to you. Then there are other things you may have been keeping for the time that you move, remodel, or “just in case” you need it “some day”. In fact, you may have kept so much that now you don’t know where to begin to get rid of things... you may not even want to... but *something* has to go because there’s just too much. You’re drowning because you’ve kept too many things and as the “collections” have grown; your house has shrunk as a result.

Has *your* house been full of strife as a result of you refusing to get rid of anything? Have you been “feasting” on clutter? Have the things that you’ve been saving for the “what ifs” and “some days” consumed your home and left you with piles and boxes of things to sort through? While it’s nice to have *some* reminders of the past, do you have so much that it’s become a *source* of your strife? Has it reached a point that it’s no longer a blessing for you to have so much? Ask yourself why you’re keeping it all. You know that the Lord will give you everything you need, but deep down are you afraid that you really don’t *need* everything you have? Are unwilling to part with it for fear some day you might *WANT* it?

Memorize this verse and hold it close to your heart. Say it to yourself as you’re going through things and determining what to keep and what to toss out in your “quest for cleanliness”. Remind yourself that the Lord will give you everything you **NEED** and by throwing or giving things away you will be blessed by getting your home back. You don’t necessarily need to get rid of *all* of the things that you have saved, but as you go through them, think of Proverbs 17:1 in another way... “Better to have less and be at peace, than to save for a rainy day and be overwhelmed with disorganized clutter!”



Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
I have saved too many things over time, and as a result, I have so much clutter. I have put meaning behind “things” and have been having a hard time letting go. I also have kept things thinking I may need them some day. Lord, I pray that You would release me from these feelings that prevent me from getting my home in order. Guide me so I know what to keep and what to let go of. Help me to not put so much emotional value on things that I become*

overwhelmed in what I have. Help me to trust You to give me what I need so that I can get rid of things that I haven't used, looked at, taken out, or "needed" in years. I pray that You would also give me peace as I get rid of things, knowing that I will have a better chance of being organized if I have less. Thank You for blessing me and always giving me what I need.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 22: RIVER OF CHAOS

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. Proverbs 21:1(NKJV)

At times our lives certainly can seem like a river. Things pile up to a point of "over flowing" and life just doesn't stop for you to catch up. Before you know it, you're way behind. It's stressful not knowing when or how you're going to be able to get back to way things once were. Sometimes, just as things seem to be going better and you seem to be catching up, something else happens to send you raging down the river again. It's miserable to feel so out of control.

The Nelson Study Bible has great insight on this verse. It reads, "*A person can look at a river and think that it is following a random pattern, but the water is following the direction of God's hand... This world's apparent chaos is God's work.*" Did you catch that? **This world's *apparent* chaos is God's work.** What *appears* to be chaos in your life is *still* God's work. That does *not* mean that God has caused your chaos. That does *not* mean that chaos, strife and terrible things that happen to you (or the world for that matter) are God's work. People still have free will, and the choices people make create those things. The Lord, however, remains in control no matter how out of control things seem. Through the troubles, surprises, and trials, the Lord is *still* in control. No matter how rough the river of your life looks right now, the Lord is still guiding it. There is a *purpose* for your trials, and God is at work in *all of it*.

Let this verse make the struggles in your life take on a whole new light. It's pointless to worry... ridiculous to complain. That's how God wants it... that's how He wants *you*. Remember as your life *seemingly* takes on a random pattern, that your "river of chaos" is following exactly in the direction of God's hands.

Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank You for working in my life. I'm sorry for all the times I've been overwhelmed by everything that has piled up around me and reacted by complaining about the apparent problems instead of praising the fact that You are in control of it all. Guide my chaos today Lord, and let me rest assured that everything that comes my way is by way of Your hand.*

*In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

WEEK 23: FAITH TO MOVE YOUR MOUNTAINS

*"...Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."
Mark 5:34 (NKJV)*

Are you so overwhelmed in your life right now that you seem to be grasping for what little faith you can muster? Do you find that deep down; you're really not sure how the tasks that need to get done will *ever* be finished? Are you feeling as if everything that still needs to be done has become your focus and has "afflicted" you and your faith?

Faith believes in something unseen. Having faith in our Lord believes in *Someone* unseen. Don't look at your daily chores and get discouraged. Don't be consumed by the tasks that need to be done. Don't feel as if it will never get done to completion. Allowing yourself to believe and feel *those* things is not having faith in the Lord. Believe in Him. Believe He will help you. Believe it will get done. Stay strong in Him and believe, so that the Lord will be able to say to you, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."*

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that I will be focused on You, and that my faith in You will be strong. Do not let me get consumed with the things of the day. Do not let me stray from You while trying to get things done. Instead, I pray that You would be with me and guide me. I pray for my faith to be strong so You can heal me from my afflictions of this world. Bring me peace this week Lord, and let me rest assured that You know all the answers and know how this will come to an end. Thank You Lord, that in a world of so much confusion, I can relax and have faith in You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 24: A CLOSER WALK WITH HIM

God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children. This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's training... At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God. Hebrews 12:7;11 (The Message)

It's not always easy to be on the receiving end of training, especially when it's something you just aren't "getting". Training is hard. It takes work to get it right. When you're learning something, your faults may be exposed. Your pride may get hurt when you're reminded through mistakes that you aren't perfect. It may be tough, but you're *supposed* to be accepting of discipline from God the Father.

God is your Father and you are His child. He loves you and needs to instruct and discipline you so you will not only become what He created You to be, but so you will grow closer to Him. He loves you and wants to walk beside You always in all things. He wants to see you grow and one way He does that is to guide and instruct you. When you stumble, He will be there to pick You up... but He is also training you. He won't just brush off the dirt and let you go on your merry way. He wants you to learn from your mistakes and grow because of them.

No matter what you're struggling with right now, the Lord is NOT punishing you, but instead He is trying to teach you. It's up to you how you will respond and what you will learn. He knows best and wants what's best for you. Be willing to accept His training and learn from your mistakes and you will find yourself closer in your walk with Him.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Although it is hard to receive discipline, I know that You do it for my own good and because You love me. Help me to accept Your instruction willingly even though, at times, it may be painful. I pray that I will learn from my mistakes to avoid having to go through them again. Continue to guide me. Thank You for loving me enough to want me to grow into something better than what I am right now.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 25: THE ROAD TO WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

...If you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding... then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:1-5 (NKJV)

With the daily demands life makes, it's all too easy to get caught up in everything around you. The crying baby, the ringing phone, the pile of bills, the pot boiling over, supper burning in the oven, the spilled apple juice, the clothes needing to be folded and put away, the e-mails, the trip to the grocery store... they make it *so easy* to take your focus off the Lord. Do you find that during those times *if* you do talk to the Lord, it's only to shout out a S.O.S. prayer? You know the one... "PLEASE SAVE ME LORD!"

Meditate on the Lord *constantly*, in ALL you do. Then when something unpleasant or unexpected happens, embrace it. Don't hate it. Don't think of how it could've been different. Don't even *wish* it would've been. The Lord is answering your prayers for wisdom by giving you your circumstances. He is blessing you with understanding *through* your trials. Embrace what the Lord is truly blessing you with, and thank Him.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I admit that in the midst of daily life, I caught up and loose my focus on You. I'm sorry for the times that I've called on You only to save me from the struggle at that moment. Help me to keep Your words in my heart throughout the day so that when anything unpleasant or unexpected happens, I can embrace it to gain wisdom and knowledge from You. Thank You for everything You give me Lord, including my trials. Thank You for loving me enough to want me to be better than I am.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 26: IN ALL... "EARNESTLY"

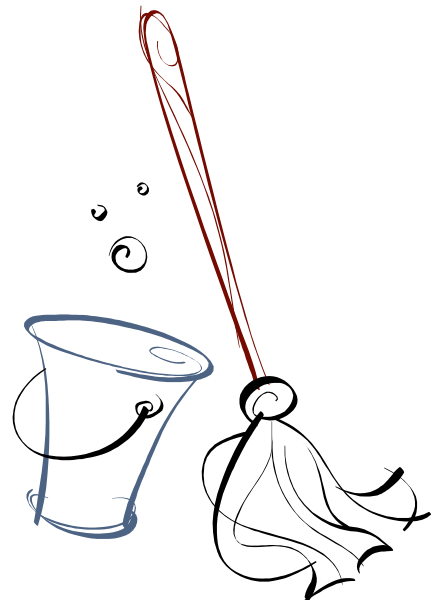
Here's what you must do—and don't put it off any longer: Get down on your knees before God Almighty... Job 8:5 (The Message) ...and if you are pure and live with integrity, he will surely rise up and restore your happy home. Job 8:6 (NLT)

Have there been moments in your life where you feel as if you've fallen into a hole and have no way of crawling out and wished you could start all over... somehow make different decisions to avoid the outcome you've found yourself in? Have you ever felt as if you've made a wrong turn and have helplessly lost your way? Where do you turn when you can't start over? Where do you find the strength to go on?

The Lord wants us to seek Him *earnestly* (the NKJV using this exact wording). To do that, it needs to come from a sincere, genuine, and thoughtful heart. Think back to some of the times when you've sincerely sought after the Lord. How many of those times were when you were most desperate? Unfortunately, times of extreme anxiety and hopelessness, tend to bring us to our knees with the most frank and heartfelt cries. Now think, how many times when things returned to some form of normalcy, did you *not* seek Him with the same intense desire? Did you leave Him on the "side-lines" until another moment came when you could no longer make it on your own?

What state is your life in now? On a scale of one to ten, where does your life fall into place with how intently you've been seeking the Lord? He *wants* you to cry out to Him. Don't put it off any long. Is it time to get down on your knees before the Lord and make things right once again... or maybe for the first time?

Make the choice to choose to desire the Lord always, and not just when things look bleak. Make the decision to seek Him throughout your days this week in *everything*, and to do it with a heart that cries out like your heart that's cried out when things have been discouraging. Sometimes it takes something bad to bring about something good. Things in your life right now are chaotic and you need help. Call on the Lord and seek Him earnestly... and then, don't forget Him when He begins to restore your "happy home".



Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
Today I'm seeking You with all of my heart and asking You to help me out of the mess that I'm in. I've reached the end of my rope and can't do this alone. I need You. Please help me to get out of this "hole" and back on track. Give me a sense of purpose and courage*

to face what lies ahead. Encourage me to finish what needs to get done, and when things begin "looking up", I pray that I would continue to seek You as desperately as I am now. I'm sorry for all the times when I've looked to You when times were tough and then set You aside when they were better. Please forgive me. Thank You for Your love and grace. Thank You for helping me through this.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 27: GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

...The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 (NKJV)

Do you get discouraged when you look at the appearance of your house? Do you dream of what it would look like if it were just “picked up”, had “splash of paint”, or if you had that coffee table you’ve had your eye on for *an eternity*?

As humans, we’re big into appearances. Look around you. Magazines to renovate, remodel, and restore your home. Commercials with attractive models grace the screen. You don’t have to look hard before you run into *some* way to improve *some* thing *some* where. With all this hype towards aesthetics, it’s easy to get caught up in it all, leaving you with the feeling there’s something you need to do, or have done, in order for things to be beautiful and in order.

While the examination of your house is necessary to get it clean and organized, you need to make sure that you don’t get so wrapped up in the outer appearance of it that you forget to make it your home. A house is just “a building in which people live”, but a home is more. A home is “a place in which one’s domestic affections are centered” (taken from Webster’s American Family Dictionary). There *is* a difference. Your house is what you *have*. Your home is what you *create*. Your house is what *you see*, but your home is what *you feel*. The more emphasis you have on your house, the more at risk you become of having less of a home for you and the rest of your family living there.

While getting your house organized, don’t forget to look at it as God looks at us. Go to the “heart” of your home when you need to see how it *really* looks. Look past the repairs. Look beyond the messes. Instead, look at your family. *Look at you*. What is it that the Lord sees when *He* sees your home? He *is* looking.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Please help me to not get so focused on the outer appearance of my house that I put aside my home. Even though I am behind and need to get many things done, I don’t want my family to suffer. Please help me maintain a balance that will help me to get ahead and still create a welcoming atmosphere for all who dwell here. I pray that those who dwell here would long to come home to while away and look back on with fond memories. I also pray that when You look at my heart, You would be pleased. Continue to guide me and look at things through Your eyes.

In Jesus’ name,

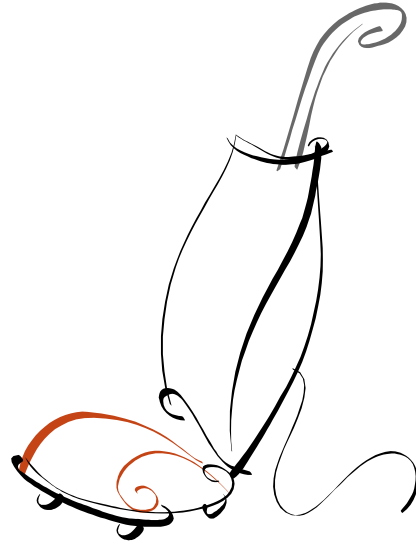
Amen.

WEEK 28: DON'T BE A B-A-A-A-A-A-D SHEEP

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psalm 23:1 (NKJV)

Computers, convection ovens, microwaves, vacuums, bread machines, blenders, curling irons, blow dryers, washers, dryers, and more... With so many advances taking place constantly, there are "conveniences" in the world we live in today. Even shopping is "easier" since it's no longer contained to the malls, but available through mail and the Internet. So much to see... So much to *want*...

While there are countless things on the market today that *could* be helpful to in getting your life in some sort of "order", it's important *not* to waste time thinking about (and wishing for) things. Baskets, totes, bins and file cabinets are not bad in and of themselves. However, if too much time (or money) is spent dwelling on *things*, you may find yourself in a precarious situation. Wanting is dangerous, because it's a feeling that has a tendency to grow. It can manifest itself and spread through you like a virus, growing until you are no longer happy with what you have. Chances are good that you already possess too much and that's how you became overwhelmed to begin with. You are struggling right now because you have become disorganized to the point where you're not sure *when* you're going to get it all back together. So, do you still find yourself wanting for more?



A sheep doesn't have this problem. A shepherd looks after him. He takes care of him. He makes sure that he is nourished and safe. The sheep has no need to want for *anything*. Everything is taken care of *for* him. Everything that the sheep needs is provided for by the shepherd. In the same way, the Lord is *your* shepherd and you are His sheep. *He* will take care of you. *He* will make sure that you are nourished and safe. There is no need for you to want for anything. *He* will take care of everything. Everything that you need will be provided to you by The Good Shepherd. So, the next time there is something that you would like to have, stop before it consumes you and leads you down the path of discouragement. Instead, ask the Lord if it's what *He* wants for you. After all, the Shepherd knows what's best for His sheep.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I confess that too many times I've wanted more than I should have. There are so many enticing things in the world today and even though they're not all bad, I know there are

times when I still shouldn't want them. I pray that when there's something that I would like to have, that I would bring the request to You Lord, and that You would give me the answer. I know that there are things that would help me to get organized, and I pray that You would show me those things and that I would not get more than what I need. Help me to be wise with my purchases.. I have too much now Lord, and as a result, have come to where I am now asking You for guidance and help in getting my life in order. Thank You for being the Shepherd and loving me enough to take away any need of wanting. Why should I want when You take care of all that I need? I pray that this will be carried in my heart, as well as my head.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

WEEK 29: CONTENT WITH YOUR CONTENTMENT?

...Contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 1 Timothy 6:6-7 (NKJV)

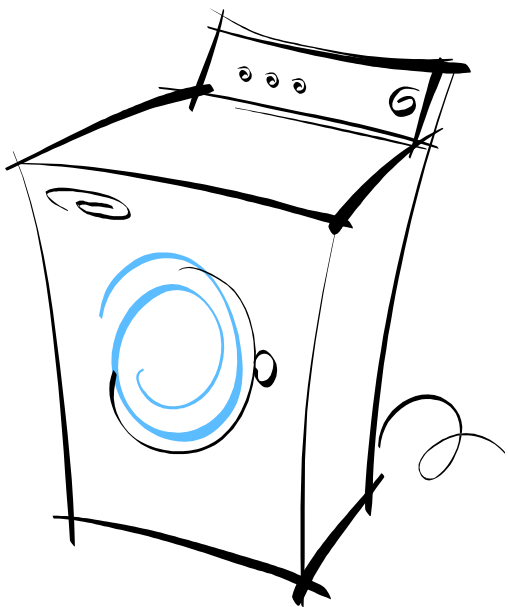
"A gift?... For me?!... Oh thank you!... I just love gifts!..... Oh... it's... uh... nice... I guess... um... you know... I don't really like this color... and it's not the brand I normally buy myself... oh, and you see this? There's a little mark on it too. Do you think I could exchange it and get something else?"

"But I picked it out for you."

"I understand, but I'm just not real happy with this. You know, all the other things that You've given me have been pretty great, but this is just not exactly what I wanted."

"But it's what I chose for you to have. You may not want it right now, but it's what you need."

Can you imagine having that conversation with God, telling Him that you're not happy with a gift that He gave you?! Discontentment is just that!! Everything you have is what the Lord has blessed you with. EVERYTHING! How you choose to respond to what He's given (or allowed for you to have) is up to you. You can't choose *what* He gives you. You can't pick things you'd like and then pass on the other things that might pose a problem for you.



Right now it may be easy to be discontent because you are behind and things are chaotic. It's easy to get frustrated and say to yourself, "As soon as I get this done, things will all fall into place. Then I'll be so happy." Be careful though. Discontentment is not an emotion that the Lord is "okay" with us having. It's like telling Him that He doesn't know what we need.

Are you content with what you have right now? If you *never* got another thing... If you *never* got married... If you *never* had a child... If you *never* went on a cruise... would you find yourself content? If the laundry didn't get done... If your husband lost his job... If the cancer didn't go away... would you be happy in the Lord anyway? What would it take to make you content with everything you have? A fire? A tornado? A hurricane? A flood? If everything you have were gone tomorrow, would you look back on it and know only then, how much you truly were blessed with?

There's no gray area when it comes to being content. You either are, or you aren't. The Lord has blessed you with many things by way of possessions and in the people in your life. You will not take any of those things with you when you leave this world, but you *will* leave people behind who will remember you. How will they remember you when looking back on your contentment?

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm sorry for being discontent. Please forgive me. I'm sorry for the times I was ungrateful in receiving gifts You gave that I didn't want. I know that even the things I didn't want were things You knew I needed. Thank You for all the blessings you've given me. Please help me to have a content heart, knowing that You will take care of everything. Please help me to not be dissatisfied with my house, or any other thing, but to be happy and rejoice in You always knowing everything can, and will be used to Your glory if I allow it.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 30: SWEET DREAMS

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds though Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)

Do you sleep peacefully or have you found yourself restless, thinking of everything you still have yet to do? Do you lie awake, tired and exhausted, but unable to enter "dreamland" because you're making a mental list of everything you need to do tomorrow?

The New King James version of Philippians 4:6-7 tells you to be anxious for nothing. NOTHING. NO THING is supposed to worry you. Instead, you are to be prayerful in everything. EVERYTHING. EVERY THING is supposed to be brought to the Lord in prayer. Not just when times are at their worst. Not when you feel you can't handle it anymore on your own. The Lord isn't an ambulance to be called on *only* when there's an emergency. He's not only the Great Healer and Restorer, but He's also the *Caretaker*. By giving your worries to Him, you are preventing anxieties from beginning!

Now read the same verse taken from The Message: *Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.*

Hand over your worries to Him. You don't need them. Turn your concerns into praises and prayers. In doing so, there will be a peace you will experience like no other. It will "surpass all understanding" when the Lord displaces the worry at the center of your life with Himself. It's unfathomable, immeasurable and unbelievable. By giving it all to the Lord, your heart and mind will be protected from corrupting influences and problems. He will keep you focused on the Truth. Be prayerful in *everything*. He will take care of you, and everything else. So, there's no need to worry. There's no need to be anxious. Put your fears to rest in Him, put Him at the center of Your life, and put yourself to peaceful rest.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for all You are. I come to You today, asking for You to remove all that is on my mind. (Take a moment to make your requests known to God...) All that is worrying me and causing me to worry and be anxious, I give to You and pray that You would give me peace and a sense of wholeness in You. Ease my mind so that I would be able to enjoy the things You've given to me. Help me to be less driven by what I think I need to do and remember to be more focused on what You want me to be. Give me rest Lord. Restore me this week, that I may know of Your peace that I can't explain, but just feel.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 31: GOOGLE "GOD" INSTEAD

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. These are the ways of the world: wanting to please our sinful selves, wanting the sinful things we see, and being too proud of what we have. None of these come from the Father, but all of them come from the world. The world and everything that people want in it are passing away, but the person who does what God wants lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17 (NCV)

It's all too easy to get caught up in things of this world. It can seem like everywhere you *turn to* there's another thing you need to *turn away from*. With so many things targeted at human desires, it can be especially hard for your flesh to fight the constant battle of good verses evil.

The Internet is one of these examples. It's amazing what it did for conveniences. It's also disappointing what it's done to men and women alike in so many other ways. The Internet has become a super highway for knowledge of good and evil. There's so much information at just the click of a mouse, and with so much, so easily accessible, it's too easy to find trouble without even trying.

You have become overwhelmed with your lack of organization. For some reason, you have gotten behind in one, or many things, and you're struggling. If you have a computer, be mindful of how much time you spend on it, and what you look at. It can easily suck up a day's worth of cleaning and organizing that you could be doing otherwise. Even your telephone can be a deterrent in getting anything done. Keep on task! You will not get organized and your house will not get clean by avoiding it (or by bringing more things into it from a shopping spree from e-bay)! Keep your focus where it needs to be and let your needs be where your focus is... on God.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

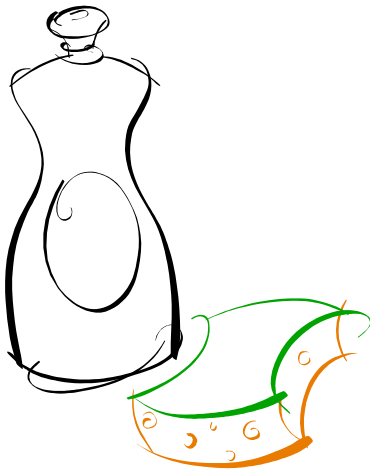
Thank You for everything that You've blessed me with. I pray that I would stay on task and focus on You so that I can get out of this terrible pressure of being behind. Help me not to stray by looking at things on the computer, or by talking too long on the phone. Give me energy to work hard to get things done and the stamina to see it all through. Thank You for the modern conveniences of today. I pray that I would use them for good and never evil.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 32: YOUR HEART'S WELCOME MAT

Remember to welcome strangers, because some who have done this have welcomed angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2 (NCV)



What are your immediate thoughts and feelings when there's a knock at the door? Are you excited at who might be there? Or, do you have a sick feeling in your stomach as you walk toward the door with a red face because of embarrassment as you open the door *just* enough so the person can't see into what a mess you live in? What do you feel like when *you* come through the door after being away from your house? When you come home, what do *you* walk into? What is the first thing you see? Whether it's an entry, foyer, living room or kitchen; what does it look like right now? Does it make you feel good? Are you relaxed at the thought of it?

The Lord wants us to be welcoming to people in our homes. Not keep them outside in the wind and rain, having to peer through a crack in the door because you don't want them to be able to see inside, or worse yet, because you can't pry the door open any further than that! If you've allowed the place that you walk into upon entering your home to become an unwelcoming place, then you need to deal with that. If your entire house is an embarrassment, then you need to deal with that too, but one day at a time. Today, focus on the entry of your home. Look at what you need to pick up, put away and clean. Think of why you feel anxious and hesitant when someone's at the door. *Then* think of being that someone receiving your welcome on the other side. What kind of a welcome do they get when your answer the door? *What is your heart?*

It's embarrassing when people see us at our worst. But, if you've let your home overtake your heart, then you need to re-evaluate. God wants you to welcome people into your home, no matter what it looks like. You are touching a person's life when they come in contact with you. It doesn't matter if it's a stranger or a close friend. Once they see you, you've become a part of their day; a part in their life. How you choose to respond to their presence in your life at *any* given moment is up to you. God may be sending you an angel, or He may be sending someone for you to be "Jesus with skin on".

While taking care of your house is important (the Lord gave it to you) don't forget that people are the Lord's *most precious gift*. What will you be like the next time there's a knock at the door? Remember, more importantly than what your house looks like, is what you are when you're in it.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the house that You've given to me. I pray that I would get things done so that I would feel better about people entering. I also pray that You would give me a sense of peace that comes from You so that I would be able to focus on who is coming into my home instead of what they are coming into. Take away apprehension when someone knocks, that I might be gracious and welcoming to all those who enter.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 33: PICKIN' UP THE PIECES

The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. Psalm 145:14 (NKJV)

Ever fallen down? Is your first reaction to look around and see if someone saw it? Are you more embarrassed than you are hurt? Wouldn't it be wonderful if someone were always there to prevent you from falling... someone to be looking ahead to see that bump in the road, or that obstacle to step over? Or, if you still stumbled, regardless of warnings, someone there to keep you from falling... someone there to uphold you? That would be great, wouldn't it? But that's impossible. Someone can't be with you twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week! *No one* can invest that amount of time in you. People are busy, and even if someone could be there *most* of the time, what are the chances that they would devote *all* their thoughts to your well being? Certainly no *earthly* person could ever...

But Someone *uniquely special* can. He is like no other. He is all-powerful and all knowing. He is invincible and unstoppable; omnipotent. He *is* there, always. He watches where you're going at all times, and carries you through. He warns you of pending trouble, and if you choose to ignore His advice, He sees you fall, but is still there to pick you up again. He's there twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, every minute, every second; always. He invests *all* His time in you. He's *never* too busy. *All* His thoughts and concerns are centered on *your well being*. HE is the *ONLY* one who can do that.

The Lord is there to uphold you and give you strength. He will be there the next time you fall down, and He will raise you up. Before He does that though, don't forget to pray while you're down there. It may be the reason you've fallen.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for being by my side and always looking out for my best interests. I look to You for the answers. Please help me to keep from stumbling and falling. When I do, however, I pray that I would use that time to draw closer to You, and learn from the lessons You have for me. Uphold me this week Lord, and give me the strength that I need to stand tall and walk through my life with confidence in You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 34: A GOOD GRASP OF THE SITUATION

Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. He shall deliver you six troubles, yet, in seven no evil shall touch you. Job 5:17-19 (NKJV)

Ever heard of the old saying, "When it rains, it pours"? Have you ever felt that way? One minute you're standing and then, BAM! You feel as if you've been knocked to the ground with one swift blow. You gain your senses and get back up. BAM! Down again. As you begin to recover and you're struggling to get back up, BAM! You get hit again... and again... and again. You grow weary from the struggle just to get up, and find that with each blow you stay on the ground longer. It takes everything you have just to open your eyes. You're weak. You cry out for help.

"I'm here."

How much longer can you live through this torment?

"As long as I allow."

How much more can you stand?

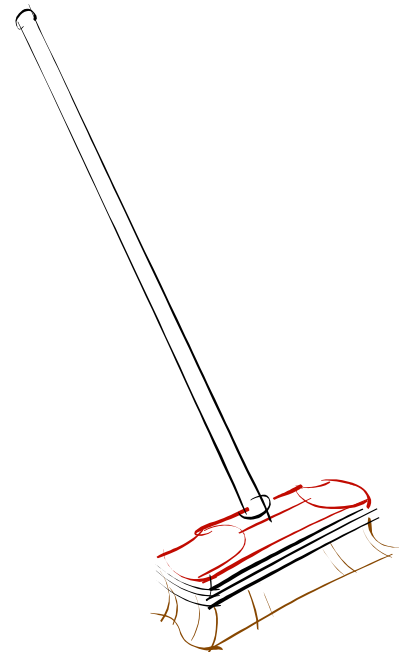
"As much as I feel you need to."

How much time before someone comes to save you?

"I am here, My child, and in **My** time, I will save you."

Do you hear the Lord speaking to you? There is a reason for what you're going through. Your trials are a part of His plan, and His plan is more infinite than you could ever phantom. His lessons can be tough, but in the end, it will be your gain and you will be better for having gone through it.

The Lord may allow trials, but you'll never know how many times you've been spared. It may make painful, but rest assured He will heal you. There may be bruises, but take comfort in knowing He will pick you up, dust you off, and give your feet a solid rock in which to stand again. The Lord knows best, and will give you *what's best for you*, even when it doesn't feel the best. Remember, some of your "bruises" could be from the tight grasp He's had on you... from never letting go of His precious child.



Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your never-ending lessons. May I rejoice always through trials, knowing You love me enough to want me to grow, and even force me to when I'd rather not. I pray that I would feel Your presence beside me and take comfort in knowing that even when I've been knocked down, You are still there. Thank You for correcting me so I learn. Thank You for allowing me to be bruised so I listen. Thank You for my wounds so I take time out. Thank You for my troubles, for I know there are countless more You've spared me from. Thank You for never giving up on me. Thank You for never letting me go from Your grasp.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 35: A BROKEN HEART

The Lord says, "Even now, come back to me with all your heart. Fast, cry, and be sad." ...Let your heart be broken. Come back to the Lord your God, because he is kind and shows mercy. He doesn't become angry quickly, and he has great love. Joel 2:12-13 (NKJV)

The heart is an amazing thing. Its function is crucial to our very existence. If stopped for too long, we stop. It's our source of living. It's no wonder; then, because of the significant role it plays to our survival, that the heart is also used to describe our "emotional state". Whether our heart is "breaking", "falling in love", or "aching"; the heart is attached to explain our feelings. We even use it to describe people, and whether they have a "cold heart" or a "kind heart". The heart carries a magnitude of images.

Our heart is also where the Holy Spirit speaks to us, and what the Lord *wants* us to give to him. He doesn't want outward acts of repentance. He wants an inner reformation. He doesn't want you to "pick up and repair" the surface. He requests a "cleaning and complete over-haul" of your inner-self. *He wants your heart.* He wants YOU. He doesn't just want you to *say* "sorry" but requires you to *feel* sorry. That may even mean brokenness. He knows your heart. He sees from within. He knows if you've surrendered your heart to Him or if you've been "neglecting your duties".

You have gotten behind in your life with one or many things, and while it's important to be organized, the Lord cares more about your heart. Your house, the bills, the kids, the spouse, the car, or the job... NONE of these things are more important to the Lord than what kind of condition your heart is. He will take care of everything else but YOU are in charge of your heart.

Before you "take care of" another thing, examine your heart. Does it need to be dusted? Maybe it needs to be completely washed clean. Whatever state your heart is in, don't go another step in trying to pick up your house until you have fallen down on your knees and cleaned out your heart before the Lord.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm sorry for becoming so consumed with the outer appearance of my home and myself, that I've left my heart to get dirty. I come to you to clean my heart. I want it to be new and right in You. I am broken. I bring everything to You that has contaminated my heart and caused it to become unclean. (Take a moment to repent to God by listing your wrongs...) Thank You for Your grace and forgiveness. I render my heart to You and pray that You would help me to keep it pure.

In Jesus' name,

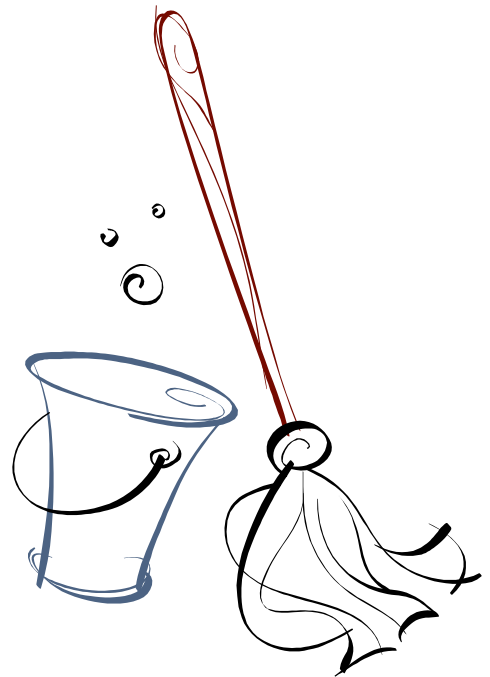
Amen.

WEEK 36: GAINING THROUGH LOSS

Then Jesus said to his followers, "If people want to follow me, they must give up the things they want. They must be willing even to give up their lives to follow me. Those who want to save their lives will give up true life, and those who give up their lives for me will have true life. Matthew 16:24-25 (NCV)

You may not think of it as gaining something when you lose something else in the process, however, there are things you can benefit from at the sacrifice of something else. Those who are married or have children know that they came at the expense of losing a fair amount of freedom that an otherwise single person has! While losing the ability to do whatever it is they want to do with their time, they gain other things. One example being the experience of a love in both giving and receiving that would have been otherwise unfathomable. The gain certainly would be considered more than the loss.

Your relationship with Christ is similar to that, in that, like marriage and parenthood, you can no longer think of only yourself. In fact, in order to have true life in Jesus, you must give up yourself *entirely*. You have to deny yourself. You need to put aside your desires, your possessions, your whole life even, and follow God. You have to "die and be born again" to have a new life.



With everything that's been consuming you lately, how much of your life have you given up to Him? Have you been unwilling to surrender yourself to the Lord? Have you been reluctant to "die" to yourself and have new life? If so, what's stopping you? And, even if you have renounced your life to the Lord, are you still holding on to bits and pieces? Are you guilty of withholding *portions* of your life from Christ? If so, why? The gain will be so *much more* than the loss. A new life in Christ does not insure a perfect day every day, but it *far* outweighs anything you have without Him.

Quit holding onto yourself. Stop keeping your life from Him. Break the ties that bind you to this world and free yourself with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He asks you to give up your life in return for gaining something else much more valuable and precious... a new and better life, in Him.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I give myself to You. I surrender and submit my life to have the new life that You promise to

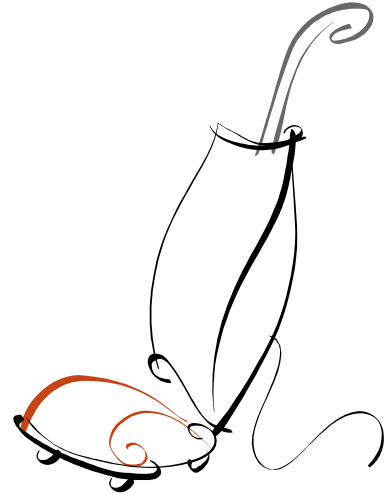
*give. I desire to follow You, and know that in order to do that, I need to die and be reborn. I also know that not just today, but everyday as I awake, I need to relinquish my desires. I pray that anytime I begin to drift, You would pull me back to You and Your precious love. I have gotten behind in so many things Lord, and have been caught up and preoccupied with things that need to get done. I pray that I would not get so wrapped up in the tasks left to do, that I forget to put You first. I lay down my life Lord, for one that You give me. In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

WEEK 37: LOOK UP AND LET GO!

Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, for to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up. Psalm 5:1-3 (NKJV)

"Why is this happening to me?"...
"If I just knew what I was supposed to do, I'd do it!"...
"What did I do wrong to deserve this?"...
"Why would the Lord allow that young child to die?"...
"What am I supposed to do now?!"...
"If I could just get out of this mess, then it will all be okay."...
"Why can't I just get it together?!"...
"Where is the money going to come from this month?"...
"Why, why, WHY?!!!"...

Have any of these words escaped *your* lips? Have they ever entered your thoughts? When you're struggling with something, or many things, do you have a tendency to want answers? Have you, at times, even *demand*ed them?



While it's crucial to talk to the Lord, it's essential to remember *how* you do it. The Lord wants to hear from you and for you to think of Him. However, He doesn't want it to be *only* when you're in trouble and under pressure. He desires you *constantly*. He also wants you to look to Him for answers but He doesn't want you to question the answers He gives. He knows what's best. He desires for you to be thankful through everything. You may not be able to hear God speak to you as clearly as someone talking to you, but He *will* communicate to you. He may not answer you in the way *you* would have chosen or in *your* timing, but *He* has a plan, and through it you will grow, if you continue seeking Him.

You may be weak in your life right now from all the struggling you've been going through. Know that the Lord has taken notice of your voice and has heard every cry. You may well be at the end of your rope. It's possible that you've been hanging by that rope so long that you're losing your grip and feel yourself slipping. SO, LET GO! You heard me! LET GO... and let God catch you! He's there. Quit the struggle! Stop trying to figure out the answers! Don't question your circumstances! Don't look down to see where you're going to fall, but look up for His direction instead. The Lord has it all under control. Why struggle to hang on another moment? The rope you've been hanging onto is eventually going to break. Focus on the Lord only... and **LET GO!**

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm so tired of constantly struggling. I come before You, not just for the answers to my questions, but for assurance. I pray that I would have some time each morning to talk with You, even if only for moments so that my day will start out right because it's begun with

*You. I know You have a plan for me and my life, and a reason behind each of my struggles. I'm sorry for not being thankful though my troubles, for I know that You have blessed me with so much, and that my trials will produce growth. Thank You for hearing my voice and every cry. Help me to look to you Lord, and let go of all my struggles, fears, worries and trials. Help me to just let go, Lord and let You do Your work.
In Jesus' name,
Amen*

WEEK 38: DESIRING MORE

Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4 (NKJV)

SALE!
FREE SHIPPING!
CLEARANCE!
GOING OUT OF BUSINESS!
10%, 20% AND 50% OFF!

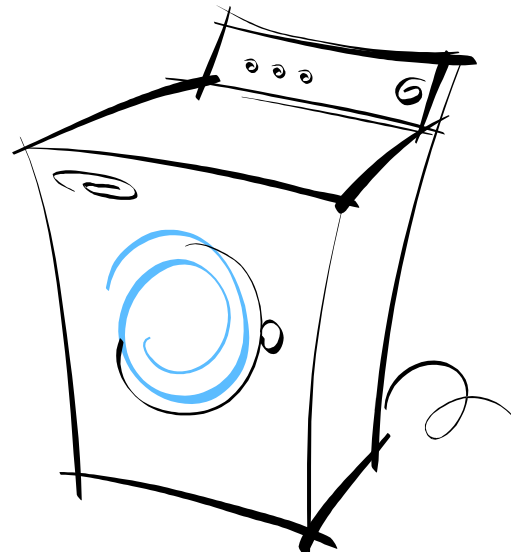
For the disorganized and “clutter bugs”, it can be hard to resist the temptation to buy, buy, and then buy some more. It seems that those who have “stuff” can never have enough, and when a sale comes ‘round... well, you’d better watch out because these people are downright ruthless!! They’re on a mission to get ALL of the deals, and from the armloads they carry, it would appear as if they have! It’s ironic that the *very things* they can’t get enough of are what have trapped them into the bottomless pit of their disorder.

Are you, to at least *some* degree, one of “those” people? Do you find yourself foaming at the mouth at the mention of the word “sale”? Do you get butterflies in your stomach from excitement as you go from price tag to price tag on the clearance rack? Do you actually get “giddy” when you think of everything you’ll bring home? Know that while you’re not alone, but that does not make it okay.

You have been stressed because you have been weighed down with the things you must do. You have gotten behind and you’re not sure how you will ever get caught up. In spite of all your frustration though, you still perk up at the thought of going shopping for more?! **STOP!** Do not buy another unnecessary thing! It’s time to get pleasure from something more unwavering. Something that won’t take up any more space in your home. SomeONE who can make you feel complete without ever needing to get anything more. It’s time to delight yourself in the Lord.

When you have a relationship with the Lord and seek Him daily, you will find your heart longing for the things of the Lord. Possessions will take a “back seat” as a result of the awe-inspiring feeling you will have from the Lord’s continual presence in your life. Your focus will become clearer and in effort to please the Lord, your heart’s desire will no longer be for things of this world, but of Him. It may not be easy to do, but it will be worth all the effort and the Lord will help you if you let Him.

You have a desire to get things organized and on track again, but you cannot continue bringing things into your home AND de-clutter at the same time! Be faithful in your pursuit to be better organized by seeking the Lord and His will. Remain dedicated to the Lord, and your task at hand.



Give up wanting things and begin taking pleasure in the Lord. Your desires will become His and He will give you the desires your heart yearns for!

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

My heart has desired many more things than You would want for me. I have wanted things and brought them home, only to get more behind than I already am. I pray today, that You would release me from the desire to want more. Take it away. Give me a heart that longs for the things that You would want for me. I want to delight in You Lord and everything about You. Help me to do so, so that the desires of my heart are what You want for me.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 39: LONGINGLY WAITING

But me, I'm not giving up. I'm sticking around to see what God will do. I'm waiting for God to make things right. I'm counting on God to listen to me. Micah 7:7 (The Message)

Have you ever watched a young child waiting to see someone arrive in their driveway? Watching out the window... opening the door... stepping outside... walking the length of the driveway... looking down the street... and then, with no sign of a familiar vehicle down the road, in his innocence, calls the awaited visitor's name *out loud* (as if that person will hear him). How wonderful to be the receiver of such a welcoming! How precious to be the one loving someone *so* much, that the longing is worth the entire wait for the moment the visitor will be able to respond to the shouts from that child. What an intensely agonizing, yet tremendously rewarding process. In the end, the child is overjoyed that his cries have not been in vain and he is able to; at long last, hold the one so dear close.

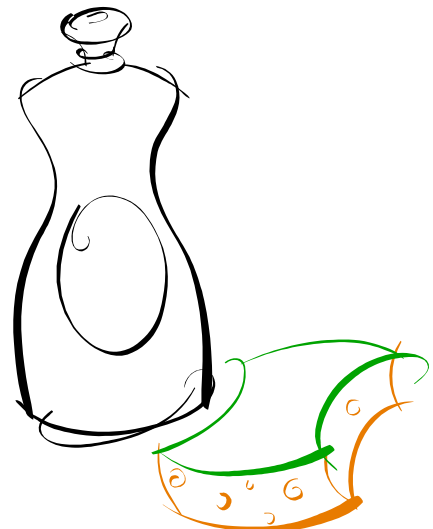
Now, imagine *yourself* that young child. No matter what your age, you are *still* a child of God, a creation of His Mighty Hands. He imagined and fashioned you into what you see in the mirror, and you are His *child*. Now, the visitor? It's God. God is coming to your house to see you. With that picture drawn, ask yourself the question, have you been anxiously awaiting Him? Does the Lord see you standing there, looking down the road for Him? Have you called out His name, not just out of desperation to be saved from your present circumstances, but because you so intensely yearn to see His face and be in His presence?

Through your struggles, don't forget *before* you ask the Lord to "pick you up" to stand in awe of the One you have invited into your home and into your life. The Lord Himself is coming to *your* house! You'll have time to talk later. You can tell Him all about the bad week you've had in a little while. For now, just revel in the fact that the Lord is coming to visit you! Wait earnestly for Him! Long for Him! NEED Him. Then... wait. Wait and wait until He pulls into the driveway and you stand in His presence. WOW! (Could you even say anything else?!)

The Lord hears you. Look for Him and wait. Wait like an anxious child watching for an anticipated visitor. The Lord will like being the receiver of that kind of welcome, and then when He arrives, don't say a word... just run to Him and let Him embrace you. Melt in His presence and hold onto that feeling. Wrap your entire being in it. Then, when it's done, remember it so that it will be worth standing at the end of the driveway each and every single day, through rain or snow, just to be in His arms again.

Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
I'm sorry for the time I've spent asking for help and relief from my stress instead of being in awe of Your presence. I know that You hear my cries for help, but I pray that I*



*would not get so overwhelmed in my quest that I forget to first be in complete admiration of You. May I anxiously await Your arrival in my life each day this week,, and may the longing I have from that be even more intense upon receiving Your awaited presence in my life. Thank You for coming to my house and coming into my life.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

WEEK 40: SEARCHING FOR YOUR HEART

...Seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord. Jeremiah 29:13-14 (NKJV)

Have you ever gotten behind in your laundry? (*Pause for a moment so you can gain your composure from laughing hysterically...*) If you've searched for anything in the dirty, or clean clothes pile for that matter, then you know exactly what it would be like to search for a needle in a haystack! Finding the missing baby *sock* in that vast, insurmountable pile seems an impossible task on a Sunday morning before church when you're (of course) already running late! You know the *feelings* that come with that desperate search also. You're angry at yourself for being behind and frustrated that you've allowed things to get so out of control. You feel hopeless as you question when, or *if*, it will ever get done, maybe to the point of depression even because there seems no way to finding an end to the chaos, not to mention that sock!

So, has your spiritual life become like your clothes pile? Have you let everything pile up so much that you feel the Lord is too far away to find? Maybe you've put Him aside and let things pile up so much, that He's *somewhere* in the mess of your life, but finding Him through all the "junk" would be like searching for "a needle in a haystack".

The Lord says that you are to seek Him with all your heart and you will find Him. It's not an organizational issue. It's a matter of the heart. It doesn't matter what you did with that lost bill. It doesn't matter where you put your keys. But, it *does* matter how much you've allowed to "pile up" on your heart. What does your heart look like? Have you let the state of your life interfere with the relationship with the Lord?

Before you lift a finger to clean your house, bow your head and clean your heart, and the next time you're searching through that clothes pile, ask yourself what you really need to be looking for... if you seek Him, He will be found by you.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I am behind in so much, and I feel like there are too many things that have piled up in my life. In all of that I confess that there have been times when I have let my life "pile up" over You. Thank You for being there for me, even though I am so undeserving of the many chances You've given and continue to give me. I know that when I seek You with all my heart, I will find You. I pray that my heart would remain "clean" in You, Lord, so that I will not let life get it "dirty". Thank You for Your gracious love for me.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 41: HANDS TO WORK, HEART TO GOD

... (she) willingly works with her hands. Proverbs 31:13 (NKJV)

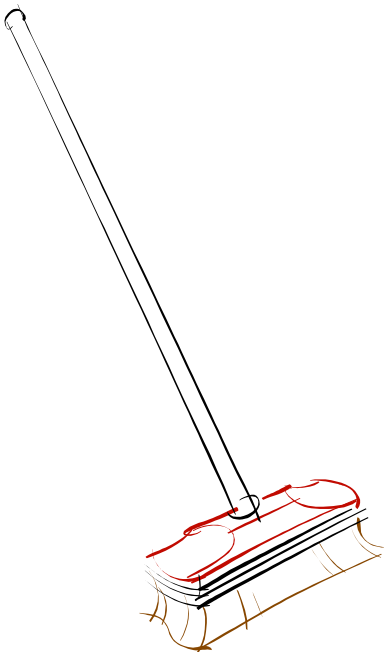
Hands reveal so much about a person. When you look at someone's hands, you can tell a lot about them and what they do. If their hands are calloused and cracked, they've been put to hard labor. If they're soft and supple, they've been taken care of, maybe even with lotions to keep from signs of wear and tare.

Take a moment to look at *your* hands... think of all they've been through in their lifetime. What have they held? What have they touched? Now think of what those hands do from day to day. The dishes, writing the bills, putting band-aids on "owees", caressing your spouse's face, scrubbing the floor, throwing in another load of laundry, holding a child's hand to cross the street... Your hands have been very busy and there are many things that those hands are a part of each and every single day. Now, look at your hands again and ask yourself if your hands are *willing* hands. Are your hands a part of a gracious and enthusiastic heart that longs to give? Are your hands "hooked up" to a heart that desires to work in abounding love and good works without the need for affirmation or recognition? Do your hands *willingly work*?

The Lord wants your hands to be accepting and willing to do the tasks that need to be done. Along with those hands, needs to be an agreeable heart. There are times the temptation to place blame in another direction is strong. After all, if there are more people than just you living in your home, chances are good that you're not the whole reason for its chaos. The little hand prints on the walls are not yours, the muddy boots by the door (and the tracks left from them in the kitchen) are not yours, and you know that you ate off only *one* plate, yet there are a stack of them in the sink! But *how* your heart

"allows" your hands to respond to those tasks is what the Lord is watching. While it's crucial for everyone to pitch in and help around the house, it's essential for you to do *all* your tasks willingly for the Lord. You are on this earth to glorify *Him*, and one way to do so is in the things you do, *and how you do them*.

As you go about your day today and this week, stop now and then to look at your hands. What kind of hands are they? When a task lies ahead that's anything but pleasant to do, before you complain, remember the nails that pierced Jesus' hands, and His heart that was accepting and willing to do the task that laid ahead of Him. What He did was anything *but* pleasant, and certainly wasn't for His own glory. Willingly put your hands to work today, and *every day* for the Lord. It is for Him that you are here, and that you do what you do.



Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm sorry for the times that I've complained about the tasks that I've had to get done, either outwardly or in my heart. I've blamed others as a way to make myself feel better and less guilty for the problems that have occurred as a result of my unwillingness to take responsibility. I pray that You would change my heart and make it one that is willing and accepting of the work that You have for me. I know that the tasks will not always be fun, easy, or enjoyable, but at the same time, I need to diligently stick to them to completion with a right heart. The next time I begin to grumble at a chore, help me to remember the saying "hands to work, heart to God". I pray that when my hands are at work, that I will remember I am working for You Lord.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 42: AFLOAT

You enlarged my path under me; so my feet did not slip. Psalm 18:36 (NKJV)

There is a competition where people stand on big log in the water, each having their own log. When the whistle is blown, they each set their log in motion by walking, which soon turns into running. As the "race" continues, the object is to balance on the log (turning the log forward or backward) and be the last one on the log. It's tricky because, not only is the log round, but because it's in the water, the log becomes *extremely* slippery. Keeping your balance to avoid getting wet, and disqualified, is no easy task.

Does *your* life feel a little out of balance and slippery right now? Or, maybe your path looks a little *too* narrow? Do you feel as if you're running back and forth in effort to keep your balance just to avoid "being taken out of the race"?

It's a nerve-wracking experience when things begin spinning out of control. One minute you're standing tall, and the next thing you know, you're doing everything in your power to maintain equilibrium. You spin forward... you spin backward... then forward... and backward again... so much time and energy exerted to just stay afloat. Sooner or later, you're *gonna* fall in that water! Inevitably you're going to lose your balance, or run out of energy if you don't get a little help. So... what are you waiting for? Help is just a prayer away.

Take a moment to think about what you've been keeping from the Lord. Are there parts of your life that you've been trying to control on your own? In keeping those things from the Lord, you've had to keep spinning that hazardous log in effort to retain some sort of balance that *will never come on your own*. It's time to cry out to the Lord. Whether it's one or many things that you've been clinging to, you need Him. Only He can save you. He will give you all you need to stay afloat. He will be your balance. With Him you will be able to stand tall again. With Him, you won't have to struggle alone. That does *not* mean that everything will be perfect. It doesn't mean you won't ever have to get on the log to begin with. What it does mean though is, God will be there with you and help you through those slick and trying times if you *allow* Him to be. He will give you the energy you need, and prevent you from "being disqualified". You *may* still get a little wet from the backplash, but He will help you avoid getting saturated. Your legs still may get tired from turning the log, but He will run along side of you. And just when the time is right, He will decide when to stop the log, and give you a break. He may even decide to take you off the log and out of the water, but only when He decides. Until that time, remember He's with you as long as you call out to Him and invite Him on that log. It's your choice. What will you decide? A slippery log alone, or a slippery log with the One who made the log to begin with?

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

There are times that I get so caught up in the daily struggles I face, that I forget to call on You for help and relief. I've tried to do things on my own, and have only gotten more

behind as a result of it. I'm tired of trying to stay afloat. I'm weak from my struggles. Lord, please come beside me on my slippery log and keep me from falling into the water. Run next to me and give me the strength I need to keep from falling. Be my balance Lord, and my steadfastness. I pray that instead of complaining and questioning why You would have me on the log to begin with, that I would accept the trials willingly, and when the time comes that You decide to stop the log, that I would remember these lessons and take them with me always.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

WEEK 43: FORECAST FOR THE FUTURE

I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. Jeremiah 29:11 (The Message)

Have you ever looked forward to something? You know... really anticipated something happening that helps you get through whatever trials you may be facing, just to make it to "that special something". It could be a birthday or anniversary, seeing a loved one again, having a new baby, or maybe just being able to finally hit the pillow with your head and go to sleep after a hard, trying day! Whatever it was wasn't it nice to have something to look forward to? It may have been helpful to get you through some pretty stressful moments even. Exciting things can do that for us. They can really be a "lift" through the valleys of life.

The next time that you are struggling and feel as if there's nothing to look forward to... take joy in knowing that the Lord has promised you something wonderful. Jeremiah 29:11 is a "pick me up" for a stressful or trying day. It will remind you the Lord hasn't forgotten about you and has everything under control. He has plans to take care of you! How's that for something to get you through the day?

Things may be tough and you may wonder *how* it's going to get better. Maybe you've even doubted if they *ever* will. Think of Jeremiah 29:11 during those times. The Lord has said He will not abandon you and give you hope. He can see your future. He knows what's in store. Put yourself in His mighty hands. Give yourself up to Him. Find hope in realizing the Lord has it under control, and anticipate the wonderful future He has in store for you.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Help me to remember You have everything under control when I begin to get stressed or feel as if there's nothing exciting to look forward to. You have said that You have a future for me to hope for, and I pray that I would always anticipate the wonderful surprises you have in store for me. Thank You for thinking of me.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 44: UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord; lift our heart and hands to God in heaven. We have transgressed and rebelled... Lamentations 3:40-42 (NKJV)

Have you ever watched a child looking through a magnifying glass? It seems once they begin discovering, they can't stop finding more and more things to view. They search for bugs, grass blades, dirt and more. Everything is carefully examined while their minds expand with a better understanding of what the things under the magnifying glass really look like. Bugs are no longer just little things crawling on the ground. After meticulous investigation, they comprehend that there are parts to this little insect with legs and even eyes!

If you could look at *yourself* through a magnifying glass, what would you see upon concentrated scrutiny? What would your assessment be? Would you be surprised and awed, or disappointed and ashamed? Go ahead... Take a moment to examine yourself. Don't look at your house. Don't think of what needs to be done. Just evaluate YOU. Get the whole picture and inspect purposefully. What do you see when looking through a "magnifying glass" at yourself? What are the heart issues that become apparent when observed closer?

What's "ordinary" to the naked eye becomes unmistakably detectable behind the glass of a magnifier. What is it you see? What can no longer go undetected in your life today? Search yourself and lift your heart to the Lord, and don't quit examining until you're in awe of what you see.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I have searched and examined myself and am disgusted at some of the things in my life. (Name these things to the Lord.) I want to turn back to You and Your ways Lord, and I pray that You would forgive me for the times I've turned away. I lift my heart and hands to You and pray that I would continue to search my heart to keep it pure and cleansed from unrighteousness. I have purposely done things that I knew were wrong and I'm sorry for those times Lord. (Name any specific times.) I pray that in searching myself, I would find the strength to do what's right and be who you want me to be. Help me see the errors of my ways and make them obvious to me, along with the ways to make myself better. Thank You for Your forgiveness and love.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 45: A CASE OF THE WANTS

Then Jesus said to them, "Be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. Life is not measured by how much one owns." Luke 12:15 (NCV)

Being sick is never fun. It may start out "simple" with a runny nose, but if you didn't take care of yourself with rest and fluids, before you know it, you're flat on your back feeling drained from the effects of the virus running throughout your body.

Just like the flu, covetousness, or greed, can do the same thing. It starts out small and "simple", but can grow quietly undisturbed and undetected until it has manifested into the "never-being-satisfied-with-anything bug". The desire to simply get organized doesn't seem bad, but even the most innocent intentions can go rancid if they are allowed to become obsessive and consuming. When you begin to base your happiness on *things* rather than the Lord, you've entered perilous territory!

"If I had a bigger house, then I wouldn't be so disorganized."

"I wish I had a washer and dryer that were brand new."

"If I only had a dishwasher, I'd never have dirty dishes in the sink."

"I love Sue's mudroom! It's so organized and clean. I wish I had one."

"We've outgrown our little car. I wish we had a van."

Have *you* ever had a case of "the wants"? Has the "bug" ever found its way into *your* heart? Maybe you're suffering from the disease *now*. Because of your quest to be better organized, have you found yourself treading some treacherous "wanting" waters? Don't allow yourself to become obsessed coveting things. Being unhappy with what you have and wanting more leads to trouble. Jesus said to beware of greed. He also said that life is not measured by the things you own. Life is more... when it consists of a relationship with Him.

The next time you feel the "sniffing wants" coming your way, take care of yourself by going to the Lord. He will be your help for even a full-blown case of the "wants". God is the only cure to complete satisfaction. He is the only thing you need now, or ever.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that You would save me from coveting things. Please help me to be completely satisfied in You Lord. Let me not drift from You, so that my heart would become rancid in wanting, but instead bless me with Your favor and fill me with Your peace this week as I go about getting things done. My desire is to be overflowing with You and everything that comes from You that is good. Thank You for everything that You've given me. I pray that I would use them all to Your glory and be satisfied always.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 46: SOMEONE AT THE DOOR OF YOUR HEART

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10 (KJV)

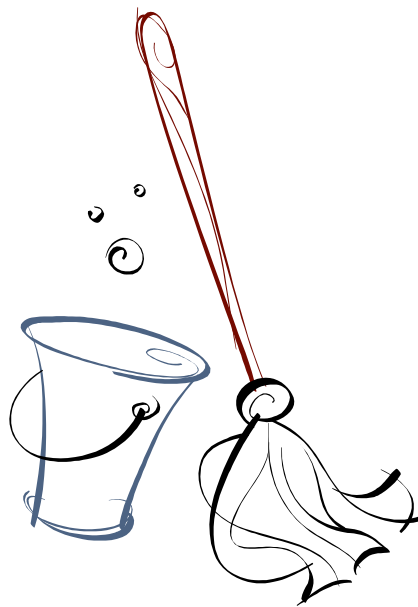
Maybe you know all too well what it's like to have unexpected visitors. It's great when they call you far enough in advance to give you time to at least shove everything into a room and close the door behind you (God be with you, or anyone else, when *that* door opens again...) but it can be mortifying, when visitors just "pop" over unannounced. As they walk in the door your mind races to any mess (or underwear laying around) that you need to try to get to before they see!

Now imagine those visitors walking through the front door and going straight to your closets, pantry, fridge, and laundry room to look and search at the most "secret" places in your home? Not only were you unprepared for their arrival, but you certainly hadn't been privy to their scrutiny! They're looking at *EVERYTHING*... including cupboards, drawers, and even under the beds! They're doing a thorough inspection of your whole house! Everything that is personal about you and your habits is becoming an open book!

The Lord is coming to visit you, only He's not going to look at what state your home is in. Oh, He's analyzing, but it's your heart He's interested in. He doesn't care about your cupboards (or even the laundry pile). He is looking at *you*, and doing a thorough inspection of your heart. What condition does He see your heart in? He's looking at *EVERYTHING* you know.

Ask yourself if you have any forgiveness piled by the washer waiting to be done... Is there any covetousness in the sink? Has jealousy been hiding in the closet? Are there harsh words that are on your toothbrush laying on the vanity? What have you left undone in your heart that the Lord is going to see when He scrutinizes your heart? You may experience some apprehension at the thought of laying all your faults out in front of the Lord, but it's essential to creating a clean heart.

You already know that God is not an "unexpected visitor" in our daily lives. He is always there. Are you living every moment remembering that the Lord is *always* looking? When looking at your life at any given moment throughout the day, would you willingly and unabashedly let Him examine your heart? Feeling a little hesitant? God is not interested in what condition the cleanness of your house is. He is concerned with your heart, and ***what you are***.



Maybe you have a little "cleaning" to do before you go any further. Clean your heart so it's ready for examination from the Lord. Then let Him in with great joy, for a clean heart is one that rejoices!

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I have so many tasks to get done, yet even more importantly than that, I need to clean out my heart. There are many things that I've left alone, but they haven't gone away. Instead, they've sat waiting until I address them. Now is the time. I come to you with things that need to be cleaned out from my dirty heart. (Name the things that you've been keeping, either hidden away or obvious, in effort to deal with other things.) I want to cleanse my heart so I can rejoice in You Lord. Thank You for giving me the ability to seek You for relief of all these things that have been harbored deep inside. I that I would live each moment knowing that You are always there. Thank You for everything You've blessed me with.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 47: BETTER DAYS A'COMIN'

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

The baby is teething, has a fever *and* diarrhea, and you got only 4 hours of sleep last night. *Read the verse again... go ahead, read it again...*

Pile of bills to do, another pile that's *over* due. *Read the verse again...*

Hungry kids, phone is ringing, and apple juice spilled all over the floor. *Read the verse again...*

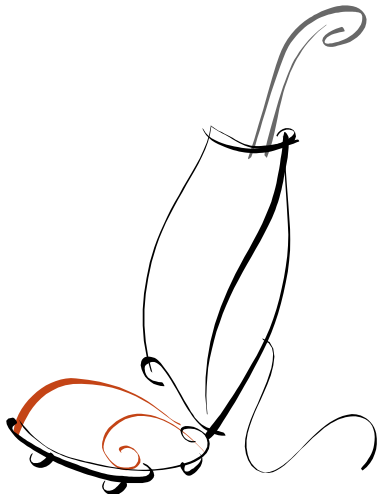
You have errands to run uptown with all of the kids crying. *Read the verse again...*

Your husband called, will be home late, and the kids are hungry. *Read the verse again...*

Kids are in the bath, the phone is ringing, and your husband is walking in the door and hungry. *Read the verse again...*

No matter how your day is today, or what it will bring tomorrow... no matter what your day was like yesterday, the day before, or the past month... a better day *is* coming rest assured.

One day there will be no more crying babies. One day there will be no more bills. One day there will be no messy kitchen. One day there will be no laundry pile. One day there will be no stress. One day there will be no more sorrow. One day there will even be no more death. Every tear that you have shed will be no more. God will wipe them *all* away. *All* your stress. *Every* sorrow. *Each* tear. There will come a day when it will be *gone*.



Take joy through your trials, struggles and stresses, because upon allowing Jesus Christ to be the center of your life, one wonderful and glorious day, you will be with the Lord and it will be a magnificent day indeed!

Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
With everything that needs to get done, I confess that there are times when I get so stressed and upset that it becomes overwhelming and consuming. Lord, I pray that when that happens, You would speak Revelations 21:4 to me to remind me there is a much better day ahead. One day all of my*

sorrow will be gone! I look forward to that day Lord, but until then, give me the strength and patience I need to get through each day. I lean on You Lord, and look to You for guidance and support. Thank You for the wonderful promise of a day when there will be nothing but great rejoicing!

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 48: FERVENT LOVE OVER FERVENT CLEANING

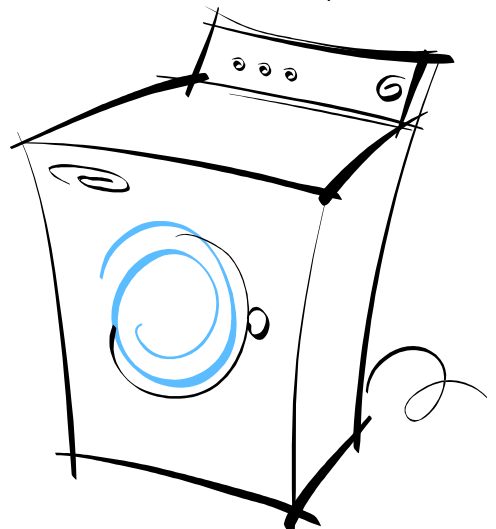
Above all things have a fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)

Are there days that you have so much to accomplish that it makes you crabby before you even begin? In thinking about what you want to get done today, will it be possible to get it all done or have you found that you have a list that keeps extending into the next day... and the next... and the next? It's so easy to get caught up in your "to do" list and when you're behind, there's always something to do. There are just not enough hours in one day. It's hard to avoid the sense of hurriedness and urgency that comes when there's so much to complete.

Now ask yourself, do you feel that way *people*? What if every day you woke up feeling that there were so many people you needed to say "I love you" to that you just didn't know how you were going to get it all done? That there were so many things that you needed to say and do to show people your love for them that you felt a sense of urgency to get it done and you actually became obsessed with it?! Can you imagine your housework and other tasks taking second place to expressing love and forgiveness?

When you become centered on one thing, it's impossible for you to give your full attention to something else. If you take a pizza and give half of it away, there is no way you can still have a whole pizza remaining. Your time and energy is the same way. All the time and effort you spend cleaning and organizing cannot be reclaimed. This **does not** mean that you shouldn't clean and organize, but it does mean you need to be wise with your time and be aware of how the people in your life have been affected while you try to get yourself more organized. Have you become so obsessed with organizing and cleaning that you've forgotten to enjoy the blessing of companionship from your spouse, laughter from your children, or chats with your friends? Have you put others "on hold" while you hastily try to "get it all done"?

Life doesn't slow down when things are tough. It keeps on going, even while you struggle. But God has put people in your life to help you through. Your task(s) may very well be overwhelming and seemingly insurmountable, but don't concentrate solely on that or you will miss "the rainbow during the rain". Love is powerful, and "it covers a multitude of sins". Cherish the blessings in your life today, and embellish the love you receive in return. You will finish the things that need to be done in God's timing. He will help you through, but it isn't going to *all* get done today. It may not even get done tomorrow. But there are things that are more important than that list of things to do. Call your spouse to say "I love you", give your child a long hug, and call a friend



to say "thanks". Then stop a moment to embrace that feeling of love, and thank God for such a wonderful gift.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I know that there are times when I get so caught up in everything that needs to get done, that I take people around me for granted. I've assumed that those people will be here when I'm finally finished, and I know that there is no guarantee of that. I pray that I don't get so focused on getting organized that I lose sight of those who are so dear to me, for I know that if they were gone my heart would ache for moments that I didn't spend with them. Help me to balance things I need to accomplish so I'm no longer behind, but help me also to make time for the people that need me. Thank You for the ones so special in my life Lord, and thank You for the precious gift of love.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 49: HIS WAY, EVERY DAY

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. James 2:10 (NKJV)

You're running late for an appointment and even though it's Tuesday, the little old lady in front of you has picked *today* for her "Sunday drive". *Finally* she turns off the road and you're free to go. And "go" you do! After all, if you're going to get to your appointment on time, you're going to need to hurry! However, you're not the only one aware of your hurriedness and with lights flashing and sirens blaring, a cop car pulls in behind you. Even though you weren't exceeding the speed limit with mischievous intentions, the law is the law and you broke it. You're guilty. God has laws too and when it comes to God, it's "His rules, His way, EVERY DAY".

'God's laws are not there for you to select the ones you want to obey. God does not allow selective obedience. We cannot choose to obey the parts of the law that are to our own liking and disregard the rest. Sin is a violation of the perfect righteousness of God, who is the Lawgiver... The whole divine law has to be accepted as an expression of God's will for His people. The violation of even one commandment separates an individual from God and His purposes.' (The Nelson Study Bible)

Did you catch that? You are actually separating yourself from God when you choose to disobey Him! It doesn't matter if you didn't mean to be "bad". He's not going to accept *your* interpretation of what His rules *really* meant. He's not going to give you a "day off" for good behavior either. You may be a good wife, but if you've spent money behind your husband's back... GUILTY. You may be a nice mother, but if you've disciplined your children in anger... GUILTY. You may be a respectable Christian, but if you won't sit by *her* in church because she cheated on her husband... GUILTY. You may be the sole provider of your household, but if you're not tithing because you don't have enough to pay the bills... GUILTY. You may be a helpful Sunday school teacher, Worship Leader, or Nursery helper, but only because you don't want *her* to do it... GUILTY. You may be trying to get your life in order, your house cleaned, and everything done with the best intentions, but if deep down it's because you're discontent... you are GUILTY. God sees your heart. He made the rules, and He knows when you break them. A sin, is a sin, is a sin... no one sin is worse than another. When you disobey, whatever the sin, you are guilty. The only thing to set you free is Jesus... and a repentant heart.

You aren't to compare yourself to others when it comes to sin, but to Jesus. While you will never be perfect like Him, you cannot give up. You must continue to let the Lord fashion you in what He created you to be, and His laws help in doing just that. How is your heart responding the commands of the Lord? If you are still disobeying God in some way (or many), begin cleaning your heart out today. His "rules" are not there to make you stumble, but instead, they are there to carry you through.

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I confess that I have stumbled and been disobedient. (List your struggles.) I have wanted

to do good, but have fallen at one point or another and because of that, I have separated myself from you. Lord, I don't want to give into my temptations any longer. I'm weak though, and pray that You would make me strong. I know that you have a purpose for my life and I don't want to stand in the way. Save me from my heart's human desires and fill me with Your righteousness. I know being good most of the time isn't good enough and I pray that you would rescue me from myself. Help me to obey your laws, today and always.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

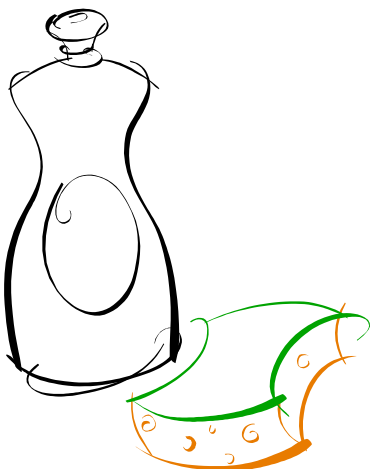
WEEK 50: DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN YOUR EYE?

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matthew 7:3-5 (NKJV)

The word "hypocrite" is unsympathetic, and yet, we all fall completely and hopelessly in this pit of judgment at some point in time. What? You don't think *you're* a hypocrite? Think that verbiage is a *little* on the harsh side? Do you think that this verse doesn't really apply to you? Do you feel as though being hypocritical is something that you have surpassed or overcome?

If you look at someone's actions and think to yourself that what they have done is inappropriate... you're a hypocrite. After all, you're any thing *but* perfect. If you've thought that woman in church has her priorities miscued, yet you haven't been able to "get it together" yourself, you're a hypocrite. If you've told your children to stop arguing and be loving, yet yelled at them when the house is falling apart, you're a hypocrite. If you've noticed (and become angry) with your husband's imperfections and mistakes (when he's left his dirty underwear on the floor), while putting yours aside (remember why you got this devotional?), then you're definitely a hypocrite.

Looking at someone else and seeing their faults is dangerous. Comparing yourself to another human in order to find comfort in yourself is wrong. We are *all* children of God, and whether Christians or not, comparing yourself to anyone other than Jesus is unacceptable. Jesus is the only one you should look at. Go ahead. Look at His life. Look at His actions. Look at His deeds. Look at His thoughts. *Then* evaluate. How do you measure up against pure and absolute holiness? Are you ashamed? Are you embarrassed? Are you... a hypocrite?



The next time you find yourself examining another's existence, take a good look in the mirror and be critical of what *you* see. Is the reflection you see one that resembles Christ? Clean up your heart and concern yourself with how the Lord sees it when He looks at you. Besides, you can't see very clearly with that log in your eye anyway. Remove it and get on with getting your act together... and keeping it there.

Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
I have been a hypocrite, holding others to a higher standard than I've held myself. Please forgive me and help me to search*

myself continually comparing myself to the One who is Perfect, that I may never feel as if I've attained a "higher level of achievement". We are all on a path Lord, and I pray that I will not loose focus on bettering myself, by looking at others and making judgments or comparisons. Help me to continue to work on myself and the tasks that lie ahead of me, that I may become what it is You have planned. I pray that I would not be quick to judge others, and be reminded that I am far from being perfect.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

WEEK 51: OPENING YOUR EYES TO HIS FACE

We shall all be changed – in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye... Therefore... be steadfast, immovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:51,52, 58 (NKJV)

Have you ever had a day when you wished you could just close your eyes and when they opened again, everything before you would be done? There you are, sitting writing bills... eyes closed... open... viola! Bills written, sealed and ready to be mailed! There you are again looking at the laundry pile... eyes closed... open... viola! Washed, dried and folded, ready to put away! Wait... eyes closed... open... viola! Put away!

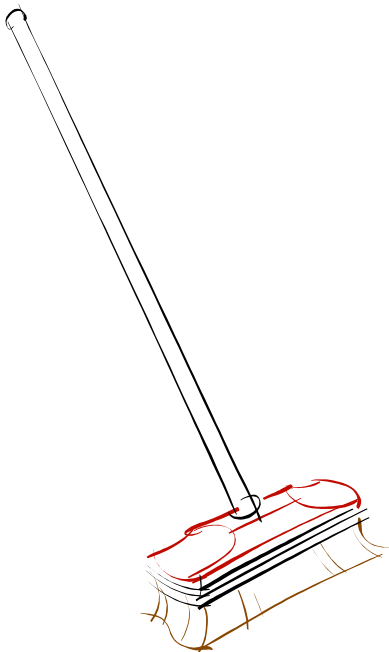
Okay, so that's not how it really works, but someday something will be very similar to that. Someday you will be changed. One moment your eyes will be open, then shut, and then opened again to something completely different and more spectacular than you could ever imagine. Until that day though, you are to be "steadfast and immovable" and "always abounding in the work of the Lord". You are to keep going, without stopping, grounded in the truth of the Lord, thriving in His will for your life, knowing that what He has you doing is not in vain.

Sounds simple enough, but it's a struggle that is harder at times, and certainly isn't any easier when you're behind and overwhelmed in your daily duties. It's easy to get side-tracked with the things of this world and not look at the bigger picture of what our time on earth is supposed to be. Stop when things get piled up. Stop when you're ready to explode. Stop when you're feeling pressed. Look to Him for direction and answers. Ask Him what it REALLY is that He wants you to accomplish and then do what He asks. Your efforts will not be futile, for it will be what the Lord has planned out for you on this earth, and someday whether everything you want to get done gets done or not... your eyes will close and then open again to a site that will be nothing but glorious and stunning.

Go through your day, and every day, remembering with every blink someday you will open your eyes to see His face. Kinda makes everything else seem pretty insignificant, huh?... Exactly...

Pray:

*Dear Heavenly Father,
Sometimes the weight of the world seems to press on me so, that I struggle to go another step. I forget to look to You for ALL of the answers, and give my trials to You. Take them from me Lord, and release me from my strife. Instead of carrying my load and doing it all on my own, I want You to*



be in charge of everything, and I await Your will for the direction in which I should go. I want to do Your will for my life daily... each second of my life, for I know there will come a moment that I will close my eyes and open them to see Your face. I pray that I wouldn't get so caught up in the things of this world that I forget of this wonderful truth. Thank You for this breathtaking promise.

In Jesus' name,

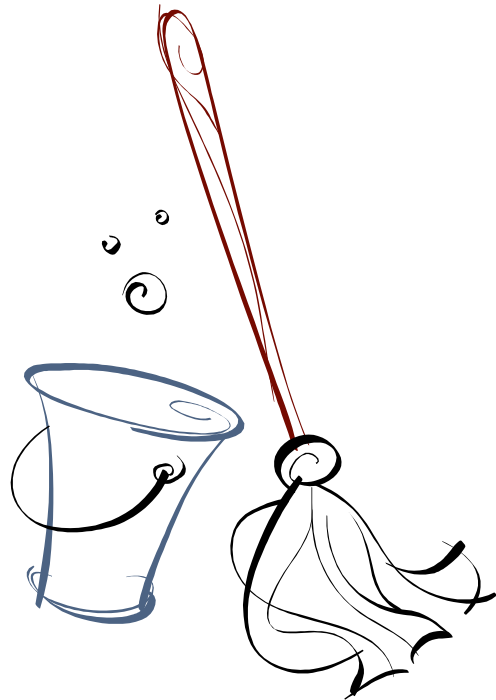
Amen.

WEEK 52: ANOTHER BEGINNING...

But he took our suffering on him and felt our pain for us. We saw his suffering and thought God was punishing him. But he was wounded for the wrong we did; he was crushed for the evil we did. The punishment, which made us well, was given to him, and we are healed because of his wounds. We all have wandered away like sheep; each of us has gone his own way. But the Lord has put on him the punishment for all the evil we have done. Isaiah 53:4-6 (NCV)

Can you imagine being perfect? Not just okay. Not pretty good. Not in great condition overall. Not even "better than most". Completely and totally perfect. Nothing wrong. No imperfections. No faults. No sins. Just perfect. It's hard to conceive that any person could possibly be, but that's what Jesus was. He was faultless, immaculate and righteous. He was perfect His entire life... well, almost. There was one moment in history when He carried the sins of the world.

Jesus didn't just die, plain and simple. There was nothing "simple" or "plain" about it. What He experienced on the day of His death is almost surreal even to think of in today's world of sin. He had prayed to be saved from His inevitable torture, but then He accepted God's will and took your troubles. As He was beaten and bruised, He bore your faults. And as He walked with that heavy cross on His back, He carried your burdens. He was chastised and mocked so you might have peace, and because He was wounded and bloody, weak and thirsty hanging there on that cross alone, He for one brief moment took each and every one of our sins as His own, those committed and those yet to be, and felt the Lord look away from Him. Because of His death, you were given the opportunity to be with Him by making Him the center of your life.



When you get overwhelmed, frustrated or discouraged with what your life is like right now, think of what life was like for Jesus on that predestined day. Think of what He endured because of you and for you. In order for you to have the opportunity to be with God the Father in Heaven, He had to sacrifice Himself. And when He was dying, He saw your sins. He felt every one. He took them all for you then. Don't hang onto your trials today. Release them. He's already accepted them. Have you accepted Him?

Pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

When I think of what Your Son did for me, I am humbled and ashamed. I know that there isn't any way to ever repay a gift so great and magnificent. I know that I am a sinner, and that it was for me that You sent Your Son. He was given as the ultimate sacrifice, with me in mind, that I might be saved and one day live with You. How can I but long to receive Your gift of grace? How can I but long to love You as You have loved me?

If you're accepting Jesus Christ for the first time, pray:

Lord, I want to turn away from my sins and toward Your forgiveness and love.

If you've already accepted Jesus Christ pray:

Lord, I want to renew my commitment to turn away from my sins and toward Your forgiveness and love.

Continue praying:

I know that I will not be perfect from this moment on, but because You have saved me from all my sins, I will press toward the goal of being what You have planned for me to be and do. I give myself to You Lord with a grateful heart for giving Your Son to die for me.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

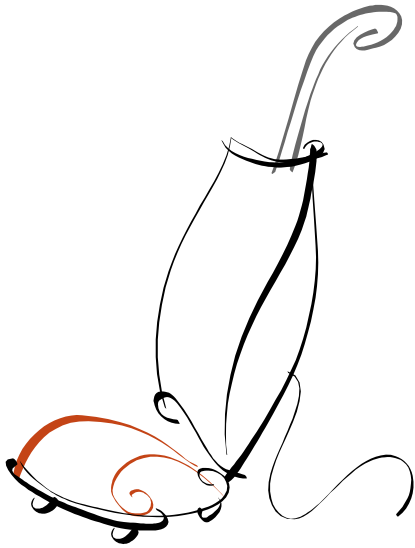


Congratulations!

You made it to the end! If this has blessed you, or if you have anything you would like to share with me about your journey, please feel free to email me at: amy@dandelionseeds.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

Still Seeking,

Amy



We all have *"those days"*, but for some of us, those days turn into weeks... months... or even years. *CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART* is a devotional designed to take you through the year, one week at a time, while offering hope, motivation, and insight for the struggle you're facing to be organized.

Leaning on the Lord for direction *all* the way, this devotional will take you to the *heart* of your trials and lift your spirit. If you are someone who needs to have more order in your home AND heart, than this "motivational" devotional is for you!

Amy Verlennich is a wife of Michael, "Smamma" (step-mom) of one and homeschooling mom of six (with the next blessing due in March). Amazed daily at how the Lord is using ALL of her faults to help others, she submits (not always without a struggle) to the Lord to use her as He will. "If it's one thing I'm still learning, it's that when we're



uncomfortable with where the Lord has us, we have no other choice but to rely completely on Him. When we do that, we allow Him to do His work through us, and then He can be seen. It's not always easy (okay, hardly ever), but it's what I strive for daily." Amy and her family live in Minnesota, but hope to travel (in a motor home) all over the United States with their kids someday.