



THREE MONTH
DAILY
DEVOTIONAL

VOLUME ONE
SERIES ONE

**THREE MONTH
DAILY DEVOTIONAL**

VOLUME ONE

SERIES ONE

These brief messages are offered to the reader as “starters” for meditation before the Lord and introductions to a time of prayer. We encourage the reader to take one daily message at a time, leaving tomorrow’s message in tomorrow’s hands. Reading each section more than once may be helpful.

**Messiah Book Room
972 Deering Street
Garden City, MI 48135
www.mmirror.net**

PRAYERS FROM SCRIPTURE

Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

*who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;
who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;
who satisfieth thy mouth with good things;
so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort.

So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

DAY 1 - PATIENCE

“And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.”
Luke 8:15

Signs and wonders may happen suddenly.

Visions may take us by surprise.

The word of God may hit our hearts with the force of a hammer.

But for the word to take hold and bear fruit takes time.

There are setbacks.

Disappointments.

Storms.

Dry spells.

To remain faithful to the word when nothing seems to be happening, to continue to love God and praise him in the midst of total darkness, requires patience.

Patience is a gift of God.

This gift is developed in us only through exercise.

The Spirit of the Lord develops our patience by giving us opportunities to practice it.

Patience in trying circumstances.

Patience toward trying people.

Patience on the road which seems endless.

And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.
Galatians 6:9

DAY 2 - CHRISTIAN CULTURE & THE BODY OF CHRIST

They are not the same.

Christian Culture,
better known as Christendom, is a society paying homage to Jesus Christ with its lips while ignoring his call to radical obedience.

The Body of Christ
is the living organism of human hearts that, having received Christ's forgiveness through the cross, are living crucified and risen lives in obedience to his Spirit.

If Christian radio helps you to follow Jesus with all your heart, listen to it.

If Christian music aids you in "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts," listen to it.

If Christian celebrities point you to the way of the cross, listen to them and pray for them.

Christian television, Christian publications, Christian enterprises of whatever kind surround us on all sides.

It is the responsibility of each believer to weigh what is being taught against the words and example of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

--Is the message helping me to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Jesus?

--Is the message empowering me to turn away from mammon to serve God alone?

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. You will know them by their fruits....Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then I will say to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evil-doers.'"

Matthew 7:15-23

DAY 3 - WHY SHOULD I BE RECONCILED?

I know he's angry with me.
And, to tell the truth, I'm not too pleased with him either.

You tell me he's my brother in the Lord, and I have no choice but to get things right.

What about him?

Why should I always be the one to make the first move?

I'm going to put the whole thing on hold for a while, and get on with my life with God.

How can you get on with your "life with God" when your life with your brother/sister is poisoned with bitterness?

"So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."
Matthew 5:23-24

You say you just can't do it?

Then ask for help.

"Lord, I'm in a bad place here over this thing with my brother. Help me!"

He will help you.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also. I John 4:20-21 KJV

DAY 4 - ALL, OR NOTHING AT ALL

John 3:16.....

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

I John 3:16.....

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

The same God who gave all, demands all.

He doesn't want half your life.
He doesn't want half your time.
He isn't after half of your money.
He isn't interested in half your heart.

It's all or nothing.

The life of God comes to dwell in us when we abandon our lives totally to him.

“Here I am, Lord,

I present my body to you as a living sacrifice.
I turn my mind from this world's darkness to your light.

By the power of your Spirit, I take up my cross and follow you.

Teach me how to lay down my life for the brethren.”

To those who are willing to walk the walk of a disciple, Jesus sends the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

By the Spirit their bodies become a living sacrifice, their minds are filled with holy light, they know how to carry their cross, and lay down their lives for the brethren.

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” *Matthew 16:25*

DAY 5 - BE STILL

The sound of war is becoming louder.

Thousands of miles from the battlefield, and still we hear it...
In our living room.
In our work place.

People are frightened.
People are angry.
People are confused.

Even in church the tension of the surrounding world seeps in like smoke under the door. Sometimes we try to distract ourselves by turning up the volume of our praises.

Is this a joyful noise unto the Lord?
Or is it just more noise?

Listen to the Spirit....

***Come behold the works of the Lord,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.
He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder.
He burneth the chariot in the fire.***

....and the message in all this is:

Be still and know that I am God.

It is beyond our power to stop the noise of war.

Only God can do that.....and he will, when he chooses to.

But we can end the noise within our own hearts.

We can obey the command of the living God to be still and know that he is God.

He will be exalted among the heathen.
He will be exalted in the earth.

***The Lord of hosts is with us,
The God of Jacob is our refuge.***

DAY 6 - WINE INTO WATER??

Jesus turned water into wine.

He revived a wedding feast that was falling flat, and soon brought life to a spiritually barren Israel.

On Pentecost the believers were “filled with new wine” as the Spirit lifted them into a walk with God that was awesome to behold.

Immediately, they brought good news to the poor deliverance to the captives sight to the blind freedom to the oppressed, and manifested the beginning of a new era on earth.

The wine of the Spirit of God has not lost its power.

All the things the Spirit did through our apostolic sisters and brothers he still does.

Jesus tells us that his Word is Spirit and life.
....That the Word and the Spirit are one.

But what happens when the Word is diluted?when we water down those clear words which Jesus spoke and still speaks?

Instantly, the wine of the Spirit turns to water.

The joyful wedding feast becomes an absurd mockery of the holy God, and is seen by the angels as blasphemy.

Once we hear the Word from the mouth of the crucified and risen Messiah, we are accountable for what we do with it.

We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. II Corinthians 4:2

DAY 7 - COMMITTED TO WHAT??

Total commitment—that's the only way.

But to what?

To the “right” theology?

To the “correct” doctrinal position?

To an “essential” spiritual experience?

To the “true” church?

For the follower of Jesus there is only one essential commitment: commitment to Him.

- to put my life into his hands,
- to put my money under his control,
- to open myself to whatever change he requires,
- to submit to his word as my only Truth.

"Here I am, Lord. I'm yours to lead wherever you choose. My hand is on the plow, and my eyes are on you alone. You have the words of eternal life, and by your Spirit's power, I will obey.

I will at last have the right theology, the correct doctrine, the essential experience, as a member of your true Body on earth, as I follow you with all my heart, soul, strength and mind."

May God help us to abandon all commitments which interfere with our commitment to Jesus alone.

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

DAY 8 - WHO IS HE?

How can you believe in Jesus, unless you know who he is?

Some say he's John the Baptist, back from the dead.
Some say he's Elijah returned from glory.
Some say he's Jeremiah or one of the prophets.
Some say he's one of the Great Spiritual Masters.

But who do you say that he is?

—not just with your mouth, with your life!

Suddenly Peter knew who Jesus was, and confessed it:

“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”

And Jesus answered, “You didn't figure this out by yourself, Peter, my Father revealed it to you.”

There is only one way that you will ever know who Jesus is:

Neither your brains nor any one else's can uncover this truth.

Nor can you, by your own powers, keep it fresh in your mind.

To know and keep knowing who Jesus is requires a continuous miracle from above.

“Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven.”

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”

“All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.”

If you're not sure who Jesus is, don't confuse yourself by “researching” the matter. Go into your room, shut the door, humble yourself before the Father, and ask him to reveal the truth.

If the vision seems slow in coming, wait for it. And while you're waiting, keep reading the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

DAY 9 - WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?

i.e. God owes me an explanation!

Who ever said that life in this world is fair?
Who ever promised quick rewards to the guys with the white hats?

But doesn't scripture say that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."?

Yes, scripture says it, and it's true. All things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

All things.

Even the "bad" things.

But at the time it happens, who can see good in a tragedy?

So what do I do with the anguish I feel since this evil thing has shattered my life?

From the heart of a man of faith who also walked through a dark valley:

***Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications:
In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.
And enter not into judgment with thy servant:
For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.
For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;
he hath smitten my life down to the ground;
he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.....
Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit faileth:
Hide not thy face from me, lest I become like them that go down into the pit.
Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning;
For in thee do I trust:
Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;
For I lift up my soul unto thee.***

Psalm 143

DAY 10 - DON'T WORRY, I WON'T UPSET YOU.

TV mysteries,
Scary movies,
Hockey fights,
War and violence on the evening news.

.....these things I can accept. After all, that's life.

But when it comes to religion, give me a mild dose!
Don't upset me, I have enough problems!

This is why our preacher's smile is so reassuring.
It's written all over his face....

“Don't worry, I won't upset you.”

No wonder everybody loves the man!
He knows how to give it to us, soft and smooth.

A piece of advice:

If you don't want to be upset, stay away from Jesus.

***“You brood of vipers! how can you speak good, when you are evil?
For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good
man out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil man out
of his evil treasure brings forth evil.”*** **Matthew**
12:34-35

And yet, if you are searching for life from God, Jesus is the place to go.

He may upset you, but he'll never let you down.

***“It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I
have spoken to you are Spirit and life.”*** **John 6:63**

Better to build your life on painful truth, than on comforting
fantasy.

DAY 11 - FAITH:

Being sure of things hoped for, certain of things not seen.

Not things wished for.

Not things dreamed about.

Not things promised by the preacher.

Faith in God.

Faith that God will do what HE has promised.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

They don't see the kingdom with eyes of flesh, but they're sure of it, certain of God's promise, enabling the Holy Spirit to move with power in their lives.

Don't confuse your “high hopes for better things” with the hope which Jesus inspires.

Pin your hopes on these words, and your faith will be confirmed:

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.”

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Faith is being sure of things hoped for, certain of things not seen.

DAY 12 - WHY GET IT SECOND-HAND?

Of course we need help, if we're going to follow Jesus.

Nobody can walk this walk without help.

But what's the point of getting that help second-hand?

Relying on books and songs and sermons before we've taken the trouble to hear from the Shepherd himself can lead to spiritual anemia.

Books and songs and sermons are helpful only for those who get their "main course" directly from the Shepherd.

His words are simple and few.

He embellishes nothing.

He speaks with such clarity that a child can grasp his truth.

"Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock....."

"And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand...."

Hear them.

Take them into your heart.

Turn them into daily living.

Then you will have the discernment to know which books and songs and sermons are true to him, and which are only a distraction.

"It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life." ***John 6:63***

DAY 13 - HE MAKES ME FEEL SO GOOD!

Every time I hear Reverend Uplift he makes me feel so good. I walk out of there all warm and fuzzy inside.

But back in the rat race Monday morning, it's gone.

Gone.

What happened to the peace I seemed to have in that wonderful church service?

Of course, if you read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) you probably won't feel all warm and fuzzy.....

“You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill, and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.....”

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

With Jesus, here's the difference:

When Monday morning comes around, the power of those words is still with you.

To help you.

To give you strength.

To set you free from the fear of man.

When God speaks through his incarnate Word, you may or may not feel good.

But if you take hold of that word,

you will have strength for the rat race,

power to walk the walk of faith.

DAY 14 - HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WAIT, LORD?

Faith is “being sure of things hoped for,” but how long do I have to sit here hoping?

I’m not asking for the moon.

So what’s the holdup, Lord? Is it me?

Am I missing something, failing somewhere?

Just show me, and I’ll do whatever you ask.

And the Lord answered me:

“Write the vision;

make it plain upon tablets,

so he may run who reads it.

For still the vision awaits its time;

it hastens to the end—it will not lie.

If it seem slow, wait for it;

it will surely come, it will not delay.

Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail,

but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

Our Lord Jesus encourages us to ask. He describes the Father as always listening in deep love.

But Jesus never promised that the Father would fit into our schedule.

To worship God,

To love him with all our heart, soul, and strength, is to learn to fit into his schedule with childlike trust.

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

Matthew 7:11

(...on his terms.....and on his timetable....for our good.)

DAY 15 - THE DISTRACTED HEART

***"My sheep hear my voice,
And I know them, and they follow me."***

The voice of the Shepherd is heard with the heart.

But if the heart is distracted, how can it hear?

Bills need to be paid.
The kids need attention.
My spouse is moody.
How long will I have this job?
The nightly news is depressing.

How can I even think about the Lord Jesus, when my heart is in turmoil?

The more turmoil in your heart, the more it needs to hear a Word from the heart of God.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but that word will never pass away.

It will still be true when all the lies of this age have been exposed.

Our job is to listen.....to hold still, and listen.

Our job is to wait....to be still until we know the Presence.

No one who takes the trouble to call out to the Shepherd and wait for his answer is ever disappointed.

***I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,
and in his word do I hope.
My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they
that watch for the morning:
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.
Let Israel hope in the Lord:
for with the Lord there is mercy,
and with him is plenteous redemption.***

DAY 16 - I WANT TO DO THE RIGHT THING

But I'm not sure I can keep walking this road I'm on.

I feel like I'm drying up inside.

I'm running out of patience.

What's going to happen when I reach my limit?

The road you're on.....

Did God put you there?

Do you have the certainty that God wants you there?

Many of us are piously trudging along a road God never called us to travel.

It never occurs to us that the living God may have had something else in mind for us since Day One.

The Lord Jesus is referring to your weary road when he says:

“Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

i.e. “Get under this yoke with me and I will show you the way I want you to walk....a good way, a way far more refreshing than the one you now walk.”

***Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning,
for in thee do I trust.***

***Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk,
for I lift up my soul unto thee.***

(Psalm 143)

DAY 17 - WHAT'S THE URGENCY?

I'm busy with my own affairs right now. Can't it wait?
Do I have to decide today?
What's the rush?

I'll follow you, Lord, as soon as I get a few personal matters straightened out.

“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

I truly intend to get reconciled with _____ as soon as I have time.

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.”

Thanks for the invitation, but I'm busy right now.

“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my banquet.”

When Eternity breaks into Time and speaks, the message is always urgent.

There is no time to say goodbye to the folks.
No time to “finish what I'm doing.”
No time to “consider my options.”

When you know that you are hearing the voice of the Master saying directly to you, “Follow me,”

there is only one thing to do,

and only one time to do it:

Now!

DAY 18 - TRAPPED IN THE PAST?

It's bad enough to be petrified by those clouds hanging over the future.....

But it's far worse to be trapped in the past.

Dreaming about past glory days, when life made sense and your heart was full.

Staggering under a load of guilt for a past wrong which cannot be undone.

Eaten up by resentment over an injury inflicted long ago.

Whoever lives in the past lives in a prison.

When Jesus calls, he expects you to let go of your past.

Give your past to him.

Give him those dreams of the "good old days" which have held you their prisoner for far too long.

Give him that guilt which he will cover with his own blood. He can right those wrongs in ways beyond your knowing.

Give him that resentment, and let him heal your bitter heart.

Put your hand to the plow, and move forward as he leads.

"I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home."

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
Luke 9:61-62

DAY 19 - HOW WILL I KNOW IT'S YOU, LORD?

*"I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you....
Because I live, you will live also."*

We take this as a promise from Jesus to all disciples for all time.

*"I will not leave you desolate;
I will come to you."*

But how will I know it's you, Lord?

How will I know that this promise is being fulfilled in me?

As a disciple of Jesus, I need to know that the Lord **has** come to me.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory."

---Is this a fact in my life?

"He who has the Son has life, he who has not the Son of God has not life."

---Do I have the Son?

You will **know** that he has come to you,

not by feelings,

not by signs and wonders,

but by **faith** which takes hold of Jesus' word as a living, personal word from the Lord to you.

Believe his words as addressed to you.....

Live his words as they empower you to obey.....

And your faith will be confirmed in ways which you cannot mistake.

"He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:21

DAY 20 - KNOWING THE PRESENCE

He promised his followers, “*Lo, I am with you always....*”

If the Lord Jesus is with me, why do I feel so alone?
Why do I have to figure things out by myself?

He invites me to come to him.
He tells me to get under his yoke and learn from him.

How?

How can I know his presence?

*Without having seen him you love him;
Though you do not now see him you believe in him
and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. I Peter 1:8*

The mark of his presence: unutterable and exalted joy.

This joy cannot be induced by human desire.
It cannot be faked.

This joy is his gift to those who turn to him with the heart of a child.....and take steps to obey his word.

In his joy we know his presence.

It is a joy that stays with us, even when trouble comes crashing down.

Outward circumstances cannot dilute or diminish it.

Like the apostle Paul, we can be “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.”

*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I
have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These
things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your
joy may be full.
John 15:10-11*

DAY 21 - THE SPIRITUAL HOTHOUSE

It seems like the ideal place for spiritual growth.

It's protected from the elements.

It's warm and cozy.

One is surrounded by people of faith.

Who wouldn't believe in Jesus in a place like this?

But what happens when we leave the hothouse for the real world?

Jesus did not develop his disciples in a hothouse.

He kept them in the real world and taught them how to conquer evil.

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles.” *Matthew 10:16-18*

The true Body of Christ on earth is not a hothouse.

It has no walls to protect it from the elements.

It is seldom at ease.

It is a mix of personalities and cultures.

It moves through this world with tough skin and a tender heart.

Its people speak with the voice of a prophet.

It suffers abuse.

It rejoices in the Lord, even in its trials.

Its members are marked by genuine love—for each other, and for all people.

Sometimes, in love, the Master allows our hothouse to disintegrate so that we may learn to walk by faith out in the real world.

“I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one.....As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” *John 17:15, 18*

DAY 22 - REPENT? FOR WHAT?

Surely God understands my weaknesses.

I'm not an angel. I'm a normal human being.
But I'm at least as good or better than most.

If I don't make it, Hell is going to be a crowded place.

My conscience?
Why do you ask about my conscience?
Do I ask about **your** conscience?

Okay, sometimes my conscience gets a little upset.
Doesn't everybody's conscience act up sometimes?

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the good news."

Repentance is a simple thing:

All you do is turn around and face the light.

Then you open your heart to some good news from God.

"Here I am, Lord.
Tell me what I need to hear.
Give me the strength to walk in your light."

God isn't your Prison Warden.
God is your Heavenly Father.

He's not looking for an excuse to damn you.
He's searching for ways to lift you out of that rut....

Into freedom!
Into peace!
Into new life!

God won't force you to repent.

But if you're willing to start, he will help you, starting now.....

DAY 23 - QUITTING TIME?

After this many of Jesus disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. John 6:66

Why did they quit?

Jesus' words were too hard.
Jesus' demands were too high.
They were disappointed....and afraid.

It happens all the time.
God's gathering is always followed by God's sifting.

When the sifting starts, many promising souls fall through.

And when the sifting is over, who's left?

Those who couldn't leave, if they tried.
Their hearts are already nailed to the cross.
Their lives are already spoiled for the world.

Where could they go?

Jesus said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?"

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

Where on this earth will you find words like the words which Jesus speaks?

How can anyone who truly knows what those words mean, walk away from them?

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

I Corinthians 1:22-25

DAY 24 - IT'S NOT A GAME

We're talking about life and death—in this world and the next.

About the One to whom our hearts answer with every breath we draw.

Our minds may feel distant from the idea of a Holy God.

But our hearts know better.

*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
even there shall thy hand lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;
even the night shall be light about me.*

We have no choice.

We have to decide what we're going to do with this truth which our hearts have always known.

The Living God sees me and knows me.

He loves me with infinite love—holy love.

But he does not play games.

He will answer my prayers.

He will deliver me from bondage.

He will send light into my darkness.

But whether I receive his grace and walk in it, is up to me.

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 7:21

DAY 25 - NEVER LOOK BACK

"I'll follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to those at my home."

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

"Okay, Lord, I'll come with you, but first there are a few personal things I have to attend to."

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Isn't that a bit harsh?
Did Jesus really mean that?
It doesn't sound very evangelical!

Today folks are busy trying to take the edge off this truth.

Today it's.....
"God understands."
"Don't worry about it!"
"You've been baptized? Relax, you're okay!"

But Jesus hasn't changed his mind.....

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

You cannot drag your past with you into the life of faith.

To follow Jesus, you have to let go....

of your sins (confess, repent, and let go),
of those grudges (repent and reconcile),
even your achievements (leave them with God).

Place it all under the blood of the Lamb
and move forward as the Spirit leads.

"One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

DAY 26 - SALVATION IS A GIFT, BUT.....

We could never buy our way out of the darkness in a million years.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

Whoever believes on the Son has life from God.

God's life enters that person.

God's Spirit raises that person into a new relationship.

Salvation is not merely a future hope, it's a present reality.

All this is free of charge.

No strings.

Now that I have received God's mercy, am I free to do whatever I like with it?

Yes, I'm free to do whatever I like with it.

If I choose to turn around and show no mercy to my brother, I'm free to do so.

If I choose to ignore my sister's need, I can.

But what happens to my salvation if I refuse to live by the light it has brought me?

“Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.’” Matthew 18:32-35

Salvation is free, but once I have received it, all heaven watches to see if I choose to abide in it.

He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. I John 2:6

DAY 27 - THE POWER OF WORDS

There are words that wake the dead,
words that comfort,
words that heal,
words that deceive,
words that discourage,
words that destroy.

Jesus says, *“Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Because his words are Spirit and Life for those who have ears for them.

In a world where words are cheap and often misleading,

it is essential to discern the difference between words which come from the heart of God, and words which come from the father of lies.

Why waste time listening to (or reading) words which are disposable,

why fill your mind with words which merely add to the clutter, while Words from the heart of God are close at hand?

“Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

“And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” Matthew 7:24-27

DAY 28 - HIGH HOPES AND LOW REALITY

I had high hopes that my act of service would bring blessing to all.

Yet everybody walks by and ignores the blessing I offer.

I hold out living bread to them and they turn up their noses.

Lord, speak to me.

Have I been wasting my time?

“As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Our job is not to “produce” for God.
Our job is not to do “great things” for God.

Our job is to abide in the Vine.

If we abide in the Vine, there will be fruit, whether we see it or not.

“Come under the yoke with me and be at peace. Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

The living God does great things through those who have learned to humble themselves under his mighty hand, serving him in whatever low place he chooses for them.

All other “great things” are an illusion.

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.” John 15: 7-8

**DAY 29 - IF YOU DON'T COME AS YOU ARE,
YOU'LL NEVER COME**

"I'm in no shape to draw near to God! First I need to clean up my act."

Sounds like the right thing to do.
Sounds pious and sincere.

One problem: It never works...

because, without God's help you'll never clean up your act!

The only way you'll ever come to God is if you come as you are.

With all your sins.
With all your guilt.
With all the stains that sully your soul.

God can handle it!
He knows you're heart is a mess better than you do.

He loves you, for all that.
He wants to heal your sin-sick soul.
He wants to give you a new start.

So the living God sent his Incarnate Word into this world to bring back to himself all his stumbling, bumbling sheep, including you and me.

Jesus doesn't ask to see your spiritual passport.
He doesn't put you through "security" to see if you're worthy.

He invites you to come to him just as you are, and find rest.

Just call on his name.
Cry out to him.
Present yourself to him in words of surrender.

He will take it from there.

"Come to me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

DAY 30 - THE NEGLECTED SPRING

"Lord, why is my spirit so dry?
Why do you seem so far away?
Have you forgotten me?"

"From the day you opened your heart to me I have provided you with a spring of living water. Why are you not drinking from it?"

Whose fault is it when our spirits dry up and our faith falters?

If a spring of living water is close at hand, if all we have to do is draw near and drink, can we blame God?

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" John 7:37-38

"Come to me and drink....."

Take time to be alone and draw near me each day.

Listen for a word from me as you read the apostolic witness.

Speak to me about the needs of your own heart.

Practice my presence throughout the day.

Receive the people who cross your path as sent by me.

Let the living water you have received flow out to the lives you touch.

Know that I am nearer to you than your own breath.

Trust me.

"Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14

DAY 31 - THE DOOR TO PARADISE

Many people expect the door to Paradise to be waiting for them on the other side of death.

But the door to Paradise is already here.
It's wide open.
Admission is free.

How come so few people seem to find it?

Well, the door to Paradise doesn't look like much.

No spotlights.
No brass bands.
No stretch limos parked in front.

Some people mistake it for a storm drain.

The opening is so low you can only enter by bending down.

So who finds this door?

***Blessed are the poor in spirit
for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn
for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek
for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness for they shall be satisfied.***

You will have eyes to see that door and a heart to enter it when you have forsaken all the high places, and humbled yourself.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties upon him, for he cares about you. I Peter 5:6-7

"I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." John 10:9

DAY 32 - WORK OUT MY SALVATION?

Isn't salvation a gift?

I received salvation by faith.
God made me his child through the blood of the Lamb.
I'm baptized

So what's there to work out?

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

Salvation is not a ticket you carry in your pocket to get you into heaven when you die....

Salvation is a life you live.

Salvation is the Spirit's life at work in you....

It's up to you to live it.
To work it out.

Salvation is God's love in you flowing out to your neighbor,

—as forbearance,
—as forgiveness,
—as generosity,
—as intercession,
—as a word of witness,
—as the laying down of your very life.

Salvation is *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*...

—moving you to live as you could never live out of your own strength.

Salvation:

The Spirit works it in....it's up to you to work it out

“with fear and trembling.”

DAY 33 - STATIC AND DYNAMIC SALVATION

Static Salvation:

“I’m saved. Case closed. Nothing more to worry about.”

Dynamic Salvation:

***“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and work for his good pleasure.”
Philippians 2:12-13***

Salvation.....

God works it in.

We work it out....

“with fear and trembling,” because something holy is going on inside us. God’s Spirit is at work within us.

Work?

Work.....is what the apostle says.

Nor is our Lord Jesus afraid to use the word:

“We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night comes when no one can work.”

Salvation is not a state.

Salvation is a relationship with Jesus.

The relationship needs to be maintained, as the branch needs to abide in the vine.

“He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” John 14:21

DAY 34 - THE VALLEY OF DISTRACTIONS

To get to the City of God you have to pass through the Valley of Distractions—

—And not be sidetracked.

Solomon, a man of awesome wisdom, had every intention of serving God in faithfulness to his dying day.

But with the passing of years, Solomon became a pitiful, self-indulgent old man—useless to the purpose of God.

How did it happen?

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" Matthew 6:22-23

There is only one way we can pass through the Valley of Distractions with a single eye—an eye full of light:

By daily acknowledging our utter dependence on the Master.

"He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Apart from you Lord, I can do nothing,
I can understand nothing,
I can conquer nothing.

I am distracted.

Abiding in you, my hands are on the plow, and my eyes see the way ahead.

DAY 35 - HOW CAN I CONCENTRATE ON GOD

.....when my life is a jungle of distractions?

Problems to solve.
People to pacify.
A house to maintain.
Debts to pay off.

I want to walk with you, Lord, but I'm being pulled in all directions by demands that I cannot avoid!

What makes you think that the Lord Jesus is indifferent to the pressures you face?

Has he told you to turn your back on day-to-day responsibilities and just be "spiritual?"

Jesus promises to give you rest in the midst of it all.

He offers you peace at the center of all storms.

One thing he asks:

"Come to me and start living your life in tandem with me, and things will begin to clear."

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your soul."

It is possible to walk through this world, indwelt by ***"Christ the hope of glory."***

It is possible to "pray without ceasing" even while you do your work and live an ordinary life.

The Lord Jesus is absolutely there for you....

Come to him by calling on his name.
Keep coming to him by turning your heart his way.
Let his peace rule in your mind.
Let his word sustain your spirit.

DAY 36 - GOD IS ON OUR SIDE! ?

"Those Muslims think that God is on their side!
They feel justified in wreaking havoc on this earth.

They don't realize that God is actually on our side.
They're just tools, fulfilling prophecy.

We are the ones who are destined to come out on top!
Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition!"

Satan rubs his hands together with glee.

"They want 'wars and rumors of wars'I'll help them fulfill their favorite prophecies."

When Jesus told us, "***You will hear of wars and rumors of wars,***" he did not add, "See that you join the right side."

He said, "***See that you are not alarmed.***"

Jesus never promised that we would "come out on top."

He said, "***Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations (including your own) for my name's sake.***"

The issue is not, is God on our side?

The issue is, are we on God's side? Doing things his way?

Jesus answered, "***My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight.....***"

Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You said it. I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

God help us to hear his voice, and obey no other!

DAY 37 - FAITH OR FANTASY?

“For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.”

---from the mouth of one who healed the sick with a touch of his hand, raised the dead with a word of command.

He is speaking to any man or woman who is a committed disciple.

Faith—in him.

Faith—in the heavenly Father.

Faith that receives the Word into its heart and acts on it.

Faith that obeys in the face of total darkness.

Fantasy:

Believing in a rosy future while evading God’s call to obedience in the present.

Believing in a glorious Rapture while ignoring repulsive Lazarus lying at our gate.

Believing in Heaven, yet never entering the door of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Any faith which is not rooted and grounded in obedience to Jesus is fantasy.

***“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”
Luke 6:46***

If our faith is lacking, there is one place to go:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” John 7:37-39

Lord, here I am. Help me!

DAY 38 - GREAT THINGS FOR GOD!

"I want to do great things for God!"

Great things in whose eyes?

Who but the Incarnate Word can show us what is "great" in God's eyes?

".....For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

To do "great things for God" is both easier and harder than to do "great things" before human eyes.

Easier, because all we need to do is abide in the Vine.

Harder, because the first step in truly serving God is to repent and become a child before him, seeking only to please him.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Maybe we should forget about "great things" and settle for simply pleasing God.

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." Mark 10:42-44

DAY 39 - FINDING THE WAY BACK

It's one thing to discover that you've lost touch with God.

It's another to find your way back to him.

Where is the blessedness I knew when first I met the Lord?

Where is that peace which once flooded my spirit?

What happened to my faith?

Why is it so hard to pray with confidence?

The way back is closer than you think.

It begins with an admission of need....

"Father I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son....."

"God be merciful unto me a sinner!"

It continues with a cry for help.....

"O my God, incline thy ear and hear; open thy eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of thy great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Daniel 9:18-19

It ends with a knock on the door of your own heart.....

"Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:19-20

DAY 40 - CUT THE SALES PITCH!

Selling has become a science.

In selling there are certain principles that always work.

You “believe” in your product.

You convince the public that they need your product.

You link your product with an appealing image.

Skillful marketers have packaged and marketed the gospel using the tried and true principles of selling.

It seems to work.

Witness the success of TV evangelism.

Observe the phenomenal growth of the mega church.

This is nothing new.

For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. II Corinthians 2:17

Jesus has not sent us into the world to sell,
He has sent us into the world to witness.

We are not to manipulate.

We are not to offer subtle bribes.

We are not to tailor the gospel to human tastes.

We are to witness to the truth who is Jesus himself, leaving it to our hearers to respond as they choose.

The Lord Jesus is able to confirm his word without our help.

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. II Corinthians 4:1-2

DAY 41 - DO I HAVE TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING JESUS SAID?

Granted, most of the words that Jesus speaks are wonderful.

They bring peace to the soul.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest....”

“If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink...”

No one ever spoke with such love.

No one ever inspired such hope.

But there are some things that Jesus said that scare me to death.

How do I know that Jesus really said these hard things?

How can I be sure he wasn't exaggerating?

“Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

“Whoever is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire.”

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....”

How can a person believe such difficult words?

Of course, we will believe what we choose to believe.

And we will reject what we choose to reject.

But those words which we reject are destined to become our judge.

“He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day.” John 12:48

DAY 42 - HOW CAN I KEEP IT TO MYSELF?

Who of us hasn't done things we wish we could forget?

Secrets.

The Woman at the Well had plenty.

Is that why she went to the well at high noon?
Thinking she wouldn't have to talk to anybody?

Then came the surprise.

She met a man "who told me everything I ever did."

Suddenly she couldn't keep her mouth shut.
She had to tell the world.

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! Is not this the Messiah?"

If we're shy,
If we're hesitant to tell the folks,
If we'd prefer to go to the well at noon—when nobody's there,

Careful!

Somebody's waiting to meet us.

Once the Master connects with our spirit, causes the light to shine on the darkness within,

we too might no longer be able to keep our mouths shut.

Words might begin to flow from our hearts without restraint.

We might even become heedless of what people think.

If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. Jeremiah 20:9

DAY 43 - WHY DO YOU MAKE IT SO HARD FOR YOURSELF?

When Jesus said, “It is finished,” it was finished!

So why are you working so hard at being a disciple?

Jesus took care of things on the cross.

All you have to do is believe the good news.

I think you’re like those Galatians; you’re slipping from “grace” to “works.”

Wait a minute! Not so fast!

Paul to the Galatians:

“Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.”
Galatians 6:7-9

Our Lord Jesus was a worker:

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work....” John 5:17 KJV

Paul was a worker:

“We then, as workers together with him....” II Corinthians 6:1 KJV

And we also have work to do:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
Philippians 2:12-13

We do not earn our salvation.

But the minute we are born of the Spirit, we are put to work.

And we will give an account to God for what we did....

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. II Corinthians 5:10

DAY 44 - WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What's so important about a name?

Celebrity names sell cereal.

Big names bring big bucks.

Even pills have names.

And yet.....

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”

“Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!”

“...Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.....And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

There are names that demean,
names that deceive,
names that market goods,
names that are idols.

And there is a name that is holy.

“Lord Jesus, help me!”

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Respect for that name is the doorway to Life.

Arrogance toward that name is the way of Death.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

DAY 45 - STATISTICS, STATISTICS!

Weather patterns....
Population changes....
Military options....

Get the data, and measure it.

Count. Proceed.

Will the product sell? Do a market study.

But church growth?
Assessing the health of the Body of Christ?

With statistics?

Don't be misled.

The living God wraps his redemptive work in a cloud.
It cannot be measured or manipulated by the human mind.

How do you feed five thousand with five loaves and two fish?

How do you open the eyes of a man blind from birth?

How do you give Mary Magdalene a new mind?

How do you bring a living soul from Darkness to Light?

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.”

—much fruit by his standards, which are beyond our ability to measure.

The kingdom of God is ruled, controlled, and grown by God.

The minute the experts come to measure the data, it turns to dust.

“Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” Exodus 3:5

DAY 46 - GOD DID NOT GIVE US A SPIRIT OF TIMIDITY

....but a Spirit of power and love, and self-discipline.

So how come we're so timid?

Bold at ball games, hockey games, etc.,
Uninhibited when someone stomps on our toes.
Fluent when it's time to raise a complaint.
Sharp when some hypocrite needs to be cut down to size.

But when it comes to witnessing to the clear simple truth about Jesus, we cave.

When the believers prayed for boldness, ***“the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31***

They prayed for boldness because they were aware of how timid they were.

They refused to accept their timidity as “normal.”

And their prayer was answered.

Nor is our timidity “normal.”

It's time to stir up the gift of the Spirit...or if we've never received this gift, to pray for it.

To come out of our little “Christian” enclaves and reach real people in the real world, we need

not arrogance,
not brashness,
not self-righteous self-confidence,

but the simple, straightforward boldness of a disciple of the risen Lord.

“If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more with the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” Luke 11:13

DAY 47 - THOSE GUYS AREN'T AFRAID TO DIE

That's what scares me most:

They aren't afraid to die.

They're not crazy.

They're not depressed.

They're in full control of their faculties.

But if they can take us down with them, they're willing to die.

People like that can do a lot of damage.

They have already changed our way of life.

And it's going to get worse.

Lord, where do we fit in all this?

Where is our protection?

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death." Revelation 12:10-11

We will experience the protection of God when we begin to conquer the Accuser by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by our willingness to lay down our lives in obedience to the Lord Jesus.

Peter wasn't afraid to die.

Paul wasn't afraid to die.

The martyred believers of our own generation were not afraid to die.

God help us to join their ranks.

For whether we live or die,

we are alive in Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
Revelation 2:10***

DAY 48 - A NEW CREED

Here's the creed by which "Christendom" lives:

"IF WE HAD MORE MONEY
WE COULD DO MORE GOOD"

We hear it in churches.
We hear it on TV.
It sounds reasonable enough.

So instead of looking to the Father of lights, the source of every good and perfect gift, we look to Mammon. And somehow Mammon—Money—looms before us as our best hope.

With money we can build churches.
 pay salaries.
 buy air time
 publish literature
 and if there's some left over maybe even feed the hungry.

So why not raise funds for a good cause?
Why not appeal for support?

Think of all the good we could do, if we weren't limited through lack of funds!

Strange, that Jesus never thought of that!
Strange, that Jesus never taught his disciples the importance of fund raising!

"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be yours as well."

i.e. "Seek the kingdom first, and the money will come."

Really?
In the Twenty-First Century?
Isn't that carrying "faith" a little too far?

Anything less than this kind of faith puts us in bondage to Mammon.

DAY 49 - I'LL DO IT, LORD, JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT

Joshua met the angel of the Lord on the outskirts of Jericho.
He fell on his face and said,

“What does my Lord bid his servant?”

“Put off your shoes from your feet; for you are standing on holy ground.”

Joshua complied.
He understood what this meant.

But do we?

“What must we do to be doing the works of God?”
they asked Jesus.

Jesus answered, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*

To believe in “him whom he has sent” means more than singing, “I believe!” or saying, “I believe!” or preaching to others, “Believe!”

You believe in Jesus, when his word to you is holy ground.

You take off your shoes.

You worship.

You listen with a trembling heart.

You obey.

The Spirit of the living God will direct us to exactly what he wants us to do,

once we learn the meaning of **holy ground**.

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. Psalm 111 KJV

DAY 50 - TOO MUCH DOOM AND GLOOM!

There's too much of it in the world already.
It's on the news.
It's everywhere we look in the world around us.

Why should I have to listen to doom and gloom when I come to hear the gospel?

Give me a little good news for a change!

You want good news?

Listen to Jesus.

Jesus offers fresh hope to all who draw near.

Good news for the poor.
Sight for the blind.
Freedom for the oppressed.
Life for the dead.

But once you begin listening to Jesus, you will have to hear both sides of the story:

To all who received him who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God. John 3:19-21

Jesus is the light. If we follow him, we walk in light.

If we choose not to walk in the light, the darkness covers us.

It may be "millionaire darkness," but it's still gloom and doom.

DAY 51 - it's all about ME

Why shouldn't it be?

I've been worrying about everybody else long enough!

Carrying other people's burdens.
Empathizing with their pain.
Helping them with their problems.

It's time to think about **ME**.

And I don't care if you think I'm selfish.
Think whatever you want,

I'm going to do for myself for a change!

"Bravo!"

"Haven't I told you for years that you're too unselfish?"

People have been taking advantage of you!

It's high time you take care of your own needs."

Who said that?
Why does that voice gives me the creeps?

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down
his life for the sheep....."*

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I
give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall
snatch them out of my hand."* John 10:10, 11, 27, 28

There is only one being in the universe that thinks about you more than
you think about yourself:

The Good Shepherd.

Follow him.

He will lead you to springs of living water that will revive your
soul and melt your heart with a goodness not your own.

DAY 52 - MAKE DISCIPLES

Jesus did not tell us to “get them saved.”

He told us to **make disciples**.

“Five hundred people received salvation during our campaign!”

“He came to church a confused man. He walked out a saved soul!”

All praise be to God for every reborn soul!

But that’s only the beginning.

Seeds that spring up as tender shoots are still fragile.

They wither when the rocky soil is dry.
Thorns spring up and choke them.

We are to make disciples.....serious apprentices of Jesus the Master.

Men and women who are learning to live by faith.
Men and women who walk in obedience.
Who love each other as the Lord loves them.
Who bear fruit that can weather the storm.

To make a disciple takes time and patience.
It means listening and answering.
It means interceding daily.
It means walking at their side.
Encouraging.
Exhorting.
Warning.
Loving.

One disciple is worth a thousand “decisions.”

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

DAY 53 - SAYING I AM THE CHRIST

There were no quotation marks in the original scripture.

Consider the difference:

For many will come in my name saying, "I am the Christ."

For many will come in my name saying I am the Christ.

This statement of Jesus is true either way.

There have been and will be many who claim to be the Christ...who "will lead many astray."

And there have been and will be many who claim to believe that Jesus is the Christ...who "will lead many astray."

Jesus warning:

"Take heed that no one leads you astray."

You will never be able to protest at the throne and say, "But Lord, I really believed Brother Jones was a true servant of God!"

"You did? Did I not tell you, that you would know them by their fruits?"

When we are led astray, it is often because we are eager to be led down that easy path.

If we are serious about the kingdom, no false prophet will mislead us for long.

So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority." John 7:16-17

DAY 54 - JESUS BECAME IMPATIENT?

Jesus?
Impatient?

Yes.
He was impatient with his disciples' lack of faith.

And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and kneeling before him said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." Matthew 17:14-17

Jesus did not love his disciples any less.
He was still on his way to the cross to die for them.

But he made clear his disappointment in their lack of faith.

He expected more.

For their good.

For the good of the harvest beyond them.

There is no question about our Lord's love for us.
His love never changes. He is always there.

But that very love is calling us to move beyond where we are at this moment.

Unbelief is a thing of the heart.

It can eat away at the heart, even while the mouth professes great faith.

How else can we explain our lack of power to bring good news to the poor and deliverance to the captives?

*"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me."
John 15:4*

DAY 55 - SORRY, FRIEND, IT'S NOT AN OPTION

"Look, I go to church, I pray, I serve people, I'm generous with my money.

But when it comes to 'witnessing' I'd rather pass. I'm not cut out to do 'witnessing.'"

Witnessing.....what is it?

Passing out tracts on Main Street?

Confronting the person on the next seat of the plane about "spiritual things?"

Nailing the guys at the water cooler with the gospel?

Not necessarily.

If you pray for laborers in the harvest,

If you pray for the people God sends across your path,

If you reach out to those who are hurting,

Needy souls will come stumbling into your life, thirsting for a word of hope.

Now you bear witness to the One who will help them as a sign of God's love for them.

You simply tell them.

Maybe you pray with them.

"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:7-8

It's not a command, it's a promise.

You ***shall*** be my witnesses.

Don't fight it.

Don't worry about it.

You love Jesus?

You will feed his sheep.

**DAY 56 - IF ONLY I COULD DO ONE THING
REALLY WELL....**

I'd feel better about myself if I could do just one thing really well.

Seems like all I've been able to do is "get by."
Mediocrity—I'm sick of it!

What kind of contribution can I make, if all I ever do is dabble at things?

So who are you trying to impress?

Here's a better way.....

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." I Corinthians 1:16-31

Answer the call of God on your life, and you *will* do one thing really well:

Follow Jesus, and you will *be* the salt of the earth, the light of the world in the place where God has put you.

And the redemptive power of the living God will flow through you to the lives you touch.

DAY 57 - I WANT TO SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE

Wait a minute! Not so fast!

I want to see the whole picture.

It's easy enough for you to say, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

But I'd like to know where you're going to take me.
How can I respond, unless I know what I'm getting into?

Jesus doesn't pressure anybody to follow him.

No brochures.
No sales pitch.
No subtle bribes.

If following Jesus does not appeal to you, feel free to walk away.

If following Jesus does appeal to you, consider....

Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

Is it worth it?

You decide.

Following Jesus is not a religion, it's a life.

Life in the Spirit of the living God.

Unspeakable joy.

Peace which this world cannot give.

True freedom.

—A free gift to those who put their hands to the plow and never look back.

DAY 58 - I THOUGHT THEY ALREADY HAD THE HOLY SPIRIT!

On Pentecost the believers received the Holy Spirit.

They spoke with new tongues..
They experienced new freedom.
Their minds were opened to understand the word.
The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts.

So why is it that some time later, when these same believers prayed for boldness, they received the Holy Spirit again?

“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31

How many times do we have to receive the Holy Spirit?

Isn't once enough?

The Holy Spirit isn't a “thing” which we “get” and hold.
The Holy Spirit is God Himself.

The Holy Spirit can do whatever he chooses.

Once we have asked and received the gift of his presence in our lives, the Holy Spirit manifests himself to us—at his discretion—in ways we can never predict.

We do not possess him.
He possesses us.

Our job is to simply obey the Spirit, as he makes things clear to usand he will.

“The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8

DAY 59 - IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR ME?

Here's my problem:

I'm supposed to pray.
And to pray without any doubts.
If I doubt I'm wasting my time.

What if I have doubts?

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him. BUT let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord. James 1:5-8

Is there any hope for me?

How can I pretend to have faith, when I'm empty inside?

Maybe I'm "double-minded, unstable in all (my) ways."

What am I supposed to do?

Stop taking your spiritual pulse to see how much faith you have.

When is the last time you pestered God?
Really pestered?

...like the widow pestering the unjust judge?

...like the man who pestered his friend for bread at midnight?

...like the woman who pestered Jesus to heal her daughter?

You cannot generate faith by yourself...

But you can ***"take no rest and give God no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth."***

How badly do you want God's help?
How desperate are you for the Spirit's renewal?

Prove it!

DAY 60 - JESUS OR CHRISTENDOM?

Jesus:

A simple call to a simple life.

“Follow me”

***“Seek first the kingdom of God,
and all these things shall be yours as well.”***

***“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have
love, one for another.”***

“Go, make disciples of all nations.”

Christendom:

A plethora of religious activity.

“Keep abreast of what’s happening in the Christian World!”

“A conference you won’t want to miss!”

“God’s man for the hour!”

“God’s woman with a life-changing message!”

“A Church that will meet your needs!”

“The True Church is waiting for your return!”

Deny yourself,

take up your cross daily,

and follow Jesus;

and you will soon find yourself in fellowship with other disciples.

And there, if you are faithful, you will keep it simple.

You will obey his commands.

You will pray without ceasing.

You will let your light shine.

His word will be your sustaining food.

***“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things;
one thing is needful.***

***Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away
from her.” Luke 10:41-42***

DAY 61 - I'M DOING MORE THAN ENOUGH!

I don't worry when the preacher tries to lay a guilt trip on me. He can pound away all day long.

I shrug it off.

I don't answer to him!

But there is something inside me, that rises up in my weaker moments and says:

“Are you satisfied that your life, as you are now living it, is pleasing to the God of all mercy?”

And I answer:

“I'm doing more than enough already! What's your problem?”

The inner voice becomes silent.

What does God want from me?

Lord, show me what it is that you want from me!
You know very well that I'm doing more than most people!

And then a word comes floating up to the surface from the depths.
One word:

“Faith.”

I feel that I'm doing more than enough—but am I doing it in faith?

And without faith it is impossible to please God. For whoever would draw near to God, must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become sons and daughters of God, who are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:11-13

DAY 62 - THE HARVEST—WHERE IS IT?

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Matthew 9:37-38

Maybe times have changed.
These days the harvest fields look bleak.

Where are the people whose hearts are breaking with homesickness for God’s Kingdom?

Where are the souls who hunger and thirst for the living God?

Loneliness aplenty.
Guilt in abundance.
Sadness and despair rolling in like an ocean.
Hearts failing for fear of what’s coming next.

Yet when Jesus is lifted up before their eyes, they turn away.

Make no mistake, this bleak looking populace IS the harvest field!

It is exactly the same harvest field worked by the apostle Paul.

The difference is not the harvest field but the laborers.

Faced with indifference and apathy, Paul went right on proclaiming the truth, knowing that some of the seed would find good soil.

*“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s world, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”
II Corinthians 4:3-5*

DAY 63 - THIS IS THE WAY: WALK IN IT

"There are many paths to the top of the mountain."

"One path is as good as another."

"If it works for you, go for it."

It sounds reasonable.

A hundred million people believe it.

Many paths filled with many travelers.

But what if there is only one way?

What if Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Incarnate Word when he announces:

***"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
No one comes to the Father but by me."?***

Once you have been exposed to the Light that is in Jesus you are forced to decide whether to listen or to ignore his word.

If you decide to listen, you have to truly listen.

Saying, "Lord, Lord," isn't enough.

Going to church and Bible study isn't enough.

Saying your nightly prayers isn't enough.

"I'm doing the best I can," isn't enough.

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."

Soon you will begin to hear a living Word, spoken directly to you, which will empower you to do the good you could never do before.

You will be on the single path that leads out of darkness into light.

And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Then you will defile your silver-covered graven images and your gold-plated molten images. You will scatter them as unclean things; you will say to them, "Begone!" *Isaiah 30:21-22.*

DAY 64 - A GROUPIE OR A DISCIPLE?

Every celebrity has groupies—

Who love him.

Who spend fortunes just to be near her.

Groupies are devoted, often to the point of worship.

For a brief time Jesus was a celebrity.

"Hosanna to the Son of David!" they shouted.

Then the tide turned, and Jesus hung on the cross alone.

The Palm Sunday groupies changed their minds.

Hence, they never saw Jesus alive from the dead.

For twenty centuries Christendom has presented Jesus as a celebrity.

For twenty centuries Jesus has had the following of a celebrity.

"Hosanna to the Son of David!" they shout.

And Jesus answers, *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"*

Jesus is not looking for groupies.

He is calling disciples.

"He who is not with me is against me.

He who does not gather with me, scatters."

Here's how to become a disciple—from the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him."

John 12:24-26

DAY 65 - AM I IN THIS ALONE?

Does no one see it the way I see it?
Is nobody with me in this?

I'm trying to follow Jesus, but where's the fellowship of like-minded souls?

I go to church and feel like an outsider.

Is it me?

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." I Corinthians 1:9

If we are in fellowship with his Son, God will surely bring us into fellowship with others who belong to him.

We are not "in this alone."

We will experience the reality of the Body of Christ.

We will meet, know, walk with, and work with those to whom Jesus chooses to join us.

They may not be the people we would choose.
They may not seem at all compatible with us.
They may even irritate us, offend us.

Where the Lord Jesus fits us into his Body is not up to us. It's up to him.

The issue is not, Are my needs being met?

Am I comfortable with these people?

Are my gifts utilized here?

But rather: Lord, where do you want to put me? Show me where you want me to fit in.

The Lord Jesus will answer this prayer in awesome ways.

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

DAY 66 - DID YOU HEAR IT?

Yeah, I heard the thunder.
Everybody heard it. What's your problem?

But not everybody heard thunder.
Some people thought they heard words.

Yeah, right!

".....and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here Elijah?"

You may be the world's greatest Bible scholar. It will do you no good, until you hear God speak—to you.

You may be the Theologian of the Century. It will profit your soul nothing, until you hear God speak—to you.

You may be the Atheist With All The Answers; wonderfully satisfied with yourself....until you hear God speak—to you.

Of course, God chooses the time and place.

But sooner or later every human with a shred of integrity stumbles into an encounter with the Holy.

He calls you by name.
He opens the door to His World.

The next step is up to you.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

John 10:27-28

DAY 67 - OTHER SHEEP

*"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold;
I must bring them also,
And they will heed my voice.
So there shall be one flock, one shepherd."
John 10*

We're not so sure about those "other sheep."

Do they really belong to our Master?
Can we trust them?

Satan delights in inspiring us with an inflated vision of our own importance....

...and a distorted vision of those "other sheep."

But when we start thinking that we're the only ones, the "special ones".....

....when we become an exclusive "Christian Club," our connection with the Lord Jesus himself begins to die.

There is only One Flock.
Belonging to One Lord.
Empowered by One Spirit.

Only the Shepherd knows who is and who is not his sheep.

Our job is to serve the Shepherd wherever he places us,

To walk in mercy,

And trust his Spirit to show us the difference between

wolves in sheeps clothing,

and "other sheep."

DAY 68 - HYPOCRITES

"It seems like every church I try is run by hypocrites.

Call me judgmental, but I know a hypocrite when I see one, and I'm not about to waste my time playing their game.

Didn't Jesus feel the same way?"

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean."

Of course, Jesus was in a better position to deal with hypocrites than we are. He was free of *"the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."*

But are we?

Who of us isn't in need of some additional inner cleansing?

Who of us is free of pretense?

Is our "humility" genuine?

If I want to cleanse the Body of Christ of hypocrisy, there is only one place to begin:

with Me.

*Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow....
Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
Psalm 51*

Give the other hypocrites a break, bring your own mess to the cross of Jesus, and start housecleaning.

DAY 69 - THE BIG PICTURE

Only God can see the big picture.

But each of us desperately needs a glimpse.

"Where is it all going, Lord?
How do I fit into this 7 billion soul confusion?
Show me the path you want me to travel.
What do I take with me into the next world?
Is there a 'next world?'"

The foolish man builds his house on sand and opens another can of Coors.

But the wise soul cries out, "***Lord, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom!***"

The Big Picture:

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. Revelation 1:12-16

Where we fit in:

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."
Revelation 1:17-18

DAY 70 - PROVE TO ME THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

The only one who can prove that to you is Jesus himself.

The men and women who saw him alive from the dead are witnesses to the fact.

The Bible is a witness to the fact.

Your believing friend is a witness.

The thousands who have died as martyrs in his name are witnesses.

They all proclaim that Jesus, who died at Calvary, rose from the dead, never to die again.

They insist that following him is the only life worth living.

But you will know for sure that Jesus is alive from the dead, the Firstborn of the New Creation, only when he reveals himself to you.

He will reveal himself to you, when you begin to pay attention to his words.

Don't just listen to words about Jesus.

Listen to words from Jesus.

Jesus' words are charged with life.

Listen to those words.

Keep listening until they ignite your heart.

"No one ever spoke like this man!"

"He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:21

DAY 71 - NOAH'S DAY AND OURS

As they say, life goes on.

It goes on and on and on.

Sure, there will be war and chaos as long as there are nations.

Yes, the economy is uncertain, and new viruses keep challenging the experts.

But life goes on.

And yet.....

What if it's all coming to a climax?

What if we're so busy taking care of business we can't see it?

"As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark...." Matthew 24:37-38

If you consider yourself to be a follower of Jesus,

then take his advice:

Stay awake....for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Listen to the Shepherd's voice calling you to follow.

Observe the signs of the times and adjust your daily life.

"When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?" Luke 12:54-56

DAY 72 - PART-TIME GUIDANCE

Most of us earnestly desire guidance from the Lord — part time.

There are interludes in which we prefer to avoid any guidance from above.....

We disconnect the phone, unplug the intercom, and ignore the voice of warning that rises within our hearts.

"Now I can indulge myself a bit."

"I deserve a break today."

"Other believers do it, why not me?"

How upsetting to discover, when we reconnect the line, that no more calls come in!

"Speak to me, Lord!"

Is he mad at me?

Just because I took a short break?

What about all those earnest, faithful days I lived?

God is not in a snit.

His love for you is as real as ever.

But guidance from above cannot be part-time.

That's just how it is.

"Spirit-guided" part-timers are self-deceived.

To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:59-62

DAY 73 - ALIENS AND EXILES?

You mean, to follow Jesus I have to be an alien?
Discipleship makes me an exile?

Well, to tell you the truth, I feel quite comfortable where I am right now.

I belong to a great church.
We have super fellowship.
I'm getting along okay at work.

So why should I feel like an alien?

Because the more attached you become to the Lord Jesus, the less attached you will be to this world.

Jesus is "not of the world."
And if we belong to him, we are "not of the world."

The more we "hang around him" the more our vision of reality changes, and we become "different" in the eyes of those around us.

Get used to it. If you belong to Jesus, you will share his lot.

Remember, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was not welcomed with open arms. He was "despised and rejected."

If you want the goodies this world offers, you are free to pursue them.

But if you want to know Jesus in the power of his resurrection, you will also taste the fellowship of his sufferings.

Being an alien with Jesus turns out to be the source of our joy.....and of God's power in us.

"Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against the soul." I Peter 2:11

**DAY 74 - EVERY ONE WHO IS OF THE TRUTH
HEARS MY VOICE**

...And Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

He didn't get it.
He didn't hear it.
The door to a new world opened before him.
But he walked right by.

The cynical soul sighs and says, "**What** is truth?"
"It's all relative."
"It's whatever works for you."
"Who cares?"

The seeking soul cries, "**Where** is truth?"
"Show me!"
"Lead me to it!"
"I do not want to waste my life in a world of lies!"

It's not,
"Where is the church that meets my needs?"

Nor,
"Where will I be helped to reach my full potential?"

i.e. My needs.
My potential.
Me....Me....Me.

It's "Open my ears to hear your voice, O Lord!"
"Cause me to know the way you're calling me to walk."

Let this be the cry of your heart, and you will hear God speak.

The Lord Jesus himself will guide you to springs of living water, now,
in this life!

You will be visited by the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth.

"Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

DAY 75 - HE KNOWS MY THOUGHTS?

How can the God of the universe, with nearly seven billion living souls on this planet, keep track of my thoughts?

My thoughts?

Why should he care?

Doesn't he have more important things to do?

Yet there he is, looking into your heart, waiting for a chance to speak to you.

Because he knows exactly what you need to hear — to bring you to life.

"O Lord thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, thou knowest it altogether!" Psalm 139

No one on this earth knows your thoughts.
No one understands what goes on in your heart.
Not even your dearest loved-one — not even you!

Jesus comes to reconnect you with your heavenly Father, who knows your thoughts --- to reveal the Father's unspeakable love for you.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows." Luke 12:6-7

***"I am the Way (to the Father)
the Truth (of the Father)
and the Life (in the Father)."***

DAY 76 - LORD, WHERE ARE YOU?

I used to have a strong sense of the Lord's presence all through the day.

He was there, with me.
His Spirit was light for my mind, strength for my soul.
I prayed, and knew I was heard by the Father.

But somehow everything has changed.

I feel like I'm out there all alone.
God is far away.
When I call, no answer seems to come.

Were my "faith days" all a dream?

Is this "spiritual exile" the only reality there is?

Did I take a wrong turn somewhere?

Where do I go from here?

When you call ... "no answer seems to come....."

Keep calling.
Don't sit there and wallow in your gloom.

Demonstrate to God, and to yourself, that nothing is more important to you than to know and to love God.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" —let that be your prayer morning, noon, and night, *"until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart."*

It will.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."
Romans 10:12-13

DAY 77 - WHEN WILL SCIENCE DISCOVER GOD?

Wouldn't it be great if science could pin it all down?

"There it is!
Proof that God is indeed running the universe!"

Why, we'd all feel better.

Because we always feel better when science gives us the facts.

But science can only give us "facts" when it can measure them.

And who can measure Spirit?
How can we get hold of Mind?

Science deals with objects.

But God is not an object.
We are the object.

God is the Subject.

There is only one way to know God:

By hearing God speak.

When it's God who's speaking, you will know it!

When you hear from God, your eyes open and you begin to
"see."

***For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart.
Jeremiah 29:11-13***

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the "dead" will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."

DAY 78 - ANONYMOUS YOU ARE NOT

You are known.

You may be an "insignificant blob" at your place of work.
Folks in the neighborhood may never notice you,
Your friends and loved ones may completely misunderstand what's
going on with you.

You yourself may feel like a leaf blowing in the wind.

But you are not anonymous.

You are living under the eye of one who knows you better than
you know yourself.

He "*understands your thought afar off.*"
There is not a word on your tongue, but he "*knows it altogether.*"

And he desires that you should come to know him.

So that you can speak to him, and hear him speak to you.

So that you can draw strength just from knowing him and
loving him.

If you already know these things, you also know that it takes discipline
to keep remembering them.....and living under the power of his faithful,
personal words to you.

If you have never tasted the presence of the One who knows you, lift up
your heart and ask him to fill it with his words of life...beginning with
these:

***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they
may have life, and have it abundantly...My sheep hear my voice, and
I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and
they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my
hand." John 10***

DAY 79 - HOLY GROUND

"Moses, Moses!"

"Here am I."

"Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Communion with the living God is impossible to those who have no sense of the HOLY.

If we want to draw near to the Lord of the Universe,
if we want ears that can hear the voice of the Shepherd,
if we want the Holy Spirit to heal our spiritual blindness,

we need to learn to take off our shoes.

To humble ourselves.

To repent, above all things, of our arrogance before the Holy God.

To cry, "Hallowed be thy Name!" with a true heart.

God is not our Buddy.

God is not our rich "Uncle Heavenly."

Before we can enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise,

We need to know....

That the Lord, HE is God.

It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.

We are his people,

And the sheep of his pasture.

Bowing before him in awe, presenting our bodies to him as a living sacrifice,

We discover;

that the Lord is good,

His mercy is everlasting,

and his truth endureth to all generations.

DAY 80 - IF I CAN'T SEE IT, HOW DO I KNOW IT'S REAL?

What you see may be "real,"

but it's temporary.

The boulder you see, may seem indestructible,

but one day it will be gone.

Everything we see has a shelf life;

after the expire date, it vanishes.

But there are words which you can hear today, that will never expire.
They're here to stay.

***"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***

—true today, and forever.

***"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled,
and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."***

—true today, and forever.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

His Words...

Are alive.

They penetrate the heart.

They will not pass away because they are eternal.

They are as true at this moment as when they first came from
his mouth.

***"Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will
be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock...."***

Open our ears, Lord, to hear, and understand, and act!

DAY 81 - "ME" RELIGION AND THE CALL OF GOD

"Me" Religion is the rage these days.

My self-esteem.
My personal fulfillment.
My healing.
My peace.
My joy.
My sense of belonging.
My need for love.

Well, what's wrong with that?
Didn't Jesus come to heal our diseases?
What about Psalm 103?.....

*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth
is renewed like the eagle's.*

Yes, Jesus came to do these things and more.
He came that we might have life and have it abundantly.
He died and rose again to make it all available to us.

But never forget that these blessings are all wrapped up in his call.

And his call is to nothing less than radical commitment —
— to him.

He is the Center, not we.

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done." Matthew 16:24-28

DAY 82 - THEY TELL ME I MUST FORGIVE MYSELF

Forgive myself?
Love myself?
Get in touch with myself?

Truth is, I'm sick of observing myself,
worrying about myself,
thinking about myself.

Maybe it's time for me to look away from myself.

How can I be filled with light if my eyes are focused on the darkness that is me?

If I have been raised with Christ, isn't it time for me to seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God?

If, with unveiled face, I behold the glory of the Lord, shall I not be changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit of the Lord?

If Jesus has taken my sins upon himself and washed them away in his blood, what more forgiveness do I need than his forgiveness?

If I trust Jesus, when he says to me,
"Your sins are forgiven,"
how can I add to those healing words?

*Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,
O thou that dwellest in the heavens.
Behold, as the eyes of servants
look unto the hand of their masters,
and as the eyes of a maiden
unto the hand of her mistress;
so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,
until that he have mercy upon us.
Psalm 123*

*"This is the blood of the New Covenant,
shed for your sins."*

DAY 83 - IT'S THE HEART, STUPID!

"Hear and understand," said Jesus, "not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

The disciples didn't get it.

"Explain the parable to us," they said.

***"Are you still without understanding?" Jesus replied.
"Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and so passes on? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander."***

If the heart is true, the life will be true.

If the heart is ruled by God's Spirit,
the mouth will speak God's words.

If the heart is at peace,
the mouth will speak peace.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Create in me a clean heart, O God!

Toothpaste,
Cosmetics,
Anti-wrinkle cream
won't do it.

It's the heart, Stupid!

***"This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me."***

Draw near with the heart,
and your life will shine.

DAY 84 - GO AHEAD, I'LL CATCH UP

It's one way to get free, when you're traveling with someone who's a pain.

"I need to pick up some aspirin. Go ahead, I'll catch up."
You watch them go, and whisper, "Bye bye!"

But what if this "Pain" you just evaded is the only one who knows the way?

From the very beginning there have been disciples of Jesus who found the journey with him just "too much."

Prizing their "freedom" above his presence, they dropped back.

"This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

"We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one!"

Jesus never said discipleship was easy.

He simply said it is the only way.

"No one comes to the Father, but by me."

He came to deliver us from our past wanderings and bring us into true freedom.

But even the Son of God cannot lead us into life without our cooperation.

Either we walk with him, or we wander on in our vanity.

There are no interludes of self-indulgence.

There are no "McDonald Breaks."

No "Go ahead, I'll catch up."

*"He who is not with me is against me.
He who does not gather with me, scatters."
Matthew 12:30*

DAY 85 - ME, ENDURE TRIBULATION?

That's not what I bargained for.
They promised me I'd be raptured before the Tribulation!

But what did Jesus promise you?

***"I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer,
I have overcome the world." John 16:33***

The safe, insulated, comfortable life was never promised to followers of Jesus.

So what's the big surprise when even now, before the Great Tribulation, we come under attack from the powers of darkness?

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad....."

Time to toughen up.
Time to get used to rough weather.

Because the hour has arrived when authentic followers of Jesus will begin to experience the world's hostility as Jesus did.....and as his faithful ones have, through all these centuries.

Love, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit is ours now.

Along with trials and tribulations.

"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-3

DAY 86 - WHERE IS HE?

Why doesn't God just come out and show himself?

Why can't he take the guessing out of it?

"As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, 'Where is thy God?'"

We feel like we're hanging between earth and heaven with nothing solid to stand on.

"My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, 'Where is thy God?'"

....and we begin to say to ourselves, "Yes, where is he?"

In this world, the living God cannot be seen.
No one has seen him at any time.

But he can be heard.

For those who have ears to hear, God speaks.

His word is the One Absolute Truth to be found in this world.

Don't look for God with your eyes.
Seek him with an open ear and a contrite heart.

"Speak to me, Lord, and, by your grace, I will obey."

"Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee!"

Take the words of Jesus, turn them into living, and you will see God's glory in the midst of the squalor of this troubled earth.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Psalm 42

DAY 87 - TAKEN BY SURPRISE

It isn't only Moses or Mary or Saul of Tarsus who meet God when they least expected it....

That's how it happens to most of us.

God decides when and where and how he will meet us — not we.

And it's usually a surprise.

Meanwhile, we follow the example of Cornelius,

"a devout man who feared Godgave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God."

Cornelius wasn't pursuing an "experience."
He just lifted up his heart and prayed.

Cornelius wasn't looking for an angel visit.
He just lived his life with a heart for God.

And what Cornelius needed, God provided ...when it was time. It came to him suddenly in a vision.

"Cornelius....your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and bring one Simon who is called Peter....."

"I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you."
—that's a promise to every follower of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus visits us in surprising ways...

—to encourage us,

—to lead us in a new direction,

—to deliver us from making a bad decision.

"He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:21-22

DAY 88 - PROOF?

Beware of the person who offers you proof of what God can do.

Or proof that the Bible is true.

Or proof that Jesus is the Son of God.

God's ways are not subject to human scrutiny.

God's reality does not lend itself to human observation.

***"An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah."
Matthew 16:4***

God reveals himself to the contrite heart when, where, and how he chooses.

He speaks.

He calls you by name.

You either respond in faith or walk away unmoved.

The Incarnate Word never defends himself.

He makes no attempt to convince doubters.

Listen carefully to the words he speaks, and decide for yourself.

"Whoever is of the truth hears my voice."

"I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day." John 12:46-48

DAY 89 - ONCE YOU'VE HEARD, YOU'VE HEARD

Once you've heard a word from God there's no going back to your former ignorance.

The call has come to you.
God has spoken.

In your heart of hearts you know what you have to do.

Of course, you can try to run away, like Jonah.

Or you can reject the whole thing, like Judas.

But you cannot un-know what you now know.

As long as you live in the twilight zone of indecision, the Spirit of God will pursue you.

The voice of Jesus, the Shepherd, will pierce the confusion of your own thoughts....

"Follow me."

You will hear those words in a thousand ways.

And you will know their source.

Those words of the Master are the doorway either to life or spiritual death....

...depending on what you do with them.

"I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8

DAY 90 - WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A DEAD END?

It seemed like the chance of a lifetime.

I went for it.

Then suddenly, a brick wall.

I waited and waited for a door to open.

Surely God wouldn't have allowed me to go down this path if it led nowhere!

But how long am I supposed to wait for a door to open?

When we come to a dead end, it's usually a sign that we have taken things into our own hands.

There is only one way to go:

back.

When the Prodigal Son came to his senses he said:

"How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.'"

The man swallowed his pride, retraced his steps, returned to his father, and to his amazement, received a royal welcome.

When we reach a dead end there's no point in wasting time.

The Father waits.

He will give us a new start

..... if we'll only come home.

DAY 91 - SIDETRACKED

Many of us are blithely unaware of how far we have drifted from the road of discipleship

—until we hit a crisis.

"All these years I've been doing Christian work, and you allow this to happen, Lord?"

Suddenly our eyes open and we discover that our "Christian work" was more flesh than Spirit.

We've been sidetracked.

Why should Satan bother to fight you head-on, when all he has to do is sidetrack you?

Some new crusade.
Some worthy cause.
Fund raising for the kingdom.
Getting out the vote for family values.
A friend who needs to be reformed.

Surely God is pleased!

Pleased?

God is pleased when we are about his business, doing it his way.

"Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road."

i.e. "Don't get sidetracked.

Get on with what I sent you to do."

"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'" Matthew 7:22-23

DAY 92 - DON'T TIE ME DOWN!

Look, I'm a believer! Okay?

I pray.
I get fellowship.
I treat people right.

So don't be trying to turn me into a fanatic!

I refuse to be tied down with commitments to this and commitments to that!

I believe in Christian freedom.

Christian freedom?

Freedom to control your own life?

Freedom to decide how far you want to go with Jesus?

Freedom to select which of his commands you'll accept?

***Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him,
"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples,
and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
John 8:31-32***

Christian freedom begins when you are crucified with Christ,
when you give up all rights to him,
when he calls the shots,
when it is no longer you who live,
but Christ who lives in you.

You will never be free,

until you are "tied down" to him.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." John 6:68-69

DAY 93 - HOLY LOVE

The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2

Paul's rock-bottom certainty was that he was loved by God.

Misunderstood by many
Hated by many.

But loved by God.

Surrounded by that love.

Overwhelmed by it.

A love that filled him with fear and trembling.

A love burning with holy fire.

You don't presume on that love.

You never take it for granted.

You worship.

You obey.

When your eyes are opened to see Calvary for what it is,

all sentimentality will be burned out of you.

You will be on your face before the Holy.

Only then do you know God's love.