A close-up photograph of a dark red granite surface with a speckled pattern of lighter-colored minerals. The texture is rough and crystalline, with some visible cracks and mineral inclusions.

**Red Granite**

**30 Daily  
Devotions**

**LOVING YOU**

brought to you by  
**Marshall & Jessica Jones**

Published by  
**Red Thread Poets**

The contents of these Daily Devotions are based on quotations from The Holy Bible, King James Version, and the inspired writings of Marshall Jones, and include but are not limited to his opinions expressed. Permission to use previously published materials included; and any advice given or actions advocated are solely the responsibility of the author, who assumes all liability for said work and indemnifies the publisher against any claims stemming from publication of the work.

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## ENDORSEMENTS

**From: Jessica Reavis-Christensen,**

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=forged%20by%20fire%3B%20iron%20sharpening%20iron>

I'm a former Recreational Leader of the New Lisbon Correctional Institution and I have to say that I am SO thankful for the 9 months I got to spend in prison. I would have never understood the need for prison reform if it wasn't for my experience.

When I was hired at N.L.C.I., I came in with the understanding that my position was to help rehabilitate the men to become successful citizens of society. I encouraged them to put the work in during their time, so they would have the tools to thrive in their freedom. Well, administration did not like that. The administration was threatened by the joy and empowerment that I brought to Recreation. They didn't like that the men were choosing healthy outlets, they didn't like that the countenance of the general population was lifting, they didn't like that the men were excited to be treated with humanity rather than unimportant scum. My time in prison was cut short because of the administration feeling threatened by the atmosphere I brought to the dark institution. Light is not wanted within those walls and that is something I believe needs to change.

After 40 days of unpaid administrative leave, I was terminated on Friday, December 13th 2019 for "not passing probationary standards". It didn't matter that all the programming I had added and built upon was changing the atmosphere in the institution for the better. They needed a scapegoat to get rid of me, and "not passing probationary standards" was it. Friday, December 13th was a day of sadness but also a day of resolution. As I drove away from N.L.C.I., no longer employed by the DOC, I made a pivotal decision to write Marshall Jones.

Marshall Jones was one of four inmate workers that assisted me in my Rec Leader position. He lead fitness classes, reffed all competitive events, assisted setting up Rec events, helped encourage men that came to Recreation, and counseled the men to prepare for their release. Marshall's conduct spoke for itself and I could see he was a man of his word by the actions displayed. He worked hard in Rec and Marshall worked even harder doing his time by becoming a published author of his first book, "A Raven's Meal". While working with Marshall, I learned he was serving a double life sentence, and I was shocked he would be there for the rest of his life. The reason I was shocked was because Marshall lived more freely within the walls of that prison than any other person I've met in my life. How is that possible? It was possible because of the faith he so boldly lives. Marshall was incarcerated at 21 years old and has served 17 years of his sentence. When I drove away from N.L.C.I. I decided I wanted Marshall to know that he was remembered by someone. I wanted him to know he made an impact on my life by living the way he did within the walls of prison. I wanted him to know that despite the circumstances, I wanted to extend the olive branch of becoming his friend. Writing Marshall Jones was one of the best choices I have ever made in my life.

I believe so many men like Marshall are deserving of a second chance. This is something I wouldn't have ever understood if I didn't have my time in prison, working closely with the general population. There is a deep need for prison reform and Marshall is the perfect story of a cast away finding redemption. I know how many second chances I have had. I believe it's time for those who have proven rehabilitation exists, get their second chance. To make evident their efforts aren't for nothing.

**From: Kelli**

Comment from Kelli, who read the Climb, a poem by Marshall on Red Thread Poets Website  
[www.redthreadpoets.com/the-climb/](http://www.redthreadpoets.com/the-climb/)

Re: The Climb, by Marshall Jones

This poem personally speaks to my heart because I know the struggle of many who are fighting for their freedom from incarceration. Prisons are full of people who have been given unmerciful harsh sentencing who are just wanting to be given a chance to redeem themselves in society to help others. God wants to use those who have surrendered their hearts to His Son Jesus Christ who's incarcerated to become the mentors for our youths in today's culture. God has a plan for every individual's life. Keeping people confined to incarceration who God need to be Ambassadors for His Kingdom is certainly not the answer. Treating all people how one would want to be treated should be the defining moment when passing a judgment onto others. Love and mercy covers a multitude of sins. God and the Lord Jesus are expressing love and mercy everyday towards all people and humanity must practice in doing the same. God Bless all who read this comment and take it to heart.

**From: Peter W Stevens,**

Friend to the Founder of Red Thread Poets (Our Triune God). [www.redthreadpoets.com/category/100-poets/peter-will/](http://www.redthreadpoets.com/category/100-poets/peter-will/)

I met Marshall through Jessica. We have become very close brothers in just a few short months emailing everyday. I live north of Toronto in Canada and was building a website to glorify God and honour poets. Red Thread Poets. Marshall sent me his poems, i have his book a Raven's Meal and he is one of our honoured poets on the site. HOWEVER it is his daily devotionals under the 'banner 'RED GRANITE' that show his anointing - they are high impact for me every day. We post them in Facebook under Red Thread Poets, and recap them on the website. <https://www.redthreadpoets.com/daily-devotions/>. Marshall is DEARLY LOVED, peter

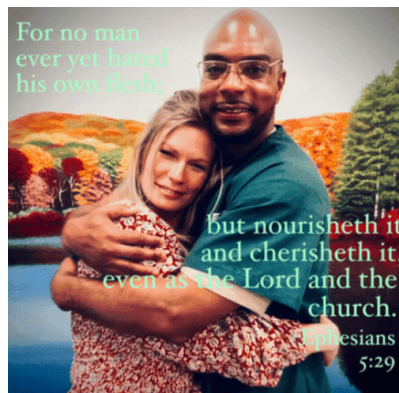
November 1, 2023, update:

Since November 1, 2020, Marshall and later with Jessica have written approximately 1,300 Daily Devotions, of which there are now over 12 Series. On November 1, 2022, they were married. Hallelujah.

Marshall continues to study and write from within the confines he remains in for now. He has commenced a bachelor's degree in biblical studies, please pray for them both, and for The Lord to arrange his release before too long. Jessica posted this recently:

'I can confidently say my husband is everything he's supposed to be in our marriage, and he is always wanting to love me more tomorrow than he did today. He's not smothering, nor is he one who says things but doesn't follow with action. My husband is the real deal, and I am so thankful to know what it means to truly be loved by him like Christ

loves the Church. Today's message (Ephesians 5:29) is great encouragement to husbands, wives, and the whole walk of marriage. God bless each of you and your marriages you are committed to! ' Much love!



## INTRODUCTION TO LOVING YOU -

The more we interact with people, the more aware we become that sadly, people do NOT know how to love themselves. There are many levels of self love, but if you don't master loving yourself, then how can you extend the love you desire to share with others? We can only give what we have. If we don't have love for ourselves, then we can't give it to others.

The word YOU in this study title has dual meaning, learning to love GOD and learning to love YOU. Love absent of God is merely affection, and affection absent of love is very short lived. Love is the foundation by which we build our spirituality, our relationships, and our purpose. Without God as our foundation there is no love for self or others, because God IS love.

Dive into this 30 Day study "LOVING YOU" and fall in love with yourself, and fall deeply in love with the One who loves you more than anyone, your Creator!

Bless You!  
Marshall & Jessica

This Study Series was first posted on Red Thread Poets Facebook Page commencing on January 28, 2021, and is also available at <https://www.redthreadpoets.com/daily-devotions-1st-quarter-2021/>

## 1. Genesis 1:26 - who God says we are

Do we really love ourselves?

When we look in the mirror, what do we see? Do we check for flaws, or do we check for beauty?

When we look within, what do we see? Is the pain from a broken home still visible? Does the stench from horrifying relationships tarnish our self-worth? How is our self-esteem? High, low, undetectable?

Before we can begin to love ourselves, we must begin the process of knowing ourselves. When we know who we are, we are not subject to the lies of the enemy, designed to keep us blind to who we really are.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the Bible says, ***"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."***

The enemy, Satan, doesn't want us to know who we are, so when we have a false self image, the enemy will push things and people to keep our minds in a state of blindness, to condition us to accept what the enemy says over what God says about us.

When we accept who God says we are, we can see God's Word as truth, allowing us to know Christ as our Savior, enabling us to receive the salvation of our soul.

Today, Genesis 1:26, who God says we are.

***"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."***

"And God said" is a phrase that, by itself, carries power! Creation came about because of what God said.

In Genesis 1:3, the Bible says, ***"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."***

Whatever God declares to be, that's what it is, and whenever God orders something to come into existence, His Word does it.

The word ***"image"*** means "shadow or resemblance".

When a person walks "in another's shadow", they are imitating or performing the same acts as the person who cast the shadow. Thus they resemble each other, and we can see the connection.

When people see us, do they see people walking in the shadow of God, bearing His image?

The word "**likeness**" means "similitude".

When God created us, He designed us to not only look like Him, but to also act like Him.

In Luke 8:16, Jesus says, "**No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.**"

When we know ourselves, we will allow our "light" to shine, which is God dwelling in us.

We are made by God to be seen, not to elevate our egos but to magnify God, who is revealed in us.

When we are afraid to show who we truly are, we are saying we are ashamed of who God created and declared us to be.

In Genesis 2:25, the Bible says, "**And man and wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**"

Never, and I repeat, never be ashamed to be who God has created you to be. There is only one you!!!

Who we are began at creation, with the Word of God expressing what man was to become.

God didn't create us to look like something else. He gave us His image and His likeness, and the ability to walk in who we are, because He wanted people to see us individually AND see God.

In 1 John 4:12, "**No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.**"

God is saying, "Don't worry about seeing me physically. Worry about who I am perfecting in you."

God is love, so if we desire to manifest God's presence, then love is definitely a sure way to go.

Before we can do any of this, we must simply accept that God created us in His image and in His likeness.

Before we can begin to love ourselves, we must understand and accept where we came from.

A tree began with a seed, but what keeps a tree alive is its root, which is actually inside of the seed itself. Everything the tree needs for life is already inside its seed. When God created each of us, He created us with our own identity, our own purpose, our own strengths and our own weaknesses.

In Ephesians 1:4, the Bible says, "**According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:**"

There was no mistake behind any of our births. We were selected!

The word "**dominion**" means "to reign or to subjugate".

Before we can walk in dominion, we must accept that we bear God's image and likeness, and because He reigns, we reign as well.

Imagine a prince or princess who won't accept their crown. Doesn't seem too logical does it? Well, we do this same thing when we don't accept what God says about us.

Remember He created us to bear His image and His likeness, and amazingly He also gave us dominion.

The key to loving ourselves is through uncovering Who we came from, and what His intention is for each of us. We will begin that work here!

## 2. Proverbs 1:7 - the fear of the LORD

What do we really know about our God?

That is a very important question, because what we know about God determines the type of life we live here on earth.

Before we can begin to love ourselves, we have to know ourselves, and before we can know ourselves, we have to know our God.

If I bought a brand new appliance, I would read the instruction manual, and what the manufacturer says about its product. The maker of the product knows it best, the manual ensures that if followed, the user will have the optimal experience from the product.

Our faith walks are no different. God created us and He provides an instructional manual for how we should live, move, and have our being.

That manual is The Bible.

If we follow it correctly, we will experience the promises the manual contains. We must have deep respect for any manual to learn how to effectively operate its product, living in faith is no different.

Today, we continue journeying into "Loving You" looking at Proverbs 1:7, the fear of the Lord.

***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."***

The word "**fear**" here means "moral reverence that makes a person receptive to wisdom and knowledge".

We are to have this deep, profound respect for our Creator, which will cause us to listen to Him when He speaks.

In John 1:1-3, the Bible says, ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."***

First, let's understand that if we want to know God, He can first be found in His Word.

The Bible is an instructional manual for us to not only know who we are, where we came from and how we are supposed to live, but it also tells us about the Manufacturer as well!

So if the Word IS God then the Word will allow us to get to know our "mysterious" God well. If we don't reverence our Creator God, we risk mismanaging His Word, and as a result end up making up our own rules. We will never function according to God's design by operating outside His manual's instructions.

This ***"fear"*** is not about being afraid. God doesn't want us to be afraid of Him, because when we become afraid, we hide from His presence and God did not create us to dwell apart from Him.

In 1 John 4:18, the Bible says, ***"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."***

Look at this as a parent. Would we want our children afraid to come to us? Quite the opposite, right? We want them to come to us, so we can help them with whatever they need. Don't we feel hurt when our children seek answers elsewhere for something we know we can easily provide?

God is the same way, and part of that moral reverence known as "fear" is knowing it is best to dwell in the presence of our Lord and Creator God.

***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"***

The word ***"beginning"*** means "the first fruit, the best, or the principal part". The first part is the most important!

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus says, ***"But seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."***

The best part of knowing God is having this deep moral reverence for the Lord, which is the foundation to everything we will know. When we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness we don't have to worry about 'not having', because God's will applies to us.

In Psalm 111:10, the Bible says, ***"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."***

Fearing the Lord is the beginning of everything we desire to have as children of God. We exercise good understanding when we follow the Word of God.

***"But fools despise wisdom and instruction"***

The word "**fools**" means "people who act silly or perverse".

The word "**despise**" means "disrespect".

I don't have to go to the Word to make this illustration, and I am sure a lot of men can vouch for this with me because we are KNOWN for doing this:

We buy things we have to put together, the instruction manual is usually the LAST thing we grab. We will tear everything apart, have tools everywhere and we'll start putting it together, only to have to stop because we got it wrong. Normally, people tell us to look at the instruction manual, but we fight it till we have no choice but to tuck in our tails and read the instructions. :-)

God wants us to be people who read His instructions first, so we understand that everything has its place and time.

May the Word of God be our first source of knowledge and may the fear of the Lord bring us closer to Him through His word. We can't know ourselves until we know Him.

### **3. Luke 10:27 - another message of loving ourselves**

Loving God is the key to loving ourselves.

Everything God desires of us has love as the main ingredient.

When we realize we need to know ourselves and understand we came from God, then we can begin to love ourselves. Then we will see that we first needed to love God.

We can only give what we have, without love for God, we aren't equipped to give anything more than fleeting affection to those we profess we love.

Sadly, we do it to ourselves too when we mistreat ourselves, when we don't love ourselves as created by God in His own image and in His own likeness.

By knowing God, we can begin to learn who He is and what He has done for us. Then our superficial affection can turn to love as we allow God to inhabit us placing His love in our hearts.

God's focus isn't rules as most people think. God is about love, if a person loves there is a lesser need for rules.

Today, we are studying Luke 10:27, another message of loving ourselves.

***"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."***

The word "**love**" here is in reference to superiors, and includes the notion of duty, respect, honor, and service with fidelity.

God wants love from us that is faithful and undivided, such as is shown by those who desire to follow the Lord. God doesn't take love lightly.

In James 2:5, the Bible says, "**Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"**

Don't think we have to be prettied up to love God. Don't think we must have it all together either. He desires a people rich in faith, who hear the Word of God, believe in it, and do what it says.

God promises us His kingdom if we love Him. He has chosen us to experience Him.

The word "**Lord**" means "supreme authority".

So we are not loving a second rate God. We are loving THE Person who created everything, including us, and whose plan is being performed as He wills it.

Is God Lord over our lives? Quick test. Whose direction do we live under?

In Psalm 37:23, the Bible says, "**The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.**"

A "good" man, one who lives according to God's purpose for their life. When God is Lord, we will take pleasure in His directions because we know it's best for us.

***"With all of thy heart"***

ALL! God doesn't want our scraps, nor our love being our last resort when all options have failed.

He desires His children to love Him because He IS.

As parents, what type of love do we want from our children? Love that's out of fear of consequence? Love that is only for gifts to come? Love because life is great and they don't have a care in the world? If we want real unconditional love from our kids, then doesn't our God, our Lord, and our Creator want the same thing?

Our **"heart"** is "the center of our desires, feelings, affections, passions, and impulses."

In Proverbs 4:23, the Bible says, ***"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."***

The heart is extremely important, because it is the entry point for every good and bad thought, idea, and feeling. God wants us to "keep" or "guard" our hearts with all diligence.

That means we are responsible for what we allow in and what we let come out.

***"And with all thy soul"***

Once again, "ALL". The soul is the seat of our identity. Our souls are who we are. God wants us to love Him with all who we are.

In the first part of 1 Chronicles 22:19, the Bible says, ***"Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God;"***

To **"set"** means to "fix in position".

When someone is fixed in position, they don't move. God wants His children to seek after Him and love Him, having no desire to move elsewhere.

***"With All thy strength"***

Yet again, "ALL"!

The word **"strength"** here means "moral and mental might".

Love isn't physical, but it does require strength. It makes it a lot easier when we understand that our God is Love, that our God is strength, and if we are His creation we have access to love God just the way He designed.

In Psalm 73:26, the Bible says, ***"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."***

Our God loves us so much that we don't need our own strength to love Him. He gives us His strength so we can love Him even when it is not easy for us.

***"With All thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself"***

The "**mind**" means "thoughts, intellect, understanding".

So God desires us to love Him from everything we know and understand about Him. God wants us to take all His love and to then love His creation with that same love He taught us to love ourselves.

May we come to love God and others with everything He is!

#### 4. Romans 8:16 - accepting our place as children of God

Loving ourselves is a very important thing, the vast majority of people who don't love themselves have no real appreciation of who they are, and where they come from.

When we look within, do we really understand that we are children of God?

If not, then what blocks our understanding or our belief.

Since the beginning of creation, Satan has been trying to get us to doubt who we are, doubt who we belong to, and deny the power that we possess.

He doesn't have to strip us of our power if we can be convinced to freely give it away.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, the Bible says, ***"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."***

Those who have been convinced of the lies about their identity are made lost and blind.

So that if we can't find our way to God we can't see the things He wants us to see.

Today, we look at Romans 8:16, accepting our place as children of God.

***"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"***

***"The Spirit itself"*** is a phrase that lets us know that the Holy Spirit is present and is making the determination as to who we are.

Remember in John 14:26, Jesus says, ***"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."***

The Holy Spirit is the constant reminder of the Word of God, everything we have been taught and also everything we need to learn. God is always telling His children who He is and who we are, because He knows there is an enemy out there giving a different report.

In Isaiah 53:1, the Bible says, "***Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?***"

We have to believe the report given by God concerning us, and we must understand that as children, God is more than willing to reveal Himself to us.

The phrase "***beareth witness***" means "to give testimony, to affirm, to validate information and attest to its truth".

So the Holy Spirit gives a report on our identity, and His witness is truth.

In Hebrews 6:18, the Bible says, "***That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:***"

God can't lie, and we have a strong hope in His word to do exactly what He wishes it to do.

In Exodus 20:16, the Bible says, "***Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.***"

So God expects us to speak truthfully about each other and give accurate reports on our neighbor. He does the same thing. So when the Holy Spirit bears witness about something, you can take His report to the bank.

***"The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit"***

"WITH" our spirit, not TO our spirit.

In Matthew 18:16, the Bible says, "***But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.***"

God is establishing the truth in His witness through us, through our witness that we ARE the sons of God. God doesn't need our help to establish who we are, but He desires us to accept and claim who we are.

In 1 John 5:9-10, the Bible says, "***If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.***"

Yeah, it is really this serious.

If we don't believe God's witness about our identity, then we have effectively called God a liar.

How can we believe the report of the "creation", but not the report of the Creator?

I was called "evil incarnate" and "incorrigible" by the judge who sentenced me to 2 consecutive life sentences without parole. Do I believe that report, or do I believe God's Report and the truth He planted within me?

The judge who sentenced me in 2003 would have to provide a different report on me today, praise be to God, because I am a child of God, a man of standard, a man of faith, and I am in the business of seeing lives saved. I accept what God says about me, because His Spirit made a report with my spirit that I am a child of God.

Did I always feel this way? Absolutely not! Do I always feel this way? Absolutely not!

It doesn't matter what I feel or don't feel, because the truth doesn't care about feelings. It just IS!

We have to accept who God says we are, because we are His creation, and He knows us the absolute best.

When we hold on to who God says we are, then no other report matters.

## **5. Romans 8:17 – the more we know about ourselves, the more we can love ourselves**

Who God says we are is who we are.

When His Spirit bears witness with our spirit, it's our job to agree with the Word of God by faith.

If God declares us His children, then it's our job to carry ourselves as such; and come against any thoughts or ideas that are contrary to that truth.

Feelings of inferiority seep in, causing us to question who we are and our access to the kingdom of God as His children.

One of the biggest issues in society is that people are taking on identities that aren't accurate.

I know this firsthand. Those living the street life, are committing crimes, partaking in the gang culture, developing reputations contrary to who God says they are. God made us each unique and gave each of us our own purpose. He did this to form a body of His children where nothing lacks and where His people can touch all points of the world to win souls for Christ.

Today, we look at Romans 8:17, and more of our identity where the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. The more we know about ourselves, the more we can love ourselves.

***"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."***

The word "**children**" here are those who God loves and cherishes as a Father, the devout worshippers of God, the righteous and saints. This expresses the deep spiritual connection established through our relationship with Him. God also establishes us as "**heirs**", which means "a partaker" of the blessings God bestows on His children, implying admission to the kingdom of heaven and its privileges as the result of our salvation by the death of Christ.

When Christ was talking to Paul about His purpose in Acts 26:18, He said, ***"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."***

Open their eyes. When we accept an identity outside WHAT and WHO God says we are, we have accepted blindness as normalcy, darkness as the climate we live by, and Satan as the authority over our lives.

In Christ, we see WHO and WHAT we are, receive forgiveness for our sins, AND an inheritance.

Heirs receive an inheritance, and that inheritance gives us access to the kingdom of God right on this earth, and when we die eternal life is waiting, where we live WITH our loving God.

In Galatians 4:6-7, the Bible says, ***"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."***

No true believer in Christ can say in truth that they are powerless. We have the Holy Spirit inside us, a REAL part of our inheritance, and we are ESTABLISHED as children of God.

I don't care what your parents used to call you, what your spouse used to say, what kids at school used to call you. We are children of God and as believers, we have the power of Christ dwelling in us.

We are "**joint-heirs**" with Christ, which means "fellow participants".

In John 14:12, Jesus says, ***"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."***

Belief is necessary, because IF we don't know that we are CHILDREN AND HEIRS of God, then we won't believe His word.

Christ said that we will do what He has done, because we believe on Him.

He went further to say, ***"Greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father"***.

How can we have this truth in our hearts but then allow ourselves to believe our prayers won't be answered, or miracles won't happen, or let man's report carry more weight than what God says?

If we deny our identity, we deny our access. It is no different than being enrolled in a school that we won't go in, because we feel unworthy of being there. Our name on the roster, our test scores got us in, but we stand outside calling ourselves stupid.

What if we allow words like "failure", "murderer", "adulterer", and "evil" into ourselves and believe that as truth?

What if "Paul" accepted "persecutor" as his identity. We wouldn't have the 2/3 of the New Testament he wrote!

***"If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together".***

The phrase "suffer with" means, "to experience pain jointly or to sympathize with".

In 2 Timothy 2:12-13, the Bible says, ***"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."***

Let's not be confused, we are created to be ONE with our God, whether we accept that or not, whether we suffer a little or not, or a lot. He created us to BEAR His light!

May we come to accept our rightful place as children, and heirs, of God.

## **6. Romans 8:29 – more to understand about ourselves and therefore, more to love**

Part of understanding our God is understanding that before we were created, God already had His plan for our lives figured out.

He knew us at creation, even before we were born.

Every second of our lives moves according to God's plan, and we are skillfully crafted to perform that plan.

Part of knowing ourselves is to know that God didn't just toss some spare parts together to create us, that He was very detailed in His design of us as individuals.

Knowing ourselves is coming to understand the personal purpose God has for each of our lives, but loving ourselves is the happy acceptance of God's creation and purpose for our lives. When we love ourselves, we can better stick as closely to God's unique design of us as is humanly possible.

Today, we look at Romans 8:29, God's foreknowledge of us, which will hopefully give us more to understand about ourselves and therefore, more to love.

***"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."***

The word **"foreknow"** is used of persons and means "to approve of beforehand".

Please read this over again. God not only created us, but He APPROVED of us before we were created.

In Genesis 1:31, the Bible says, ***"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."***

God declared everything He created and declared it VERY GOOD. What did God do next?

In Genesis 2:1-3, the Bible says, ***"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."***

God rested, blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because there wouldn't be anything else added to it.

Think about this. Everything God created us to be is already there within us.

Why do we find ourselves trying to build a better identity, because we haven't accepted who God has created us to be, instead of rejoicing in God's design of us?

God told us by pre-approving of us Himself, that we are good enough, smart enough, and strong enough. It's our job to believe that and live it out.

***"He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son"***

The word **"predestinate"** means "to limit in advance, to predetermine".

This means that God set our boundaries, our potential in order for us to remain in His purpose for our lives. To predestinate something means to set the course of that person, so they will be in the places they were created to be in at the precise time they were set to be there.

In Ephesians 1:5, the Bible says, ***"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."***

God even had the precise time set for our salvation, and every event leading up to it.

The word **"conformed"** means "formed together with, fashioned like unto".

God, once again knew the precise time that we would be "fashioned like unto" the image of His Son. Imagine a statue that looks exactly like the person it's reflecting. God has fashioned us to look like Christ at the precise time and place He designed it to happen.

In Philippians 3:21, the Bible says, ***"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."***

The word **"image"** means "reflection, representation, or similitude".

God designed us to look like Christ, act like Christ, and project Christ in all we do. God already had this time and place figured out! So when I was face deep in the street life, God already knew before I was born that I would not only go through all of this, but I would live my life for Him, spreading the Word of God to any willing to listen. I didn't see it, but God did. I thought I was too far gone, that I had done too much wrong, but God approved of me before I was born.

Looking back, I see clearly that everything in my past was absolutely necessary for who I am today. How can I ever help pull people out of fires I've never been in myself?

***"That he might be the firstborn among many brethren"***

In 2 Timothy 2:21, the Bible says, ***"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."***

God's desire is for us to choose Him to be our God all while He knows that some won't.

If we remove ourselves from what we wrongly think is valuable, and gratefully accept and appreciate what God deems valuable, we will become as the **"firstborn"**.

The firstborn is always the chief one, the beneficiary of the inheritance of God. The firstborn are set apart, and so then are we as believers!

God didn't create us to be like everyone else. He created us to look like Christ. God loves us that much that He approved every detail of our identities. When will we?

## **7. Romans 8:30 - what predestination produces in us who believe**

God orders our steps, and those steps lead to where He called us to be.

Having the security of God's Word in our hearts should also make us secure in who we are.

The word is "should", as not all come to a sincere acceptance and admiration of who God created us to be.

Many live lives of doubt and disbelief.

If we don't know who God is, we can't begin to embrace who we are, since our identity is given by Him.

If we can't embrace who we are, we won't accept our purpose, as our identity is woven into our purpose.

If we won't accept our purpose, God won't be glorified by our lives.

Those who love God and truly love themselves are being who God created them to be and doing what God has called them to do.

In this society, many are chasing wealth and fame rather than fulfilling God's purpose in their lives.

While this world touts the most millionaires and billionaires ever, it's becoming less loving and irreparably broken.

Today, we forge further into loving ourselves, with Romans 8:30, what predestination produces in us who believe.

***"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."***

As we already discussed, the word "**predestinate**" means "limit in advance, to predetermine". God has our purpose fixed, the place our purpose will blossom, and when it will manifest.

In Romans 9:21, the Bible says, ***"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"***

Let us not think that what's happening to us is catching God by surprise. He has figured our rebellion into His plan for us, causing the worst moments of our lives to ultimately work for good.

In Romans 8:28, doesn't the Bible say, ***"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"?***

ALL things work TOGETHER! God set limits so we remain in the framework of His purpose, thus He only lets us go so far, do so much, make so much money, and have certain people in our midst for periods of time. We thought it was "fate" but it was the creative precision of God causing these things to come to pass at the appointed time.

### ***"Them also he called"***

The word "**call**" means "to summon in order to appoint for a position of divine purpose". In order for God to call us, He has to know where we are and will be, and even better, He called us before we were born!

In Acts 2:39, the Bible says, ***"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call."***

There is a promise in store for those who the Lord calls, and it is not exclusive to Jews. God had us figured into the equation the whole time, knowing full well that the Gentiles would be engrafted into the body of God.

In John 10:16, Jesus says, ***"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."***

Please don't believe the lie that we aren't included in the promises of God due to past sins, religious affiliations, or because we don't feel worthy.

How we feel and what we think doesn't negate the work God has already done, nor the plan He has had from the beginning. Too many believers are in churches feeling unworthy because they haven't embraced what God has already approved for them. He calls the people He established beforehand.

### ***"And whom he called, them he also justified"***

The word "justified" means "rendered righteous or just".

It is bestowed upon mankind by God through salvation by Christ Jesus, absolving us from the consequences of sin and giving the privilege to enjoy divine favor.

Romans 5:1, the Bible says, ***"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"***.

God laid the groundwork for us to partake and succeed in His divine nature, but it's still our job to accept and embrace our place in the kingdom of God by faith.

Justifying us is making us approved by Him to do what we are called to, no different than God putting His stamp on us. There is no reason to feel unworthy or unqualified because He has thoroughly equipped us.

### ***"and whom he justified, them he also glorified"***

The word "glorified" means "bestow honour and adoration upon".

This is God placing a spotlight on us, so He can reveal that we belong to Him.

In John 17:22, Jesus says, ***"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:"***

Christ glorified us so the world could see that we are one with God, so we can then show the world who our God is; and give Him the glory for who we are and what we do!

May we come to understand that we are in the perfect place, at the perfect time for God's purpose to be fulfilled!

## **8. Romans 9:17 - why God gives us the power and abilities we have**

Our lives have purpose - their main purpose is to bring glory to God.

When glorified by God as in Romans 8:30, we give glory to Him by sharing our testimonies so God gets all of the credit.

In Luke 10, Christ sends the seventy out to preach the Word of God; they came back excited that the devils were subject to them through Jesus' name.

Christ adjusted their perspective.

He had given them both power and protection in Luke 10:19, but in verse 20, Christ said, ***"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."***

Christ wants us to focus on where we stand spiritually WITH God, rather than on the power He has given us to activate the kingdom of God on earth.

Today, we look at another aspect of loving ourselves in Romans 9:17: why God gives us the power and abilities we have.

***"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."***

Think about this with me.

God created Pharaoh from the beginning, knowing full well he would not be a convert and be saved, but nevertheless God equipped him for a powerful purpose. God even knew Pharaoh's heart would be hardened to not let the Israelites go.

In Exodus 3:19-20, the Bible says, ***"And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go."***

God caused Pharaoh's heart be hardened, until all the plagues came to be, the last the death of all firstborns, as the Passover was implemented. Then he let them go.

The phrase ***"raised thee up"*** means "cause to rise or exist".

God's purposes aren't just for believers, as you might assume. All are created with a purpose, even those not believers have important purposes. Doesn't our purpose then have extra special meaning to us?

In Habakkuk 1:6, the Bible says, ***"For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not their's."***

God ordains peoples who aren't saved to rise in power, just as Chaldeans' purpose was to take Judah captive, preserving the line to Christ from being destroyed.

God also raised up King Cyrus of Persia to overthrow the Babylonians to ultimately free God's people from captivity.

***"That I might show my power in thee"***

The word "power" here means "miraculous force".

It's not about strength or might, but about God fulfilling His purpose in the people He has chosen.

In Romans 9:22-23, the Bible says, ***"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory"***.

God can at ANY TIME show His power through His wrath or through His blessings; God ALWAYS has purpose in His actions.

God uses wrath as a tool of redirection and repentance, turning people back to God and generating glory for His name.

Similarly, God shows His power through His people as he blesses us with what we need to fulfill His purpose.

In Ephesians 3:7, the Bible says, ***"Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."***

God's power is revealed as we reach after His purpose, as we share the Word of God, as we activate the promises of Scripture, and as our faith bears fruit.

In Ephesians 3:20, the Bible says, ***"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"***.

When we allow God's power to reign in our lives, He can go beyond anything our finite minds can conjure up. God gets the glory when His power is revealed in us, as our mouths speak in victory and our lives bear witness!

***"That my name might be declared throughout all the earth"***

The phrase ***"might be declared"*** means "to herald publicly".

When someone heralds something publicly, they effectively become the "town crier", having a boldness to speak a Word of truth to those whether they listen or not.

God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and the triumph over Egypt was spread all over the world. In the second chapter of Joshua, the Word of God's deliverance spread to Jericho, ahead of their arrival, confirming to Rahab that Israel would conquer Jericho.

God gives us power to operate according to His purpose, and His power is revealed in our lives, and His name spreads throughout the world.

May we be willing vessels that God can use for His purpose.

## **9. Luke 15:7 - yet another reason for us to learn how to love ourselves**

We are so precious to God!

Every part of our life matters to Him, and His love for us is in every detail of our attributes and character.

Imagine the God we serve creating billions of people, all with their own specific characteristics, their own purposes, and their own identity.

Our God has an extraordinary love and care for His children, and His love for us is freely shown by the death and resurrection of Christ.

In John 3:16, the Bible says, ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."***

God sent His Son as a perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins and gave us access to everlasting life as long as we believe in Him.

God gave His son, knowing full well tons of people would reject His gift, but He did it anyway, to save the ones who are lost.

Today, we look at Luke 15:7, yet another reason for us to learn how to love ourselves.

***"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."***

I personally have been that "one" that was lost. I know what it feels like to be separated from the Lord.

It humbled me to fully grasp this verse, especially after reading Luke 15:4, which says, ***"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"***

Do we fully understand that God went searching for us, found us WHERE WE WERE and offered us repentance as if we had always been living righteously.

In the next verse Luke 15:5, God puts us on His shoulders and rejoices. So while the world around us is flinging dirt on us whenever we do something wrong, God is searching us out to rest us on His shoulders.

The word **"joy"** means "delight, rejoicing, or gladness".

God celebrates when He finds us, then speaking to His closest people about His child that was lost and now is found.

Our salvation is a huge deal for God, and when we clearly understand that God not only celebrated our repentance, but He got the heavenly host involved in celebration as well, doesn't it really show us how deeply God loves us?

The word **"heaven"** is the abode of God, Christ and the angels, the spiritual realm of God.

Believe it or not, this is where everything began.

In John 6:63, Jesus says, ***"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."***

When God spoke and called creation forth, it was in the spiritual realm, and our manifestation was in the earth.

That is why in the Lord's prayer, Matthew 6:10, Jesus says, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Everything begins in heaven. So when we come to repentance, the celebration begins in heaven and manifests on earth, with our lives bearing the evidence of our repentance.

The word "**repentance**" means "think differently, implying Godly sorrow for unbelief and sin causing the person to turn from it to God and the gospel of Christ."

Repentance is more than just being sorry. Plenty are "sorry", but don't change.

Repentance always causes a change of direction.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10, the Bible says, "***For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.***"

True repentance means keeping our minds, hearts, and direction moving towards God, and away from the sin and unbelief we walked in. When we turn towards the Lord our God there is rejoicing in heaven, kicked off by our loving God, who came running after us when we were lost,

***"More than over ninety nine just persons, which need no repentance"***

The word "**just**" means "morally upright, righteous, holy".

The person when lost is of greater importance to God, not being better than those already in the fold, but because their lives are in the greatest jeopardy.

In 2 Peter 3:9, the Bible says, "***The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***"

God doesn't want any of us to perish, but the 99 have security with God, who doesn't have to run after them, as they are already home. They have previously had a celebration over their repentance, since we ALL have to come to repentance!

God loves His children, even the ones who are lost, the ones who have backslidden, the ones "outside" the fold.

God is searching for us, hoping we find repentance, so He can place us on His shoulders and bring us home where we belong. There is a celebration in heaven waiting on our repentance.

That's how much our God loves us!

## 10. Ephesians 1:18 - understanding our identity and purpose in Christ

God wants His children to understand who we are, whose we are, and where we are going.

He doesn't want us blind, unable to see our way, because that will make it very easy to fall.

When we can't see clearly who we are, then we are vulnerable to suggestion, and that is when we can allow the wrong people or influence to give us our identity and direction.

In Psalm 119:105, the Bible says, ***"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."***

Is the Word of God our source of direction, the source by which we understand who we are?

Do we heed what the Holy Spirit reveals to us about what we need to do and where we need to go?

To go any other place besides the Word and the body of Christ to find our identity and direction is as seeking darkness to find light.

God has everything we need, but

do we trust what He reveals to us?

Today, we are going to look into Ephesians 1:18, understanding our identity and purpose in Christ.

***"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"***

The word ***"understanding"*** means "broken down thoughts spiritually deciphered".

We receive information, and to understand the information correctly, we break the information in pieces, allowing God to put those pieces together, to make it a complete thought.

This isn't done without God!

In 2 Corinthians 4:6, the Bible says, ***"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."***

We must acknowledge that the understanding we have is given to us, and not something we have because of our intelligence.

The word ***"enlightened"*** means "to impart spiritual and moral light, to shine light upon".

When God "turns the light on", we will clearly see what He has revealed, He is giving us everything we need so that we can see correctly.

In 1 Corinthians 2:10, the Bible says, ***"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."***

The Holy Spirit is the greatest teacher we will ever need as believers.

***"That ye may know what is the hope of his calling"***

The word **"know"** is a term of relational intimacy, referring to two separate parts becoming one.

When we know something, we have come together with it, in agreement making what we know a part of us.

The word **"hope"** means "expectation or anticipation".

This isn't a "wishful thinking" kind of hope, but it is a "I am going to look for it because I know it's coming" kind of hope.

In Psalm 121:1, the Bible says, ***"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."***

The person who hopes is looking for their hope to come to pass.

Because of our faith in Christ Jesus and as children of God, we have a real reason to hope, and a real reason to expect God to reveal himself to us.

In Ephesian 2:12, the Bible says, ***"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"***

That is the picture without God as our Father, but now we are children of God with access to His word and promises.

The word **"calling"** means "a divine invitation by which Christians are introduced into the privileges of the gospel".

God gives His calling with His intention of it being possessed permanently.

In Romans 11:29, the Bible says, ***"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"***.

God wants us to be secure in Him, that He will to give us the understanding we need through His revelation of the implications of His invitation to the kingdom of God. How can we stand by a Word or have faith in a Word we don't understand? So God secures our knowledge enabling us to have security in His Word!

***"and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"***

The word "**riches**" means "wealth, fullness, abundance, or valuable bestowment"

God doesn't give us just something. He gives us more than we need!

In Psalm 23:5, the Bible says, ***"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."***

Running over means excess beyond capacity!

The word "**glory**" here means "perfection, excellence", and that's what is revealed when God shines His light.

In Acts 26:18, the Bible says, ***"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."***

An inheritance comes when someone dies. Christ died so we could be thoroughly equipped with the understanding needed about who we are, whose we are, and where we are going!

How can we love what we don't understand?

## **11. 1 Corinthians 6:20 - the depths of God's love for us**

Do we really understand that God's love redeemed us from the penalty of eternal death, a promise fulfilled in all who have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior by faith?

Do we understand we are loved so deeply, and every second of our lives matters to God?

In Matthew 10:30, Jesus says, ***"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."***

A God that numbers our hairs definitely cares about the state of our faith, of our lives, and about the joy that wells up in our hearts.

God also cares about our tears, and the filthier we are, the more He loves for us.

Imagine being a slave and someone steps in and says they will die a torturous death to free us from our bondage.

Let me paint another picture. Imagine our heart has failed and someone says they will give their heart so we can live, knowing the transplant will kill them.

That's what Christ did for us!

Today, we explore 1 Corinthians 6:20, the depths of God's love for us.

***"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."***

The word **"bought"** means "to redeem, to acquire for one's self by a ransom or price paid".

This pertains to those whom Christ redeemed by His blood from the bondage of sin and death. Just think about this. God paid a price for our salvation because we were so valuable to Him. That price was His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Why do we take this so lightly?

Look at your child if you have one. Imagine conceiving this child to grow up, be tortured, strung up on a cross, nails driven into his hands and feet, so he could save the lives of people you know don't deserve it. That is what our God did for us.

In Romans 6:23, ***"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."***

Our sin has a wage, one we are unable to pay. In Biblical days, when a person owed and couldn't pay, they became the slave of the people they owed. God sent Christ to be the perfect atoning sacrifice for all who believed on Him, His shed blood being the payment for the outstanding debt owed.

In Ephesians 1:7, the Bible says, ***"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"***

In Christ we have this redemption, this price paid releasing us from the prison of sin and death, and we are free indeed, because John 8:36 Jesus says, ***"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."***

This type of love can't be fully comprehended, but it doesn't make it any less real.

***"Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"***

The word **"glorify"** means "to render honor, to give praise to, to magnify".

Our response to being redeemed, should be to glorify God, to give Him honor for what He has done for us.

In Luke 17, Christ was met by ten lepers. They asked Christ to have mercy on them (v.13). It then says that when Christ saw them, He said **"Go shew yourself unto the priests."**

They obeyed, and as they started to go to see the priests, they were cleansed (v.14).

In Luke 17:15-16, the Bible says, **"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan."**

The Samaritan knew Whose Word cleansed Him, Whose mercy healed him, and he remembered what Christ did for Him, and fell down on his face at His feet!

To **"worship"** means "to depress, to bring oneself low in the presence of God", and this is what he did!

He worshipped, giving God the glory for his healing.

In Luke 17:18, Jesus said, **"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."**

One furthest from the kingdom, a mixed breed, one despised by Jews was the one that did what we as believers are supposed to do. Have we gotten so comfortable with God that we have neglected to give Him the glory for what He has done in our lives?

In Romans 12:1, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."**

We offer our bodies in service to the Lord, a living sacrifice pleasing to God because He redeemed us from the penalty of death we deserved. Above that, we offer our bodies because He loves us and we love Him and have a desire to please Him.

In Colossians 3:23-24, the Bible says, **"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."**

We serve God with our whole hearts because we have been set free of bondage, using our freedom to serve our loving God.

In Psalm 24:1, the Bible says, **"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."**

We are the redeemed by The Lord. Let us say so!

## 12. Psalm 127:1 - only God can provide the type of prosperity we are created for

Because God is the Author and Finisher of our faith, He sets things in motion for us to fulfill His purpose.

Too often we author our own stories and go off script, only to find that our ventures don't bear fruit.

A venture without God may lead to some level of accomplishment, but without God ordering our steps, it won't lead to our purpose.

God is not concerned with accomplishments, awards, or the superficial desires we feel we need, to feel whole.

God wants us living and operating to fulfill His good purpose on this earth.

People mistake wealth with being blessed with money, but a blessed person is the one desiring to live the life God intends.

In Proverbs 20:21, the Bible says, ***"An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed."***

The word ***"hastily"*** means "by greed".

This world races after riches, after fame, all things driving it further from the presence of God, the opposite of drawing closer to Him.

Today, look at Psalm 127:1, only God can provide the type of prosperity we are created for.

***"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."***

In Ecclesiastes 3:14, the Bible says, ***"I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."***

God doesn't build temporary structures in his children. God builds something in us that will be forever.

Our issue is we don't like the design, it's unsuitable for our taste, so we cut away, add, and modify it till we love it.

We ignore that all homes have a building Inspector who ensures construction is according to specifications.

If the home doesn't meet spec it needs fixing or it has to come down.

Well, in God's world, it's the same with our lives, and our ministry. God, our Heavenly Inspector will make sure our home is built to His specifications. The only way it will survive His inspection is if the home is built by God Himself to His specifications.

Radical right?

In 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, the Bible says, ***"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."***

God may give us the tools and the abilities, but the plan is His, and He will check the work!

In 1 Corinthians 3:13, the Bible says, ***"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."***

Those who labour in vain are those who build in ways that won't survive God's tests, and those who try to go their own way without God, trying to author their own stories.

***"Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain"***

There is no protection without God.

In Proverbs 21:31, the Bible says, ***"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."***

We must understand that our best efforts to protect ourselves mean nothing if the Lord doesn't keep us.

The word ***"keep"*** means "guard, observe, or watch over".

David knew this well, and in Psalm 3:6-7, the Bible says, ***"I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly."***

David knew it didn't matter how many people mounted up against him. David was a valiant warrior, known all through the land for killing Goliath, giving Israel that victory over the Philistines, but in Psalm 3:7, David calls God for help and acknowledges that God smote all of his enemies.

David always gave God the glory and didn't try to fight without God. David inquired of God before he went into battle, to make sure it was what God wanted.

In 1 Chronicles 14:10, the Bible says, ***"And David enquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand."***

Until we rely on God for protection, He will continue to let our failed efforts be in vain.

In Matthew 23:12, Jesus says, ***"And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."***

Part of loving ourselves is loving the plan God has for us, the building He is building within each of us, and the edifice the world sees. May we become a people who allow God's reign to build us into a people of His purpose.

### **13. Ephesians 4:24 - as we learn to turn to Christ, to learn how to put on the new man**

Do we understand we are new people in Christ?

Our salvation has essentially buried the old person, the old nature, and has replaced it with a new person and new nature.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the Bible says, ***"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."***

Do we really believe that?

For a long time after recommitting my life to the Lord, I still felt unworthy, and still saw life from the lens of someone living outside the kingdom of God.

I still felt filthy. It wasn't until I really came to accept what the Word of God said about me;

That I am reborn,

That I am a child of God,

That I'm not only part of the kingdom of God, but I have access to God's promises through His Word,

That the image staring me in the mirror changed.

Once I accepted my identity in Christ, I no longer accepted anyone holding me to who I used to be, nor do I allow mud to be flung on me. God wants us to embrace our identity in Him and take our place as a redeemed child of God.

Today, we look at Ephesians 4:24, as we learn to turn to Christ, to learn how to put on the new man.

***"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."***

The word **"new"** speaks of a Christian reborn, renewed, and transformed from a child of darkness to a child of light by the Spirit of God, making a New Creation.

Don't we want a second chance at a first impression?

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God offers us that freely by His Spirit.

In Revelation 21:5, the Bible says, ***"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."***

God sits on a throne as King, whatever He says goes, because Kings have authority to declare things.

In Luke 7:1-10, Jesus healed the centurion's servant, in verse 7-8, we get a moving picture of authority working.

In Luke 7:7-8, the Bible says, ***"Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."***

The Word spoken by God The Authority, can enter our life. When we accept Christ as Lord and Savior, God declares us New Creations in Christ, so that's what we are!

We are to **"PUT ON"** the new man. Sounds like we are to wear our new man like clothes!

Ephesians 6:11, says, ***"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."***

1 Thessalonians 5:8, says, ***"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."***

Colossians 3:14, says, ***"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."***

We have the privilege to PUT ON love.

Galatians 3:27, says, ***"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."***

We also have the privilege to PUT ON Christ!

The phrase **"PUT ON"** means "to invest with clothing".

Our salvation does not make this automatic. God enables us to produce the fruit of salvation, so that HIS FRUIT of the Spirit CAN be at work in us.

Whatever we PUT ON people see clearly, and they will remember us by what we PUT ON.

This is a COMMAND by our loving God, but it is also A CHOICE.

Sad to say, many people, myself included, have made the bad choice of keeping on our old man, even after being born again. Many of us have made the choice to not accept this new man by choosing to dwell in our old state of diminished self-worth.

In Peter 1:3, the Bible says, *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"*.

We have everything we need to live a Godly life and all His Word to guide us into accepting who we are IN HIM.

It's a CHOICE, and it's OURS.

"Which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"

The word **"create"** means "to fabricate and form in a spiritual sense, to renew".

God created man to live in righteousness, with his heart right with God through faith. He did create us with free will, but He does not want us to put on anything inconsistent with our 'NEW MAN' identity in Christ.

In Romans 13:14, the Bible says, *"But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*

When we put on Christ, we will walk in righteousness and truth, and look at ourselves according to how God sees us. Who we truly are can be found in the Word of God.

May we always TURN TO CHRIST to be like Him, as we get to know ourselves, as Christ wishes us to know our God!

## **14. Ephesians 5:27 - another aspect of loving ourselves, understanding what our Father thinks of us**

God adores His children!

We may not always feel adored, and often feel unlovable.

But, God doesn't feel unloving toward us. He actually created us so He can proudly show us off.

Don't think so?

In Job 1:8, the Bible says, ***"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"***

God is looking to display who we are, to proudly boast of His creation, especially to Satan!

God creates us with every ability to fulfill His purpose, and as we have victories in what we face, our God is cheering us on!

Remember, God is our Father, and Fathers celebrate the accomplishments of their children.

God desires is to look on His children with a pride that shows how much He loves us. We have a Father that wants the absolute best for us.

When our Creator thinks so highly of His children, why don't we feel like we are worth that much to Him?

Today, we explore Ephesians 5:27, another aspect of loving ourselves, understanding what our Father thinks of us.

***"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."***

The word "**present**" means "exhibit".

When God exhibits us, He puts us on display for all to see from all angles.

Think about a clothing store with me. What does the store staff put on display in the front windows? Their best clothes, their best ensembles. Why? Because it attracts people to stop, take notice, and come inside to shop.

In Titus 2:7-8, the Bible says, ***"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."***

God wants us to show a pattern of good work, meaning such as others always observe in us.

In Titus 2:14, the Bible says, ***"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."***

God had Christ die for us, to not only redeem us from the penalty of sin and death, but to make us a special and beyond usual people.

Guess what? God didn't create us to be ordinary.

God doesn't put ordinary on display.

Remember, what's on display represents Him who displays it! God placed His Spirit inside us, giving us the ability to live extraordinary lives in Him. Then He can show the world who we are in Him!

The word "**glorious**" means "adorned in pure and splendid raiment as a bride".

The word "church" means "Christian community of people on earth, saints of the Living God".

God desires to display a community of Christians adorned in pure and splendid raiment as His bride, to show the world the love and pride He has for His children and His creation.

In Colossians 1:22, the Bible says, "***In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight***".

What a sacrifice to show us off with pride, huh? That's our God!

***"Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"***

The word "**spot**" means "stain".

In the Old Testament, a sacrifice was offered, but the sacrifice had to be spotless.

In Numbers 28:3, "***And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering.***"

Imperfections in the sacrifice were not acceptable to God, as a sacrifice without spot, blemish, or wrinkle God considers the absolute best. God wants our best too!

In Exodus 12:5, when God ordered His children to sacrifice the lamb for the passover, He said to Moses, "***Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goat***".

That's the quality of sacrifice God desires.

In Deuteronomy 15:21, "***And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.***"

***"But that it should be holy and without blemish"***

Christ is the perfect, atoning sacrifice for us, He died making us acceptable in God.

In Ephesians 1:4, the Bible says, ***"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"***.

That's God's original design for us as His children.

In Ephesians 2:6, the Bible says, ***"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"***.

God did not design His children to be in the shadows, unseen. God desires us to bear His image in the earth, so all may see us and glorify Him!

May we live our lives worthy of God, presenting ourselves to Him a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle.

## **15. 1 Corinthians 13:4 - and start breaking down the attributes of love**

As we're going through this series, "Loving You", we've been getting ourselves on to the path of knowing and loving ourselves on the deepest levels possible.

We need to know where we come from and the intended design of our God and Creator, so we can begin to understand ourselves better.

As we pour through the evidence of God's love for us, we see how detailed He is in every aspect of His plan for our lives.

God's love for us is abounding and deep, and He makes provision for our salvation and restoration while we are still face deep in our sins.

The love of God, when translated fully, becomes the source from which we can fully love ourselves.

If our Creator loves us with every fiber of His being, then we really have no excuse for not loving ourselves.

As with anything, we have to receive our identity, our purpose, and God's love with faith, and then walk in our identity, live to fulfill our purpose, and love ourselves deeply the same way God does.

Before we can begin to understand love, let us ask ourselves, what is love?

Today we look at 1 Corinthians 13:4 and start breaking down the attributes of love.

***"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,"***

The word **"charity"** is love, but it is agape love, "the love which God and Christ exercise towards us. The love derived from God".

This is the purest form of love because it comes directly from God and it doesn't have the filters that we sadly place on it. When we pick and choose who we give love to and at what level, we have diluted agape love. Whenever we place stipulations on others in order for them to receive our love, then we have diluted agape love.

In Romans 12:9, the Bible says, ***"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."***

The word "dissimulation" means "insincere, deceptive". This verse gives the message "hate the sin but love the sinner".

The phrase ***"suffereth long"*** means "patient, slow to anger, forbearing".

In Romans 5:8, the Bible says, ***"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."***

So if God sent Christ to be a sacrifice for our sins while we were still sinners, then God's love is truly patient. If we are created in the image and likeness of God, then we must be people willing to love others while we still have dirt on ourselves.

In 1 Peter 4:8, the Bible says, ***"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."***

***"And is kind; charity envieth not;"***

Charity is love, remember? Love IS! It exists, it has an identity, and it has characteristics that prove its existence.

Patience is an attribute, one that requires both grace and understanding for what our brothers and sisters are going through.

How can we understand if we don't try to see what they go through? Love isn't about feelings. It is shown!

The word ***"kind"*** means "to show oneself useful, to act benevolently".

How do we as believers show ourselves useful? In service!

In Luke 22:27, the Bible says, ***"For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."***

Christ is telling the disciples that serving others is the most important thing, no matter what our position in the church may be. Helping others in need with a pure heart is a key way of our showing love to them.

In Romans 12:13, the Bible says, "*Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*"

We need to use what we have to be a blessing to others.

The word "*envieth*" means "to have warmth of feeling against".

This means we don't covet our neighbor's house, nor do we despise people for what they have. Love should make us rejoice when someone has something we don't have. I frequently cheer brothers on when they go home, or get their cases overturned, and sometimes, I cry with them in joy. Love is always going to want to see someone else's joy complete.

In Romans 12:15, the Bible says, "*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*"

Love means we have each other's back, not stab each other in the back, right?

***"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."***

The phrase "*vaunteth not itself*" means "to brag or boast, to be high-minded or haughty".

In Psalm 34:2, the Bible says, "*My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.*"

If we boast in anything, it should be in the Lord, for what He has done, and for who He is.

In Romans 12:3, part of the verse tells us "*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly*".

Love isn't about putting ourselves on display, but it is about serving others with our whole hearts.

May Love be our goal!

## **16. 1 Corinthians 13:5 – for more qualities of love**

Love is the greatest thing we can give someone else, and it is also the greatest gift we can give ourselves.

Before we can fully appreciate loving anyone, including ourselves, we have to embrace the qualities love possesses.

Our actions bear witness to whether we are operating in love.

These verses we are studying in 1 Corinthians 13 are the standard by which we measure love.

God doesn't want His children to have relationships absent THIS love, or ministries absent THIS love, or gifts of the Spirit absent THIS love.

THIS LOVE must become the reason we do all of these things!

1 John 4:12, the Bible says, ***"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."***

When we love one another, we show everyone who our God is, and how God manifests Himself in any relationship.

Love is the evidence that God is present in a relationship!

Today, we look at 1 Corinthians 13:5, for more qualities of love.

***"(Charity) Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;"***

The phrase ***"behave itself unseemly"*** means "conduct unbecoming to one's identity in Christ".

A believer who behaves in an unseemly manner is by their actions invisible as a believer. In them we see more "world" than "Word".

In 1 Corinthians 15:33, the Bible says, ***"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."***

Our conversations display whether we are speaking in love or not, as we see in Matthew 12:35, Jesus says, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

What is displayed in our actions usually is the evidence of what's inside us.

In Romans 12:10, doesn't the Bible says, ***"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another"?***

If this is how we are supposed to act, then there is no room for us to act and speak like the world.

As we are created in the image and likeness of God, then our goal must be to act like Him.

***"seeketh not her own"***

Love isn't selfish! In Romans 12:1, the Bible says, ***"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."***

Our God is not a selfish God, nor should His children be. That is why we should present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God, making ourselves available to serve God and people with our entire heart.

In 2 Corinthians 9:7, the Bible says, ***"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."***

God doesn't want His children to love and give because we HAVE to, but because we WANT to!

In John 15:13, Jesus says, ***"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."***

This is the attitude our God wants us to have because He has freely shown this kind of love as THE example for us. Want to know where?

In John 3:16, Jesus says, ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."***

God sent Christ to the world to die on the cross for our sins, and Christ freely offered Himself in love.

In Philippians 2:4, the Bible says, ***"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."***

The first Church grew because of this attitude!

In Acts 4:32-33, the Bible says, ***"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."***

When we love each other, there are no weak links, no one is impoverished, and everyone experiences the power of God, especially because no one keeps that to themselves.

***"Not easily provoked, thinketh no evil"***

The word "provoke" means "to stir, to exasperate, to anger".

In Ephesians 4:26-27, the Bible says, ***"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."***

Anger gives the enemy a way inside us to influence us to walk in anger instead of love.

If we are not easily stirred, exasperated, or angered, that means we extend both tolerance and grace to others from the REAL LOVE that is in our hearts.

The word "**thinketh**" means "to take an inventory in order to judge". "Thinketh no evil" means "we keep no record of people's wrongs".

In Matthew 6:14, the Bible says, "**For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:**"

Forgiveness is also the evidence of love, which is pleasing to our God.

May love abound in our hearts towards each other.

## 17. 1 Corinthians 13:6 - more aspects of love

The beauty about God's word is that it plainly tells us who we are, and who we are not.

It tells us what things are and what they are not, and I love that the Bible clearly defines the difference.

Flesh and Spirit, good and evil, light and darkness.

Either we're of one or we're of the other, and our actions will bear witness to which side of these we are on.

There are no grey areas when it comes to love. Either it is or it isn't.

God gives us the standard by which we measure our offering of love to establish whether it is or it isn't.

If we are in line with the Word of God, cool, but if we fall short of love, then we have a clear road-map for how to get back on track.

God wants us to succeed in living a holy life, which is why He conveys His commands in such a clear and understandable fashion.

They also show us how far we are off the mark, which helps us to understand that we constantly need God's presence in us enabling us to measure up.

Today, we look 1 Corinthians 13:6, more aspects of love.

***"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth"***

The word "**rejoiceth**" means "to be cheerful, to be merry with".

Usually the word rejoiceth has a positive connotation, but here it is applied negatively to godlessness.

The word **"iniquity"** means "injustice, moral wrongfulness; wickedness or unrighteousness seen more in the neglect of the true God and His laws and an adherence to the world and idolatry".

So this points to those people who celebrate godlessness in others, support their wrongdoing, or condoning their actions!

In Psalm 10:3-4, the Bible says, ***"For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."***

Those wicked actions are already abhorrent to the Lord, but imagine some believers standing behind others and actually cheering them on and celebrating their sickness, and approving of their wrongdoings.

Quick test: Are we any better than those believers?

In Proverbs 1:10, the Bible says, ***"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."***

God certainly doesn't want us yielding to the enticements of sinners!

In 2 Thessalonians 2:12, the Bible says, ***"That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."***

If we love someone, why would we want them to experience the same penalty we ourselves have been delivered from? If we love them, why would we celebrate those deeds that will lead to their condemnation?

In Romans 1:32, the Bible says, ***"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."***

Our love should want us to see people at their best, not side with them, effectively cheering them on, helping them ruin their lives. That is not love.

***"But rejoiceth in the truth"***

The word **"rejoiceth"** here actually means "to sympathize with gladness".

The word **"truth"** implies "conduct conformed to the truth, integrity, virtue, a life conformed to the precepts of the gospel, someone who lives uprightly".

In 2 John 1:4, the Bible says, ***"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."***

It should be a joy to us seeing others living their lives according to the Word. We know how great it feels to walk closely with the Lord experiencing His presence, and His love in our hearts for others that enables us to share their experience with them.

In John 8:32, Jesus says, ***"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***

So when we see believers walking in truth, it is our job, as believers who love them, to celebrate with them, and fully support them as they walk out that love, and to help them building a community of love . We should celebrate with them as if they were just released from prison, because they were!

In 3 John 1:3-4, the Bible says, ***"For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."***

How many of us celebrate other people that are living for Christ?

In John 1:17, the Bible says, ***"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."***

Jesus says in John 17:17, ***"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."***

When a person walks according to the truth, they are living in the promises of God, assured and strong.

If we love our brothers and sisters, we should have the deepest desire in our hearts to see them walking in truth with us.

When we don't share the Word of truth with others, we jeopardize their chances of experiencing this love.

Something to think about.

May our love produce the best possible outcomes for the people we love.

## **18. 1 Corinthians 13:7 - a word on unconditional love**

Love is unconditional.

That means that our love doesn't depend on anyone else but ourselves.

God gives us His love and then commands that we share it. He doesn't stipulate, or express to us that a person has to "clean themselves up" first before they can receive love.

In John 13:34, Jesus says, ***"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."***

God gives us the example, and we are to then give people the same love we have received.

It is not easy because, let's be honest, some people make it so hard for us to love them, and will go as far as to push our love away.

Even worse, there are people right now being martyred for sharing their faith and love with others, knowing the risk involved.

Loving people who love you back is easy. Loving people when everything is going well is easy too.

What happens when times get hard? When disagreements erupt? When we have been wronged by someone we love?

Do we show the same type of love when the other person doesn't make it convenient?

Today pressing through 1 Corinthians 13:7, a word on unconditional love.

***"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."***

The word ***"beareth"*** means "to roof over, to cover over, to endure patiently".

It says that if we love people then we are to cover them no matter what.

***"All things"*** means ALL things.

Of course, we prefer our own standards on this, telling ourselves we will cover others only to a certain point

Is that how God loved us?

In Romans 15:1, the Bible says, ***"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."***

Our covering shelters them as they build the resolve necessary to love a little better, and by covering them, they experience an example of what real love is.

In Galatians 6:1, the Bible says, ***"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."***

Sadly, many believers receive this amazing, reckless love from our God and then forget where we came from, forgetting too we were once without salvation and with a whole bunch of fault.

God didn't save us so we could forget, but He saved us so we can remember and show others The Way, The Truth, and The Life, through our words and deeds.

In Proverbs 10:12, the Bible says, "***Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.***"

A covering is a safe place to hide from bad weather, or an enemy's attack. What if people were trying to find a safe place in us, but only were met with hatred and judgement?

***"Believeth all things, hopeth all things"***

The word "***believeth***" means "to have faith or confidence in".

My Granny, Ruth McKinney, never stopped believing in me, no matter how bad I got. She was always happy to see me, and no matter what I did, she always received me as if I did nothing wrong. She didn't condone anything I did in the slightest, but she always loved me.

She passed on my 18th birthday in 1999, and she embodies 1 Peter 4:8, which says, "***And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.***"

I learned how to love by the Word of God and the examples His children have set in my life.

God created me, and never stopped having faith in who I was to become. My Granny never stopped having faith in who I was to become, and I won't stop having faith in the people I love.

I understand now, when Christ saw the multitudes and had compassion on them, because I remember when I was in the multitudes needing compassion, needing covering, needing a Savior.

The word "***hopeth***" means "to expect".

In Galatians 6:10, the Bible says, "***As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.***"

Guess what? We always have the opportunity to do good to all men. There is a saying I used to hear a lot growing up. "We'll leave the light on for you". It is also a slogan for a motel chain if my memory serves me correctly. The saying signifies that there will always be someone there waiting for you when you come.

How many people would find themselves at the altar if they could be received with love, when they make their way "Home"?

***"Endureth all things"***

The word "endureth" means "to await, to bear up under, to be patient under".

In 1 John 3:18, the Bible says, "***My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.***"

We are to be patient with our fellow brothers and sisters, as they grow into the faith and as they become who God has called them to be. Our love is not to change, no matter how long it may take others to get themselves together.

May our love be unconditional, abounding in truth, and may our love teach others how to love as God commanded.

## 19. 1 John 4:10 – understanding more about the qualities of love

The love in our heart comes from our Heavenly Father.

The standard of love comes from God, and His love for His children is the greatest example of love for us to experience.

Our salvation is the result of God's undying love for us and His relentlessness in bringing His children back to Him.

Our greatest love could never come close to God's love for us, and our salvation is despite everything we do, that you would think would disqualify us from His precious gift.

We can have the hardest time forgiving others for the smallest infractions against us, often we're unable to get past that hurt to step up and forgive them.

Nonetheless, our God loves us and forgives us for our lifelong offenses against Him.

That standard of love is set in 1 Corinthians 13, which shows how extremely difficult it is to love others perfectly. We all will fall short!

Today, we look at the extent of God's love in 1 John 4:10; understanding more about the qualities of love.

***"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."***

The word "**love**" here is the love God extends to us, that enables us to love others.

In 1 John 4:8, the Bible says, "***He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.***"

God IS love, and if His Spirit dwells in us, His love dwells in us. Since we are created in God's own image and in His likeness, He has given us access to have the same characteristics God has, meaning we are designed to "BE" love as well.

God's love vastly out matches our level of love, which wasn't even a factor when God gave His Son to die for our sins.

In Romans 5:8, the Bible says, ***"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."***

Let's think more about this.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Christ dies on the cross for our present day sins, giving us salvation if we believe on His name.

So He died before we were born, Christ's sacrifice was made before we formed the thought to live in sin.

We place stipulations on who we love and under what circumstances we love, but imagine God's love, forgiveness, and restoration being available to us BEFORE we do anything wrong!

God wants us to see His other children, AND even ourselves, the way He sees us.

Why is it so hard for us to look at others and ourselves the way God sees us?

In Romans 5:18, the Bible says, ***"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."***

Our old man, by it's sin nature is ruled by judgement and condemnation, so how do we accept God's love when we are so conditioned to see fault and offense in everything.

Salvation is a free gift to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, so it's up to us to accept God's report on who we are. Love covers a multitude of sins, and we are learning, in the presence of real love, there can be no offense.

***"And sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"***

In John 3:16, the Bible says, ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."***

A simple condition for such a powerful gift, right?

The word ***"sent"*** means "set apart and sent forth". This is where we get the word "apostle" from. Whenever God sends someone, it is to fulfill His purpose.

In Titus 3:4-5, the Bible says, ***"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."***

We are the recipients of salvation because of God's love and kindness. God thinks the world of His children, yet sees us believers not loving our brothers and sisters, and not loving ourselves the way He loves us.

The word ***"propitiation"*** means "atonement, that which appeases anger and brings reconciliation with one who has reason to be angry with us."

Please pay attention to this part of the verse. It says, "And sent His Son to be THE PROPITIATION for our sins." It didn't say "a propitiation". Why? Because in Christ, He is THE ONE!

In Romans 5:10-11, the Bible says, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

As believers we must stop walking around like we are unlovable, like we are horrible people, like we are condemned.

Christ WILLINGLY died to save our lives, because He loved us knowing we were worth saving.

May THAT KIND OF LOVE make it easier for us to walk in love, extending that same love to ourselves and to others.

## **20. 2 Thessalonians 3:6 - keeping the right company**

What type of company do we keep?

This is a very important question, because we tend to associate with those we have things in common with.

Have we really taken a moral inventory of the people we surround ourselves with?

Every person has a voice and that voice can be highly influential to those around them

Likewise their actions can be as influential as their voice.

Do we surround ourselves with people who love God? With people who love themselves?

Do we appreciate that another person's character can easily rub off on us, whether good or bad, and cause us to act more like our own character or potentially way outside our character?

Part of loving ourselves is making sure that we are in an environment that invites love and spiritual accountability. In other words; people who really desire to see us become everything God ordains.

Today, we look at 2 Thessalonians 3:6, keeping the right company.

***"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."***

The word "**command**" means "to transmit a message".

People transmitting messages always hope that their message will be received and acted upon.

**"Brethren"** are the brothers and sisters of the faith, so this message is to believers within the Church at Thessalonica. Whenever something is commanded, it is of extreme importance and it will greatly benefit those that follows the command.

In James 1:22, the Bible says, ***"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."***

God wants a people that follow His commands.

In 1 John 5:3, ***"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."***

We are surely able to follow God's commands without them bearing down on us too hard.

The word "**name**" here implies authority, showing whose authority this Word is given under. It is not about the person delivering the message but about their authority to deliver the Word to those following.

The Word is given in the name of Jesus Christ and according to Philippians 2:9, the Bible says, ***"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:"***

There is no higher authority than the name of Jesus Christ when the Word is given in His name. This means pay close attention!

***"That ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly"***

The phrase "withdraw yourselves" means to "avoid".

This means to physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually remove oneself from others.

We must learn to become very intentional about who we share our space with.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14, the Bible says, ***"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"***

Understandable, but remember, Paul is talking about a "brother", a believer!

In Romans 16:17, the Bible says, ***"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."***

Whether the person is a believer or not, if their words and conduct are contrary to the Word of God, the direction is to avoid them, whether we like it or not.

In 1 Corinthians 15:33, the Bible says, ***"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."***

Others' evil words and deeds can corrupt us, and it can definitely rob us of the loving relationships we want to experience with God and others.

The phrase ***"walketh disorderly"*** means "to practice moral irregularity".

Disorder implies that the other person is lawless, and we are to avoid "every" brother who walks that way.

***"And not after the tradition which he received of us"***

The apostles spread the Word of God, teaching those listening how they ought to act as believers.

The word ***"tradition"*** means "transmission or precept", which is a word or command given that should be followed.

In 1 Peter 2:21, the Bible says, ***"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"***

Peter followed Christ, and then spread that Word everywhere He went, in both word and deed. Christ is the example, so the Word that came from Him is the Word that we should embody and then pass on to others.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, the Bible says, ***"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."***

If someone is not acting the way the Word teaches, and are not heeding the admonishment of the shepherds, then he or she is not the person we should share company with.

If a person is not walking according to the Word of God, they are not walking according to the love of God, and that is a contagion we can do without.

Loving ourselves means we choose our company wisely.

## 21. 2 Corinthians 10:5 - the trial between truth and the enemy lies

As we establish our identity and purpose in Christ, the enemy will come to stir doubt and confusion in us.

If the enemy cause us to question who we are and what God has called us to do, we will become stagnant, and vulnerable to attack.

The enemy does NOT want us to love ourselves, as it means we understand with open arms, that we are children of the Most High God, proudly accepting WHO He created us to be.

While we are PLANTED in the foundation of Christ, whenever the enemy tries to knock us off balance with his lies, he will find us ROOTED AND STRONG in Christ.

Part of loving ourselves is continuing to allow God to build us up into the people He ordained for us to be, AND thus keep the enemy away from God's design in us.

As believers, don't we thirst for truth, aren't we willing to come against everything jeopardizing what God is building?

The other question is: do we love ourselves enough to speak God's Words of life as to who we truly are?

Today, we will look into 2 Corinthians 10:5, the trial between truth and the enemy lies.

***"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"***

The phrase "***casting down***" means "to demolish, to make low".

The word "***imaginations***" means "reasonings, devices, and counsels against God".

The enemy will come and attempt to undo our testimony about both God and us. He will come and bait traps, looking for vulnerable believers unsure about who they are in God and where they are going.

In 1 Peter 5:8, the Bible says, "***Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour***".

The word "***vigilant***" means "to keep watch, to guard".

The enemy always looks for points of access where he can attack.

In James 4:7, the Bible says, ***"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."***

Only by submission to God can we resist the enemy. So when we ***"cast down imaginations"***, it implies intentional action on our part to demolish the enemy lies WITH the Truth, which is the Word of God.

***"And every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God"***

The phrase ***"high thing"*** means "barrier".

The word ***"exalteth"*** means "rises up".

The word ***"knowledge"*** means "true doctrine".

So the enemy has devised strategies and is coming to create barriers, attempting to keep us believers from the true doctrine of God. The enemy would love to block our access to the truth, to rob us of fellowship with God, in Whom we have our identity.

In John 8:44, Jesus is speaking, ***"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."***

Christ clearly defines the enemy, and He says that there is no truth in him. The question then is, why do we let the enemy's testimony about us carry more weight than God's?

In Psalm 119:160, the Bible says, ***"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."***

We must come against the lies of the enemy with the Word of God. That requires us to plant the Word of God in our minds and hearts.

In Psalm 1:2, the Bible says, ***"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."***

The Word of God builds a standard within us that gives us weaponry against the enemy. Remember, the enemy comes against the knowledge of God, the source of our love, identity, and purpose.

***"And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"***

The word captivity expresses bondage, making someone submissive, bringing someone under subjection.

In Matthew 18:18, Jesus says, ***Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.***

God has given us the authority and ability to come against anything that defies the Word of God; and He has given us the weaponry to do it.

In the negative the word ***"thought"*** means "negative plan or device".

Spiritual bondage starts with just one negative thought coming against God's truth. It will spread darkness in our lives if we don't destroy it immediately.

Christ's obedience to God is the standard we must shoot for, and we are to obey the Word of God just as Christ did.

In Luke 11:35, Jesus says, ***Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.***

We have to be on guard for every reasoning and every thought that comes our way, examining it according to the Word of God, and ensuring that the enemy doesn't get a foot in to plant any lies.

May we search the Scriptures, find our identity in Christ AND the power He HAS given us over the enemy.

## **22. Ephesians 1:13 – a message on trusting the Word of truth**

God gives us a clear understanding of who we are in His Word, and from the beginning, God has been pouring His love into us, His children.

He has cleared our paths when things came to destroy us,

He has protected us when predators lurked, and He even chastises us when we stray too far from His design of us.

It's all done so we can become everything He creates us to be, so that we as believers can have direct fellowship with our God.

All this God does to express His undying love for us, why do we then choose to go our own way, choosing not to believe His Word, and choosing not to accept our identity in Him by faith?

God, like most parents, desires His children to trust Him, to receive His Word of truth concerning us, and to believe we are children of God.

The ONE thing that makes any relationship great is TRUST, which ALSO makes it stronger.

When we begin to trust what the Word says about us, we will begin to understand that there is a lot MORE to love than we thought.

Today, looking at Ephesians 1:13, a message on trusting the Word of truth.

***"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."***

***"In Whom"*** refers to Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews 12:2, ***"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."***

We should trust in Jesus Christ, because that's where the faith of a believer begins.

The word ***"trusted"*** means "to hope in advance".

In Romans 10:17, the Bible says, ***"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."***

The Word comes before faith, so the Word also comes before salvation. So we first hear the Word of God, then comes believe in it, which then triggers what we then do, which is what the Word of God says.

We trust it, but trust in the Word of God, doesn't come with mere belief.

Suppose someone tells us to sit down in a chair, that it will hold us up, we can believe them but not sit down on it. Only when we sit down, do we activate our trust.

Trust is the physical manifestation of belief, because by our actions we become vulnerable to what we are trusting.

Is the Bible to us in our life right now "the Word of truth"?

The word ***"truth"*** means "true doctrine of God".

Faith without the Word of God isn't faith. The steps of faith are clearly defined because God wants His children to have true faith based on His Word, thus having something concrete to hold on to.

In John 1:12, the Bible says, ***"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"***.

There is real power for those who believe in His name, who receive Him as Lord and Savior, and who have faith in the Word of God.

The word **"gospel"** means "God's plan of salvation, its doctrines, declarations, precepts, and promises".

The word **"salvation"** means "deliverance from sin and its spiritual consequences and admission to eternal life with blessedness in the kingdom of Christ".

In Ephesians 4:21, the Bible says, ***"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus"***.

If we are going anywhere other than Jesus Christ to hear and be taught the Word of truth for the answer to our salvation, then be prepared for lies and never to live in victory.

"in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise"

The word **"believed"** means "to entrust, have faith in".

The word **"sealed"** means "to stamp for security and preservation".

Our faith secures our salvation and our position in the kingdom. The seal attached expresses authority, only revokable by the Person who FIRST sealed it.

In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, the Bible says, ***"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."***

We are not only sealed, but God confirms us, so if we are not secure in God's seal, how are we ever going to walk in authority, and accept our rightful place as children of God?

In John 6:27, Jesus says, ***"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."***

We shouldn't aim to feed our bodies more than we feed our spirits with the Word of God, because the Word of God inside of our hearts is endless.

The word **"promise"** means "an announcement, especially a divine assurance of good".

By this we're NOT blindly standing on a limb for the Lord.

He gives us His Word, when we believe in His Word placing our trust in It, He responds with salvation, a seal, and THE divine assurance of good.

May we all, as believers, understand how secure we are in Christ!

## 23. 2 Timothy 1:7 – the characteristics of the Spirit, God has given us

There are a ton of things God has bestowed upon us.

Scriptures say in 2 Peter 1:3 that God's divine power has given us everything we need to live a Godly life, so we as believers are equipped for everything that comes our way.

We have access to the knowledge we need to understand the Word of God, because the Scriptures say in John 14:26 that the Holy Ghost, sent in Christ's name shall teach us all things.

Christ also gave us His peace, not a peace the world gives.

The Bible gives us a clear picture of what God has given to us as His children, but as with anything else, we have to believe that what God has given us belongs to us!

Another part of loving ourselves is knowing what our loving God has equipped us with, and what He didn't equip us with.

Sometimes, holding on to something God doesn't want us to hold on to will make the difference between the freedom to accept and love ourselves and remaining in bondage.

Today, we will look at 2 Timothy 1:7, the characteristics of the Spirit, God has given us.

***"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."***

The phrase ***"hath not given"*** means "did not bestow".

When something is bestowed upon another, it's usually a gift directly reflecting the person giving the gift. God is very clear about what He gives and doesn't give.

The word ***"fear"*** means "timidity or cowardice caused by weak, selfish behavior".

In Romans 8:15, the Bible says, ***"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."***

Fear is a prison, and people walking in fear walk in bondage to the thing they fear. God wants to make it clear that He didn't give us fear.

Even when His angels appeared to the shepherds abiding in the fields in Luke 2:10, the Bible says, ***"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."***

Being in the presence of God, His heavenly hosts, and even fulfilling our purpose should not produce cowardice as in Ephesians 2:10, the Bible says, ***"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."***

God has already ordained us to walk in the good works He planned for us.

Fear wars against power, fear wars against purpose, and if God did NOT give us the spirit of fear, then let us ask ourselves, who did?

There are many believers too afraid to make a move towards the purpose God has for them, because they have not even got past the fear of who God has called them to be. Imagine a church filled with people who haven't embraced who they truly are, and you will see a church that hasn't begun to walk in power!

### ***"but of power"***

The word ***"power"*** means "miraculous force or might".

This isn't speaking of physical power, which means absolutely nothing when it comes to God. God does not want us working in our own power. He is looking for a people who will use His power.

In Luke 24:49, Jesus says ***"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."***

Our primary problem is typically our impatience. We don't want to tarry until we receive the promised power, nor do we want to grow weary with waiting, so 'all the time we move out' in our own power before God's appointed time.

In Acts 1:8, the Bible says, ***"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."***

God's power gives us the ability to become witnesses, both in word and deed, becoming a people who will fully display GOD'S WORKING POWER in our lives.

### ***"And of love, and of a sound mind"***

The word ***"love"*** here is agape love, the love God gives us to walk in.

It is the purest form of love we have.

In Galatians 5:13-14, the Bible says, ***"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."***

God gives us freedom, and we are to use that freedom to love other people as ourselves.

Wait a minute, to love people, we FIRST have to receive God's love, and THEN love ourselves? How else can we love someone as ourselves if we don't love ourselves?

The phrase "**sound mind**" means "discipline and self-control".

This is such a person who is focused on God, trained on His Word, AND prepared to walk in truth.

In Colossians 3:2, the Bible says, "**Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**"

If we are focused on God, we are not focused on fear, because in Christ IS everything we need!

May we be unafraid to be who we are!

## 24. John 15:4 – a word on communion

Communion.

This word automatically shifts a believer towards the ceremony where the bread is broken, symbolizing Christ's body broken for us, and the wine is drunk, symbolizing the blood of Christ shed for us, activating the new testament.

Communion is in remembrance of Him, our identifying with what He has done for us.

It is a ceremony not to be taken lightly, because in 1 Corinthians 11:29, the Bible says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

There are penalties for the person who partakes in communion unworthily.

Let us now look beyond the ceremony, to grasp the meaning of communion, which means "partnership, social intercourse".

Intercourse implies a joining, partnership implies a joining, and both are designed for two separate people becoming one.

Communion with God is absolutely necessary for a believer, a dire necessity, because absent from Christ there is no life.

Today, we will look at John 15:4, a word on communion.

***"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."***

The word "**abide**" means "remaining, dwelling, enduring in perpetuity, forever".

It means that we aren't "fair weather fans", hanging around to get some favorable result or to get out of some slump, but it means we are joining ourselves to the Lord forever.

In 1 John 2:19, the Bible says, ***"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."***

There will be people that start in the faith, that won't continue, and it will be revealed who they are.

In Matthew 12:33, Jesus says, ***"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."***

Time and circumstance reveal if we are abiding in Christ or not, and it won't only be revealed to us. Others will see it too.

Have we ever stopped to think that our faith could make or break other people's decisions to abide in Christ?

In 2 Corinthians 13:5-6, the Bible says, ***"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates."***

Our faith is between us and Christ, being the Author and Finisher of our faith, but we are clearly visible to the world around us, and our fruit will reveal who we are.

Before we can be subjected to scrutiny, we must check ourselves and hold ourselves personally accountable ensuring we are abiding in the Lord.

***"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me"***

The end of John 15:5, the Bible says, ***"for without me, ye can do nothing"***.

Any fruit that we bear is only the result of Christ giving us the ability. There should be no conceit in the kingdom of God because we are only using what we are given by Christ.

In John 15:16, Jesus says, ***"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."***

Christ chose and ordained us to go and bring forth fruit, fruit that remains.

So if Christ chose us to bring forth fruit, doesn't that mean we were also chosen to abide in Christ?

We can't bear fruit unless we abide in the vine. Unattached, we are like a branch broken off, with no connection to the life-giving sustenance keeping us alive, OR to bearing fruit.

How is our connection to God? Intact? Broken? Severed? Let us examine ourselves.

In Colossians 1:22-23, the Bible says, ***"In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;"***

Christ did His part, dying on the cross, and sending the Holy Spirit to teach us all things.

It is our job as believers to continue this relationship, by drawing closer to the Lord, by searching His Word diligently, by fellowshiping with God in prayer, and making ourselves available to be taught and led by the Holy Spirit.

We are responsible for our relationship with the Lord, and in order for us to bear fruit that remains, we must remain one with Christ.

Before we can enjoy this process of loving ourselves, we have to abide in the Lord, and have communion with Him. He is love!

## **25.1 Corinthians 3:16 - to understand a key aspect of ourselves according to God**

God wants us to know Him.

Since the beginning God has desired to fellowship with His children, for us to abide in Him while He abides in us.

God doesn't want us blind to His word nor His purpose in us, so He always sends representatives to His people to keep them filled with a fresh Word.

First, He talked to man directly, then He sent prophets, then Christ and His disciples, then The Holy Spirit and apostles, and then The Bible, ensuring mankind always has access to the Word of God.

God sends us His Spirit so we always have the truth in our hearts.

The enemy wants to hinder us from experiencing God's truth and having an amazing relationship with our heavenly Father.

When we begin to accept the truth in our hearts about who we are and how highly God thinks of us, we will start looking at ourselves differently and begin the change. Maybe then, we will begin placing more value on who we are in Christ instead of focusing on the worldly attachments we mostly use in pacifying our broken spirits.

Today, look at 1 Corinthians 3:16, to understand a key aspect of ourselves according to God.

***"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"***

The word "**know**" is a term that expresses a relationship between two things. It can express the sexual bond between a man and woman preferably a husband and wife.

In Genesis 4:1, the Bible says, ***"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD."***

When we "**know**" something, we form a union with what we know, making it a part of us.

Paul writes "**ye are**", which is present tense, which tells us the Word of God is alive IN us and the promises apply to us NOW.

The word "**temple**" means "a dwelling, metaphorically, of persons, Christians, in whom God or His Spirit are said to dwell or act."

Do we really grasp that we are a dwelling place for our God?

We house God's Spirit, Who can move within us, and enable us to walk in power.

Banks have vaults that are virtually impenetrable without the key and codes, because of the wealth they hold inside.

We are vaults for the Spirit of God!

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, the Bible says, ***"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"***

If a vault is secure, able to keep the enemy out, then why do we find ourselves opening the door and allowing the enemy to have residence where God clearly belongs?

**"God"** here is defined as "The Supreme Deity".

If someone is supreme, then there is no other authority above them.

In 2 Corinthians 6:16, the Bible says, ***"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."***

The temple of the "living God"! God is alive and at work in us, but it is our job to let Him have reign of our temple. He wants to commune with us and join us unto Himself. He desires our bodies to represent Him and our relationship with Him.

***"And that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"***

The word **"Spirit"** means "breath, spoken of as imparting new spiritual life to those who believe in the gospel, and then dwelling in Christians."

The word **"dwelleth"** means "to occupy a house, to cohabit".

What does this **"Breath"**, the Spirit of God, do?

In Genesis 2:7, the Bible says, ***"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."***

The **"Breath"** of our God, His Spirit, gives life.

In John 6:63, Jesus says, ***"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."***

The word **"quickeneth"** means "to give eternal life, to make alive forever in the bliss and privileges of the Redeemer's Kingdom."

So we not only live, but we have eternal life! Our lives are sealed forever in Him because of the Spirit living inside of us.

In Acts 17:28, the Bible says, ***"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."***

The Spirit inside us enables us to be our REAL selves in Christ unrestricted by anything, where the enemy has no power over the Spirit of God that rests in us. But we sadly let the enemy in ruining this beautiful temple God has erected in us.

God enables each one of us to be a temple that houses His essence, that houses everything He is.

God must really think highly of us to allow us to be a dwelling for His Spirit.

When will we become people that begin to embrace the value God places in us, not in conceit, but in awareness that we are built for more than bondage?

We are built to not only house the Holy Spirit, but for the Holy Spirit's perfect work to manifest in us!

## 26.1 Corinthians 6:11 - the fruit of being washed clean

Guilt is like drug abuse.

We take on more than what is prescribed, it alters our character and mood, it can become highly addictive, it can kill us, and it keeps us from appreciating who we are and who we are created to be.

How many believers are still flinging their own mud back on themselves because they won't accept that God has washed them clean from their sins?

How many people are still living in willful penance, allowing others to incarcerate them for sins they have been forgiven for?

How many of those believers are us?

How can we ever rise to God's level of loving ourselves if we won't accept what our Creator God says about us?

What good was Christ's death on the cross if we won't allow His blood to wash us clean and then accept clean as the new normal?

When we become new people, declared new by God, we have access to a brand new life in Him.

Today, we will look at 1 Corinthians 6:11, the fruit of being washed clean.

***"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."***

Look at the word **"were"**. Past tense, right? The letter was to the church at Corinth, Paul was writing to believers.

So sadly, there were people in the church still practicing their unrighteousness from before they were saved. Look at our churches now. There is much unholiness amongst believers. There are even TV shows displaying the church in a similar light to organized crime!

In Ephesians 2:8, the Bible says, ***"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"***.

Have we really accepted this as truth, and if so, why are we living our lives like people who were not saved from our sins?

The word **"washed"** means "to bathe fully, to have remitted, to be freed of the consequences of sin."

Do we believe we are bathed fully of our filth, with sins remitted by God through Christ? If so, why don't we have complete faith in God's salvation and leave the guilt behind?

***"But ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus"***

The word **"sanctified"** means "to purify or consecrate, to make holy, to render clean".

How can we still be who we used to be if we were not only forgiven for our sins, but washed, cleansed and purified for holy use?

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, the Bible says, ***"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"***

We are called to be saints, we are sanctified in Christ Jesus, and despite how we feel, that's exactly who we are!

Our self-awareness does have to catch up with our salvation, understandably, but there should come a point where we proudly step into our identity in Christ coming against those thoughts that try to "dirty us back up".

The word **"justified"** means "to render righteous and free, to absolve from the consequences of sin and admit to the enjoyment of the divine favor, to clear from any charge or imputation".

In John 8:10-11, the Bible says, ***"When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."***

This woman was caught in the act of adultery, the penalty, death by stoning according to the law. Her accusers proudly brought her before Christ, to get His insight into the punishment. Christ ended their accusations with that one statement.

They both saw that there was no one left to condemn her, so Christ said He would not either, then He said to go (move forward) and sin no more. If our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ doesn't condemn us when we have fallen short, then why do we?

Paul uses **"are"** to express that we "ARE sanctified" and we "ARE justified". The present tense signifying that what is important is what the Word of God says, not how we feel.

***"In the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"***

The word **"name"** means "the authority by which the message comes."

Want to know how great is Christ's name and authority?

In Philippians 2:9-10, the Bible says, ***"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."***

If we are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, then what man, including ourselves, can change that report?

May we accept, with our whole hearts, the salvation, sanctification, and justification given by Christ, leaving guilt behind us forever?

There is no place for guilt amid true believers.

## **27.1 Peter 2:9 - our identity through the lens of God**

In this society we live in, there seems to be a standard for everything, most falling short of the marks our peers and influencers set for us.

Most people spend their lives hearing they aren't good enough, smart enough, young enough, old enough, thin enough, saved enough.

Yeah, sadly, the Church has been soiled with these standards as well, and people are walking around Church trying to look the part, not to please God, but to measure up to the standards of those around them.

How can we ever grow into a people who receive who we are in Christ, and come into a deep and pure love for ourselves, when we are constantly being positioned for inferiority?

This is not how God wants us to be. The best accountability is the truth, and God wants us to come to the full truth about who He is and also who we are.

Today, we will look at 1 Peter 2:9, our identity through the lens of God.

***"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"***

**"Ye are"**. Once again, this is present tense, to express that this is not only at work right now, but it remains a continuous process of being.

The phrase **"chosen generation"** means "selected offspring". Selection implies being chosen the best, or the favorite from the bunch.

In Deuteronomy 10:15, the Bible says, ***"Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day."***

The Lord loved us so much that He chose the line all the way to Christ, then went further and chose the Gentiles, also bringing them into His fold. Remember, this is written to the Church.

In John 10:16, the Bible says, ***"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."***

Please believe that we are handpicked by God to be a part of the kingdom, there was no mistake in God's choice.

***"A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"***

The phrase **"royal priesthood"**, means "Kingly fraternity of priest". No pressure there, right?

In Exodus 19:6, the Bible says, ***"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."***

Priests convey the Word of God to people, they are representatives of Christ, and they are holy, consecrated people.

In Revelation 5:10, the Bible says, ***"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."***

Imagine our not accepting who we are selected to be because we can't accept the truth about who we really are.

The phrase "**holy nation**" means "a consecrated tribe of people".

In John 17:16-17, the Bible says, ***"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."***

The Word tells us who we are, that we are NOT of the world, neither shall we receive what the world says as truth. We are THAT important to the Lord!

In 1 Corinthians 3:17, the Bible says, ***"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."***

God is serious about how we live and what we allow inside us. His Word of truth is what He desires to inhabit us, and He wants us to be a people who are built up and established by Christ.

The phrase "**a peculiar people**" means "an acquired possession of people for preservation."

In Ephesians 1:14, the Bible says, ***"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."***

We have immense value to God, so much so that He purchased us and will set the date for Christ to come back for His bride, the Church.

In 1 Corinthians 6:20, the Bible says, ***"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."***

If we were bought with a price, then that alone should tell us that we are worth a lot to God.

***"That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"***

The phrase "**shew forth**" means "to publish, to declare abroad". The Word is spread essentially.

The word "**praises**" actually means "virtues", which means "moral excellence".

The word "**darkness**" means "absence of spiritual light and truth".

The word "**light**" means "true knowledge of God and spiritual things".

God selected us to be His Kingly children, an acquired possession consecrated by God, so we can tell the world how salvation in Christ brought us to the true knowledge of God and spiritual things. God selects us to be people willing to share our testimony about who God is in our lives!

May we walk as a people of God, ready to step into the place He has prepared for us as His children.

## 28.1 Thessalonians 2:13 - the effectiveness of God's Word in those who believe

When we hear the Word of God, what is our response?

Do we receive the Word of God with an open heart, or are we a skeptic?

Are we willing to accept that the Word applies to us?

When we hear pastors, ministers, and teachers share the actual Word of God do we judge the messenger and then discount the message?

We as believers can hinder our own spiritual progress because we are so stubborn that we won't accept the Word of God unless it either comes from someone we can relate to or is directly from God Himself.

In Romans 10:21, the Bible says, ***"But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."***

God is tirelessly pouring His Word upon us, constantly sending His elect to speak a word of truth, and constantly revealing our identity to us, but do we accept that God's Word most likely applies to us?

Today, we look at 1 Thessalonians 2:13, the effectiveness of God's Word in those who believe.

***"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."***

The phrase ***"without ceasing"*** means "to go uninterrupted".

When we serve the Most High God, we should always be thankful. It is really a privilege for us to share a Word from the Lord, and equally a privilege to receive a Word that comes from the Lord.

Do we see how great a position we are in as believers?

In Luke 11:27-28, the Bible says, ***"And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."***

The woman tried to give the womb Jesus came from credit for the Word of truth that came from Him, but Christ told her the person that was blessed was the receiver of the Word and their keeping it.

Christ sets the example for us by keeping the Word of God Himself, and accepting the entire Word as truth, even the Word spoken of Himself.

Paul and his ministry team are continually thankful to see the Word go out and being kept, and people being blessed by the Word. What's NOT to be grateful for!

***"Because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us"***

The word "**received**" means "to associate oneself with, to learn, to identify oneself with".

For others to receive the Word of God from us, we must delivered it so that it resonates with them enough to stimulate their action. In my opinion, the Church of Thessalonica received more than just the Word. They received a living application of the Word, by also receiving love, and a great example.

In Hebrews 4:2, the Bible says, ***"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."***

Two different crowds can receive the same Word, but be impacted very differently. The intention preached and the way the Word is received can be two quite different things.

In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says, ***"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."***

We don't just share the Word. We share how the Word can be lived.

***"Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God"***

This means as we bring the Word to others, it is a spiritual assignment, where our understanding is secondary to God's intent.

In 1 Peter 4:11, the Bible says, ***"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."***

When we share the Word, it should come from God, taught and led by the Holy Spirit.

The phrase "**Word of God**" speaks of the Bible, but also of the divine revelations, declarations and oracles of God.

When we receive the Word from God's delegates we must honour the Word itself, as if it comes directly from the mouth of God, unless it proves inaccurate.

***"Which effectually worketh also in you that believe"***

The phrase ***"effectually worketh"*** means "to be active, to be efficient."

The Word of God moves and comes to life in those who believe.

The word ***"believe"*** means "to place faith in, to entrust".

The Word must be allowed to work IN us, meaning that we receive it by faith, so that it can become effective.

May we associate ourselves with the Word spoken of us as believers, and may we begin to live out that truth in our lives.

## **29.1 Thessalonians 5:8 - a word on guarding what truly matters to God.**

As believers, we must ARM OURSELVES daily for spiritual warfare.

The enemy is busy every day, aiming to keep people as far away from THE FAITH as possible.

In 1 Peter 5:8, the Bible says, ***"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."***

There is a real threat out there, and that threat is aimed at stripping us of both our identity and our security in Christ.

A key part in loving ourselves is seeing the VALUE that God has created in EACH of us, and doing our part to protect it.

If the enemy can keep distorting the knowledge of God we have, then we will question who we are and what we are called to do.

If we don't know our TRUE selves well, how can we love ourselves?

Isn't it odd how we would protect jewelry and money with our lives while allowing our identity and relationship with God to remain vulnerable to attack.

What if we guarded our faith as strongly as we guard our possessions?

Today, we look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8, a word on guarding what truly matters to God.

***"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."***

The phrase ***"of the day"*** is speaking about believers.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:5, the Bible says, ***"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."***

Being of the day means that we should clearly see Who's protecting us, and clearly see who we are.

In John 11:9, the Bible says, ***"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world."***

The last part of this verse, ***"he seeth the light of this world"***, is highly important. Here's why.

In John 1:9 the Bible says, ***"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."***

The ***"true Light"*** is Christ!

In John 1:4, the Bible says, ***"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."***

And we have THAT life through HIS Light

In John 1:12, the Bible says, ***"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"***.

We must FIRST receive the Light in our lives to then receive the power to become sons of God.

Being ***"of the day"*** is vital to every believer, because it pertains to the people who have faithfully accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; and so abide in Him.

This means we embrace everything the Word of God says about us as TRUTH, as we aim to live out the Word in our lives. SINCE the Word says we ARE children of God, then we should BELIEVE that, and START living like children of God.

To be ***"sober"*** means that we "keep watch, or be on guard".

God has given us the power to be the children of God, BUT He also gives us a choice to choose to walk in darkness or in light: to be children of darkness or children of the day.

Would we ever drive a car with our eyes closed? That is exactly equivalent if we accept any lie diminishing our identity and true relationship with God.

***"Putting on the breastplate of faith and love"***

A soldier wears a "breastplate" in combat. It protects from attack the vital organs of his body, especially his heart.

In Proverbs 4:23, the Bible says, ***"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."***

God wants us to protect our hearts with everything He has given us. Life flows from our hearts.

In Ephesians 2:8, the Bible says, ***"For by grace are ye saved through FAITH; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"***.

There is no salvation without faith.

In Matthew 22:37-40, ***"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt LOVE the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt LOVE thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."***

Love ensures we follow the law without worrying about the law. There is no righteousness without faith and love, because both are required!

***"And for a helmet, the hope of salvation"***

A helmet guards the head and the mind.

In Romans 12:2, the Bible says, ***"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your MIND, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."***

Our minds allow us to establish, by evidence, the will of God for our lives. Protecting our minds is vital to resisting the enemies lies. These attacks can cause us to lose sight of who we are and what we are called to do.

May we become a people of God who choose Light over darkness, and truth over lies.

Our identities are secure in Christ if we have the boldness to accept who we are and what we are called to do.

Secure people love themselves, remember that.

## 30. Philippians 1:6 - confident that God finishes what He starts in us

We have made it through this series, "Loving You". In the process we have uncovered God's intended design for His children.

We learned about the intentionality of God creating us for His purpose, and that before we were born God had a purpose, a name, and a character already ordained for us.

We learned that we are unique, and the love of God formed us into His image and likeness.

We discovered that we have authority as children of God and access to the Spiritual realm by the Holy Spirit taking residence in us.

We were created in love and no matter what our purpose is, we are called to love others.

The intent of this series is to bring us into the knowledge of who we are, why we were created, and how deeply God loves us, so we can begin to look within and begin to love ourselves.

As we love ourselves, we place value in who God created us to be, and we protect His purpose in our lives by fulfilling what He called us to do.

Love brings security, and when we are secure, the enemy has the hardest time penetrating our lives.

Knowing it is pleasing to our God, a life lived in love is a victorious one, in which we always live to serve others.

To close out this series, we look at Philippians 1:6, confident that God finishes what He starts in us.

***"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"***

The phrase ***"being confident"*** means "one who is persuaded, assenting to evidence or authority".

God wants His children to be confident in who He is as our God, and in who we are as His children, and in what He has appointed each of us to do.

In Romans 8:28, the Bible says, ***"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."***

God wants children that KNOW, fulfilled through our union with the Word of God and living it out in faith. This confidence allows us to remain rooted in Christ even when it seems like we are going in the opposite direction.

In Jeremiah 29:11, the Bible says, ***"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."***

God wants us to be confident in His faithfulness, because He already has our ending figured out.

In Ecclesiastes 3:14, the Bible says, ***"I KNOW that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."***

God doesn't do anything in us that man can change, unless we let them. So when our parents say we won't amount to anything, when our spouses say there isn't anything special about us, and when society brands us failures, they are only uttering the lies of the enemy, because that is NOT what God says about us.

***"That he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."***

In Galatians 3:2-3 the Bible says, ***"This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"***

In faith we received salvation, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the power to operate as children of God; all in faith.

We entrusted our confidence to the Lord, believing His Word to be true, and we set out to do what the Word says.

We will severely blunt God's power to operate in our lives if we turn around and abandon God's proven path, and do what we feel we must do to follow our own path.

In Proverbs 3:6, the Bible says, ***"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."***

We must remain connected to the Lord in everything we do, in order for the work of the Lord to continue.

In Galatians 4:1-2, the Bible says, ***"Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father."***

There is a process involved in forming us into children made in the image of God, and the process is continuous!

We must never stop growing, and never stop maturing in the faith, as God is never done with us.

The word ***"good"*** goes back to creation, when God creates something by His Word it IS so. When He saw what He created manifest itself, He saw it was "good". Good implies the fulfillment of God's purpose from His creation.

The word ***"perform"*** means "bring to an end or complete".

"Until the day of Jesus Christ" pertains to the second coming of Christ. So what we do today in Christ will continue until He comes back! God created us to make an impact, to affect history, giving testimony of God's love for us!

God began a great work of love in us, and we should look in the mirror to see God's love looking back at us.

May we begin to see ourselves the way God sees us!

God Bless!  
Marshall & Jessica

## WHY KJV (King James Version)

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

This is one of my favorite Bible verses, a constant source of encouragement for me to dig deeper and deeper into the Word of God to receive truth in its deepest form. I believe it is our job as believers to study as deep as we can, and then build our way up. The King James Version of the Bible is one of most popular early translations of the Bible to English, so that is where my study begins. I have come to learn that by putting the King James Version side by side with other translations that may be easier to read, that easier doesn't always keep the deeper meaning intact. The "thee", "thy", and "ye" can be a little overwhelming at first, but as with anything else we study continuously, it will become easier to decipher.

The Bible I use, the KJV AMG Hebrew-Greek Keyword Study Bible, gives me an enormous tool to not only study the Word of God from an earlier English translation, but gives me access to study the keywords in the Scripture to find the deeper meaning of the verses I study. The more I studied the Word of God, the deeper I wanted to go. When I first started my incarceration over 17 years ago, I read the NIV version of the Bible. As I matured as a reader, I went back to the King James Version in 2007, wanting to learn the most difficult English translation. I went to the Hebrew-Greek Keyword Study Bible in 2014 and have been using it since. I recently was given a MacArthur Study Bible, NASB, which I use for scriptural cross-references and commentary purposes. I am in no way saying it is wrong for anyone to study any translation other than the King James Version, but I do suggest that everyone possesses one, so we can break down the Word of Truth side by side. It is important to go to the earliest possible translation, to see the modernized translations accurately convey the Word of God.

Studying the Word of God pleases Him, and I desire to break down the Scriptures rightly, understanding that by studying the Word of God, I am breaking down truth so I can position myself for the Holy Spirit's teaching. Whatever I learn, I then share, and by sheer repetition, I am able to retain what I learn better.

## Marshall's Bio, Poems, and History

### Marshall's Bio

Marshall Jones is a 38 year old man on a lifelong journey of bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God. The author of "A Raven's Meal" (RoseDog Books), a poetry collection, he aspires to target the grey areas, and the people who are terribly misunderstood by society. Believing that everyone deserves a voice, he not only shares his testimony, but he also tries to use his gifting to share other people's experiences as well. He writes from the prison system that has housed his body for 17 years, but also from the place that has been the catalyst to his freedom.

### Marshall's Poems

You can view Marshall's poems at <https://www.redthreadpoets.com/category/100-poets/marshall-jones/>

### History

Red Granite Daily Devotions commenced on Red Thread Poets Facebook page on November 1, 2020. The first eBook Psalm 91:1 was published on Red Thread Poets in March 2021.

See <https://www.redthreadpoets.com/ebooks/>

The Daily Devotions are recapped by date at [www.redthreadpoets.com/daily-devotions/](http://www.redthreadpoets.com/daily-devotions/)

Marshall uses these resources in his Bible Study Process: AMG Hebrew Greek Keyword Study Bible (KJV), Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, The MacArthur Study Bible (NASB), Webster's New World College Dictionary.

## ABOUT RED GRANITE DAILY DEVOTIONS AND MARSHALL JONES

- Entirely influenced by Holy God Almighty
- Conceived November 2020
- First Daily Devotion November 1, 2020
- 13 Series available as of Q2 2026
- Over 1,300 daily Devotions written since November 2020.
- Written by Marshall Jones from his cell in Wisconsin, United States of America
- 22 years to 2026 serving a double life homicide sentence
- Jessica his wife and partner from November 1, 2022
- We all await the Lord's grace for a positive outcome from the new 2026 Commutation Advisory Board in Wisconsin, please pray for such

## FOLLOW MARSHALL AND JESSICA JONES:

<https://www.redthreadpoets.com/red-granite-daily-devotions/>

[Forged by Fire; Iron Sharpening Iron Private Facebook Group](#)

## THE SERIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

1. PSALM 91: 16 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on January 2, 2021.
2. LOVING YOU: 30 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on January 28, 2021.
3. THE FEARLESSNESS OF FAITH: 21 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on March 13, 2021.
4. WARFARE IN THE SPIRIT: -16 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on May 19, 2021.
5. THE BEATITUDES: 10 Daily Devotion: The first was posted on July 21, 2021.
6. THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD: 15 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on August 13, 2021.
7. PSALM 23: 6 Daily Devotions: The first was posted in November 2020.
8. JESUS CHRIST - THE MYSTERY UNCOVERED: 31 Daily Devotiion. The first was posted on November 28, 2021.
9. MARITAL BLISS: 12 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on August 21, 2022.
10. GODLY PROSPERITY: 10 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on October 10, 2022.
11. SLAIN TO RECEIVE: 7 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on September 4, 2023.
12. FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: 12 Daily Devotions. The first was posted on October 28, 2023.
13. LIGHT OF CHRIST: 31 Daily Devotions: The first was posted on February 23, 2025.

## LOVING YOU

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