



**21 Daily Devotions**

Wilsonville Baptist Church  
Steve Thomas, Pastor



*Wilsonville Baptist Church*  
*2019 Church Renewal*

**21 Days Of Devotion and Prayer**

## Day 1

Steve Thomas

**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. Philippians 4:13-14**

When you get where you are going, where will you be?

Most of us plan for a trip, so when we get there, we will know. Not only that, but we will know when we are close. But it seems in our Christian lives, we are not as diligent in preparing. We seem to walk around, not knowing where we are headed, and sometimes get very discouraged.

We need to learn to focus our lives. Paul said, “But one thing I do...”. Paul was focused on one thing, and one thing only. His eyes were on the prize of Jesus Christ. He did not let the government stop him, even when they beat him and put him in prison. He did not let other Christians stop him, even when they were afraid and discouraging. He did not let the Jewish religion stop him, thought they wanted to shut him up.

Paul said, “Forgetting what lies behind...”. He had regrets of a life wasted in persecution of Christians as he was seeking power and money. He left that behind. Satan will tell us we cannot move forward, and will place many roadblocks in the way. Jesus has washed away the past.

Paul said, “Reaching forward...”. He knew he had work to do and it was important to get it done. He wanted to do better. He wanted to be bolder. He wanted to be the man of God that God had called him out to be. He was not satisfied where he was. He was continuing to reach. We need to continue to reach.

Wilsonville Baptist Church needs you so that we can work together as the family of God to accomplish His will and purpose for us. It is time to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” We can accomplish anything God wants us to as we come together in the unity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

One of my favorite scriptures comes from Exodus after Moses asked God to show him His glory. He wanted to see God! God granted His presence to Moses, hiding him in the cleft of a rock, and allowing Him to see a glimpse of who He really is. It must have been the most incredible moment of his life. I dare say nothing else ever gave him more joy (and fear) than this personal experience with God—to be in His presence.

**“Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin;...” Exodus 34:6-7 (NASB)**

He is an amazing God! He IS all that we could ever ask for! He alone can quench the desperate thirst of our parched lives. In His presence—that’s where we need to be.

**“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1)**

Father,

We ask that you make us genuine seekers of who You are, completely satisfied just to be with you, and not consumed only by what You can do for us. We know that every good gift comes from you and we thank you. Remind us when we forget that the real gift is YOU. As we seek You, please give us the gift of Your magnificent presence. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Day 21

Tina Wiles

### Seeking the Gift Giver...

I like to get presents! How about you? There is a childlike excitement when I receive a gift and a giddy anticipation of what's in the box or gift bag. What makes it even more special is when it comes from a beloved and cherished friend who I know put thought and effort into choosing it for me. But more than the wonderful gifts they have given me over the years, far greater is the gift of getting to know my friends on an intimate level. We spend time together, we pray together, we share our burdens, we celebrate together, we laugh together, and we cry together. These friendships are treasured jewels in my earthly "crown."

There is no gift that exceeds the gift of Jesus, from our Father, given in great love and sacrifice for us. As if this wasn't enough, our Father has lavished on us other gifts as well: Communicating directly with Him through prayer, peace, hope, freedom from the bondage of sin, spiritual gifts, joy, and the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit living within us. Just to name a few.

We have a good Father who loves His children well. And in loving us, He sometimes reveals in us things that aren't quite right. This year, He showed me that I value His gifts more than His presence. What He can do more than who He is. Let me make this clear—I know that God welcomes us into His throne room of grace! We are to look to him for what we need! But what about seeking His face? His presence? What about getting to know Him on such a deep and personal level that is so satisfying I am content to remain in His presence, even if He never answered another prayer? Even if I received a diagnosis of a terminal illness? Even if I have to suffer? Even if...you fill in the blank. Yes, God is the giver of wonderful gifts! But we must not value what He can do more than who He is.

Day 2

Margaret Battle

**"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble." Psalm 46:1**

There are times when it is easy to be overcome with the troubles of this world. Big ones, like poverty, hate, war, and those troubles that come to each of us individually. If we allow ourselves, these troubles surround and close in leaving us feeling hopeless. This verse is one that offers comfort and assurance. It reminds us that God loves us and will cover us with his protection, even in our imperfect state. Not only does he love us, but he beckons us to come to him. To allow him to give us a safe place, a refuge. A place without trouble or fear. One that offers protection, peace, and joy. God's love for us is so powerful, so encompassing, we really cannot imagine the depths of his grace. BUT we can know, without a doubt, it is always there ready for us. A gift from our heavenly father.

## Day 3

Anita Gibson

### Faith & Miracles Are Like... BFF's

Do you believe that God is still in the miracle working business?

If you are like most Christians, then you probably answered yes, as it is not hard to see everyday miracles around us. What about you personally, when life gets difficult, are you looking for and expecting God to show up?

Just like peas and corn, peanut butter and jelly, bacon and eggs... Faith and miracles are like best friends forever (BFF's). They belong together. Faith opens your eyes to see and expect Gods' miracles.

The Bible is rich with stories about faith and Gods' miracles (a few examples):

"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see." Acts 3:16 (NIV)

"He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes." Deuteronomy 10:21 (NIV)

"I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" Jeremiah 32:27 (NIV)

"'If you can?'" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." Mark 9:23 (NIV)

"Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26 (NIV)

Many times, we as Christ followers try to fix our problems on our own, not even seeking God until the situation becomes such a mess that only He can fix it? Why do we prolong our suffering and wait so long to ask for His help?

- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- Romans 8:1
- Romans 8:17
- John 1:12
- Ephesians 4:24
- Colossians 1:14

The list could go on and on...

My challenge for you today is to identify what lies you have been believing, then pray over those, and ask God to reveal Scripture to you that disproves those lies and to change what you have been believing. Store this in your heart and ask God to do a work of renewal in you that only He can do. Then, live your life as a child of the King...just like you are called to do!

- Why am I not more patient?
- I feel like a failure
- Maybe I am really not cut out for this career
- My spouse and children deserve a better spouse/parent
- If anyone ever knew the “REAL” me, then what would they think?
- Does God really love me since I feel so unlovable and so unworthy?

I can imagine that these lies/tactics of the enemy will change as I progress through different seasons of my life.

(Side note: I am sure that the enemy does not want this shared because as I am writing this, I keep wondering “should I delete this?”, “am I oversharing?”, “do people really need to know what I struggle with?”...so my prayer is that it is meant to reach at least 1 person that needs to hear that you are not the sum of your mistakes, or the sum of any of the world’s lies...you are a new creation in Christ!)

THE GOOD NEWS IS...Jesus came to Earth and died on a cross as my Savior, my only hope! The Bible refutes EVERY.SINGLE.LIE the enemy can throw at me. My hope and joy are (or should be) in Christ alone and my daily unreliable, ever-changing feelings will not sway that! My joy is not based on what side of the bed I wake up on, how others treat me throughout the day, how my body is holding up to aging...it is based on the fact that no matter how unlovable and undeserving we are as humans, Jesus Christ came to this Earth for us and he loves us no matter what! Here are a few Scriptures for you to soak in and use as a time of renewal for who you are based on what the Creator of the Universe says!

The Bible, the living, breathing Word of God still holds the same promises for us today. We just need even the smallest amount of faith, God will work out the rest.

The next time you find yourself in trouble, anticipate the Lord working for your good. Ask God to deepen your faith and open your eyes to see His hand in your life.

**“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

**“Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48 (NAS)**

In summarizing this portion of what is referred to as the Beatitudes, or, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes a startling command, “...you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Though this command applies to the whole of our Christian conduct, it is specifically applied to what Jesus just taught in verse 44, “...I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you....” If you are thinking what I thought when I first came to studying this: IMPOSSIBLE! Now, here is the rest of that thought of Jesus (v. 45), “...in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven....”

Here is what Jesus is saying: Salvation, that is the regeneration or the rebirth of an individual, comes when the Holy Spirit opens the heart and mind to the truth that Jesus is God and God's only Son, who was born of the Virgin Mary, performed many miracles, was persecuted, and died upon a cross as the sacrifice God the Father would only accept to pay for yours and my sin, and then arose to heaven on the third day, who now reigns as Prophet, Priest, and King over all of creation.

When a person believes this, with all their heart, soul, and mind, that person has been transformed by the Holy Spirit and are the sons (and daughters) of the Father referenced in v. 45. But that is not the end. Too many, I believe, think that it is all there is to the Believer's life. And that is sad. In reality, it is just the beginning of the sanctification process – to become Christ-like.

To live out a life that brings glory to God, and honors the finished work of Christ, we must first know what is expected of us. By reading and studying the whole of the Sermon on the Mount is a good start. But the fulfilling of these commands is impossible on our own. Your efforts will fail, if done in your strength.

### Who Am I?

Throughout my life I have had to actively remind myself and renew my mind (Romans 12:2) based on what Scripture tells me and not based on anything else. It is not easy because the enemy is crafty...BUT the Word of God is VERY CLEAR on who we are in Him. Renewing our minds is a lifelong, never-ending process, and one that we should not get lazy with...

Let me start by reminding you who you are NOT...

It all goes back to the Garden and the introduction of sin. Because of sin, we live in a broken world, with broken bodies and broken brains that are very capable of getting stuck on lies. We are born in need of a Savior but the enemy still goes after us and attacks our weaknesses. No generation has been immune from his tactics (1 Peter 5:8-9, John 10:10, John 8:44) and the Bible is clear in its warnings for the church. The purpose of the attacks is to render the church useless. If the enemy can steal your joy, take away your focus, constantly remind you of your failures, then he has succeeded in attacking the church one member at a time. Here are a few examples, and unfortunately I have believed some of these at times...

- My grades aren't going to get me in to XYZ College
- What happens if this relationship doesn't work out?
- What on Earth am I going to do with my life?
- Why did I make those poor choices?
- I am not equipped to be a wife and mother
- My children need more of a Pinterest mom

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In this renewal weekend, let us seek the Lord in our tragedy. Let us be vulnerable with our questions and doubts, and let us take one another by the hand as we navigate through them together. When we live in the Truth that Jesus knows our sin and chose to die for us anyway, we live in Victory. This is how we grow in Faith.

Through prayer and relying completely upon the power of the Holy Spirit will you succeed. Will you still fall short? Yes. But that is part of the process. God's grace will pick you up and restart you, over and over again. And then, as you mature in the faith, you will fulfill the command of loving your enemies and praying for them. Why? It brings glory to God and it shows to the world God's perfect love.

Let me leave you with Luke 1:37 - "For nothing will be impossible with God."

## Day 5

Tim Taylor

**“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it..” 1 Corinthians 9:24**

Spiridon Louis isn't well known around the world, but he is in Greece. That's because of what happened in 1896 when the Olympic Games were revived in Athens.

During the competition that year, the Greeks did quite well—winning the most medals of any nation. But the event that became a source of true Greek pride was the first-ever marathon. Seventeen athletes competed in this race of 40 kilometers (24.8 miles), but it was won by Louis—a common laborer. For his efforts, Louis was honored by king and country, and he became a national hero.

The apostle Paul used running a race as a picture of the Christian life. In 1 Corinthians 9:24, he challenged us not just to run but to run to win, saying, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” Not only did Paul teach this but he lived it out. In his final epistle, he said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). Having finished his race, Paul joyfully anticipated receiving the victory crown from the King of heaven.

Like Paul, run your earthly race to win—and to please your King.

- *Bill Crowder, Our Daily Bread*

This verse spoke to me because yes- my parents and Sunday school teachers' lessons led me to Christ. I became a Christian at a young age and I am deeply thankful for the teaching I received as a child. But I, like the many Samaritans, have truly EXPERIENCED God for who He is and heard for myself that He is the Savior of the world.

How? Through my own doubt, through tragedy, through confusion...I sought for Truth and stability. And found Him living in my heart.

During these last few years in college, I have experienced more “life” than I have in any of the previous 16/17 years combined. And I learned that “life” is not pretty. It hurts. It is not fair. It does not make sense...and I often felt like I lost my innocence, but I lived in the consistency of God. I knew He was Faithful, but now I live in His Faithfulness. In Him, I have fullness of joy.

Many times, when we discuss doubt in the church, we reference Thomas. Although Thomas doubted the presence of the Lord, Jesus did not condemn him for his doubt. He instead offered His hands for Thomas to see and His side for Thomas to feel, saying “Peace be with you” (verse 19). Jesus did not belittle Thomas nor did he praise him for doubting. In John chapter 20 verse 29 Jesus says “Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.” Jesus recognized Thomas' doubt and offered him peace. In our doubt, Jesus is our peace. We seek for answers, but He Himself is the answer.

I am thankful for the leaders in my life who encourage me to seek Truth in my doubts, rather than to push them away. I am thankful for an older brother who showed me firsthand the Freedom in addressing tough questions. As a biblical community, we cannot be afraid to ask the hard questions.

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## Day 19

Lauren Vick

Earlier this month, I was reading in John chapter four and came across a verse that spoke directly to my heart. This chapter is widely known for the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. We know the story well: Jesus, a Jew, spoke directly with an adulterous Samaritan woman living in sin. He teaches her about living water, providing her with eternal life if she believes He is who He says He is. This woman's encounter with Jesus becomes an amazing testimony to other Samaritans for obvious reasons. The fact that Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman, knew her past, and offered her eternal life anyway? What an incredible story that many were ready to listen to.

However, this testimony is not the focus of this devotion. As I read this story that we know so well, I stopped when I read verse 42 where the other Samaritans are saying "it is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world".

As I experience a little more life as a young adult in college, (emphasis on the "little" part) I have learned the importance of making my faith my own. As I grew older and began to think more deeply, I naturally formed difficult questions and doubts that circled around in my mind. For instance: I trust my parents, but what if they are wrong? I spent my childhood in church because they told me to, I believe what I have been taught because I love my parents and absolutely trust their guidance...but so do my other peers of different faiths. They grow up practicing the religion of their parents because they love and trust their parents too... and it is a tough question to deal with. Someone has to be right and someone has to be wrong... and I needed to seek the Lord for myself because yes, my parents could be wrong. But how would I know they are right unless I searched for myself?

## Day 6

Charity Morris

### Coloring Outside the Lines

When I was little, coloring was my job and crayons were the tools of my trade. It was not relaxing or fun. There were rules. I had two sets of coloring books; my private collection and one for guests. It was not about creativity or imagination. I only wanted to copy colors exactly and stay within the lines. I could not understand how other kids seemed to get so much joy out of scribbles.

The harder I tried the more I failed.

The "my job" feeling continued onto every area of life, especially as a believer. My head knew I was saved by God's grace alone, my heart was struggling to swim to a boat that had already left dock. The harder I tried the more I saw my imperfection and inability.

Despair!

If that sounds like you, listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28:

"Come unto me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest."

Wait a minute, He wants me to come, to Him, I'm a mess?

God is offering to exchange my burden for rest?

Yes!

Jesus is willing and able to carry your heavy load of sin and cares. In fact, he is the only one who can. Because of grace, when God looks at me, he sees the perfect blood of his son and not my scribbles.

Wherever you are today, call on Jesus. He is true to his word and will give you rest.

**Day 7**

**Savannah Johnston**

### **You Are Not Your Past**

When I was 15 years old I was done with life. I was heartbroken. I was bullied beyond belief. I did not want to live anymore. Little did I know, life was just beginning. Crying one night, my dear friend Deborah Crumpton, gave me a paper she had printed...

“And I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten...”  
Joel 2:25

Charles Spurgeon said these words before I was even born. “So the meaning of the restoration years must be the restoration of the years the locusts consumed. You cannot have back your time. But there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours. It is a pity that they should have been eaten by your folly and negligence. But if they have been so, be not hopeless concerning them. All things are possible to him that believes. There is a power which is beyond all things and can work great marvels.”

Wow! This was encouraging to me. It made me have hope that somehow my future could be good. I have been restored and God uses those awful years as blessings now.

- 1) It makes me immensely grateful for the man I married.
- 2) It affects the way I parent my own children. (I give grace because I was given grace. I have hope for their futures because I see God's hand through my life.)
- 3) I am able to use my past hurts and suffering to help others.
- 4) It made me an extremely compassionate and empathetic person.

When God called Samuel, it took him a while to realize who was calling, but once he grasped the identity of the caller (with a little help from Eli the priest), he was attentive to hear what God had to say.

When God called Moses, Moses didn't really think he was the man for the job, even with a burning bush to emphasize the moment. But guess, what? God called Moses, specifically, for a specific purpose, at a specific time in his life. Moses caught on rather quickly.

And yes, when God called Saul, what a shocker. Not to God, of course, but . . . Saul . . . really???? Imagine his answering machine message: “Can't talk now. Working on my persecution plan”. He hated Christians. But Paul he became, and he transformed into a hater of SIN and a devoted servant of God.

When God calls us, it is to a holy calling, (2 Tim 1:9). He has always known us (Jeremiah 1:5) and always loved us, and always had a plan for us. Each individual person on planet earth is bestowed with a specific purpose, a unique personality, with distinctive talents, facing circumstances and living life unlike anyone else's. And our gifts and calling are only ours (Romans 11:29).

1 Peter 2:9-10 reminds us that we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light! God's people, who have received God's mercy! Most often, it's not a lack of skill or desire or strength that keeps me from responding. It's a lack of faith.

Remembering who I am, and how important I am to God, prompts me to rethink my auto-messaging of unavailability, and lean towards listening for his call and responding more appropriately. Hello, God, it's so nice to hear from you. What can I do for you today?

Day 18

Donna Harper

### When God Calls . . . .

We have created some pretty interesting answering machine messages to handle the calls we are seeking to ignore, delay, or capture for later review. Like . . .

“We’re not available to take your call right now. We’ll get back to you.”

“No one is home. Leave a message. PS if this is a telemarketer, take me off your list! In fact, if you’re selling anything, take me off your list!”

“All calls are being monitored and may not be returned.”

“You have reached a number that is unavailable or no longer in service.”

“Thank you for calling. You are # 101 and your call will be answered within the next 3 hours and 15 minutes.”

“Hi, I can’t really be reached by phone. If you want to communicate, please email me. Or better yet, send me a text. But I really can’t say if I’ll respond.”

What about when God calls? Do we tend to use these types of responses with Him as well? I’m soooo GUILTY! So often, I’ve pre-planned how my day’s going to go, have all my responses and excuses ready, and put the hand up to say, nope, not happening today. Over time, it’s been a whirlwind of “who, me?”, “I can’t”, “I couldn’t”, “I wouldn’t be best”, “maybe when I’m older”; “if only I was younger”, “I’m so busy”, “when the kids are grown there’ll be more time”, “maybe this summer”, “oh, I wished you’d asked me last summer”, “when my income’s steadier”, “but I’m retired and on a fixed income.”

Get the picture?

I am restored but the enemy will use anything he can to pull you backwards. He knows exactly what buttons to push. For me, my past is a big button.

He whispers, “You are not enough.”

“You are a failure.”

“Who do you think you are?”

I’ve found that when I am away from God that voice is extremely loud. But when I am close with God he reminds me who I am.

**He declares, “You are ENOUGH.”**

**“You are LOVED.”**

**“You are MINE!”**

It used to greatly bother me when someone brought up my past. Yes, it still happens even now. ‘This will never go away!’ I would think. Well, it’s true, it will never go away. Though, now, I know I can use it to help others. Now, when someone brings up my past I find joy in saying “Yes, that was me then, but this is who I am now.”

He has fully forgiven you. Don’t you think it’s time to live forgiven and free?

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2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Hebrews 8:12

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Psalm 103:12

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

As I told my middle child that I “just knew” what she wanted, God just knows us. He knows what we need and what we desire; He knows our imperfections and our flaws; He knows our strengths and our weak spots. He knows all of this, and he meets us in that place. The fourth verse of Psalm 139 says “You hem me in, behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.”

Instead of focusing on what I wish God didn't know about me, I'm going to praise Him for how He does know me and how He constantly works in my life.

Day 17

Lauren Yancey

For Sunday lunch, my family is usually subjected to a gourmet meal of tuna fish salad. Every week, as I'm buying groceries, I try to remember to get everyone's favorites: Cheese-lts for my husband to eat with his tuna fish, bar-b-q chips for my youngest two (my middle child calls them orange chips), and some turkey for my oldest since she doesn't really love the Sunday special. I also try to make sure I have string cheese for my oldest while the other two would prefer "yellow cheese" (American). The last time I placed the meal of tuna fish salad, yellow cheese, and orange chips in front of my middle child, she exclaimed, "Mama, how did you know this is exactly what I wanted!" I smiled and kissed her head and told her that I just knew.

**The first few verses of Psalm 139 claims, "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely."**

I'm not sure about you, but the idea that God knows all of these things about me is both reassuring and disconcerting. I don't really relish the idea that God is fully aware of all the thoughts rolling around in my head. Here's the thing, though. When we look at our Biblical examples, I don't see a God that knows us and treats us all in the same way. I see my God who knows us for what He can give to us, and not for what He will catch us doing. I see my God who gave Aaron to Moses when he was too afraid to do his own speaking. I see my God who gave David a friend in Jonathan when he knew he was going to be chased from his home and exiled for a long period of time. I see my God who wrestled with Jacob when he knew he needed to fight his frustrations out - literally. I see my God who gave Gomer an obedient man who would love her and be faithful to her in spite of her ghastly decisions. I see my God who gave Mary a friend and cousin to share her excitement and fears around her unplanned pregnancy.

Day 8

Danny Moore

### Is God In Everything?

The whole teaching of the Bible confirms and teaches this. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. The very hairs of our head are all numbered. We are not to fear, for the Lord is on our side. No one can be against us, because He is for us. We shall not want, for He is our Shepherd. He shuts the mouths of lions, that they cannot hurt us. He delivers and rescues.

And this God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. I will say of the Lord, in Him will I trust. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come nigh you. Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come nigh your dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.

To my own mind, these Scriptures, and many others like them, settle forever the question. They are all under the control of our Father, and nothing can touch us except with His knowledge and by His permission. It may be the sin of man that originates the action, and therefore the thing itself cannot be said to be the will of God but by the time it reaches us, it has become God's will for us, and must be accepted as directly from His hands; nothing can disturb or harm us, except He shall see that it is best for us, and shall stand aside to let it pass.

**Day 9**

**Steve Thomas**

### **Unity in the Body of Christ**

**“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”**

**Philippians 2:2**

Unity in the Body of Christ, the church, is very important in reaching people for Jesus and bringing encouragement to other believers. We are to have the same purpose and goals as we strive to bring honor and glory to the name of Jesus Christ. We are told to be unified, and we must realize that it takes effort on everyone's part.

Unity is easily disrupted when we let pride and selfishness get in the way. We must be careful not to allow our wants and desires to get ahead of what God has taught us is the priority. When unity is not in the church, the world is repelled by what they see and the Christian is disheartened. On the other hand, when unity is present, the world is drawn to the church and the Christian is lifted up.

We learn some ways to keep unity in Philippians 2:2. The first thing that we see that is important is harmony. Harmony is not everyone singing the same note, but when blended together, it is beautiful. That is what God does with the church. He takes our different personalities, backgrounds, looks, professions, etc., and blends them together to make something beautiful.

We are then told to show love to one another. Love each other as Christians should be easy since we have the Holy Spirit in our lives and we have the command from Jesus to love, but sometimes it's not as easy as we try to make it. God is love, and He wants us to love. If we cannot love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will struggle to love others. One of the ways we show our love for Christ is by loving others.

**Pray this prayer:**

God, thank you so much for loving me enough to send Jesus to die for me. Help me create a plan to remove the “what ifs” out of the way the next time the Spirit guides me to share your love with someone.

**“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”  
Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)**

From the time I was a small child, I understood that God made me and loved me, but that not everyone knew that God loved them. I was taught, and still believe, that it's my responsibility to tell everyone I encounter that God loves them and wants a relationship with them.

However, understanding my responsibility in sharing God's love with the world hasn't always been the easiest thing to act on. I often get in the way of the Spirit's leading. I can find myself thinking, “What if they laugh at me? What if I lose her as a friend? What if I'm persecuted for sharing my faith?”

If you are a believer and you've ever felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit to share a scripture verse or even a simple statement about God's love with someone, you may have felt the same feelings I'm describing once in a while. Did you overcome it?

Take time right now to write down a few simple things you can do that will help you overcome the “what ifs” that may get in your way of sharing God's love. And, the next time you find an opportunity to share, you'll be prepared to push through the “what ifs” and declare God's love for your friend, neighbor, or new acquaintance.

We also see we have the same purpose. To bring honor and glory to God and reach the world in the name of Jesus Christ. It takes all of us. We worship together, play together, eat together, fellowship together, study the Word together, witness together, and the list goes on. We have the same goals, and we can work together to get the job done God's way. It takes all of us.

Unity is important. Look also at John 13:35 and Ephesians 4:1-3. Pray for unity at Wilsonville Baptist Church.

## Day 10

Lenny Fowler

Today I will discuss how Jeremiah 31:3 became a milestone in my walk with God.

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:

Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3

Many argue that the Old Testament has no relevance in the life of a New Testament believer. However, it is part of God's Word and every word written there is there for a reason. I believe in the truth in both testaments, and even though it was primarily for God's chosen people, it applies to us even today. I will discuss how this verse impacted my walk (or trust) in God.

In October 2009, my wife came to me and asked me to feel what she thought might be a lump in one of her breasts. There was definitely something there, so we scheduled an appointment to determine its cause/origin.

After her exam, she came to where I was bush hogging at a dear friend's home church. She called me over to the fence and said she had breast cancer. Right then and there we resolved that this would be a blessing knowing that our faith combined with her somewhat outgoing character would bring us through this terrible trial.

She chose to have a double mastectomy because of problems her mother had with the removal of only one breast when she had cancer. The surgery was done on October 16, 2009. As I was watching over her at 3:00 AM in her room after the surgery, I fell into despair and was having what I call a "pity party." Let's face it, we all have moments of despair when circumstances take our focus off God. But I was in the habit of going through a daily Bible reading plan and that day's reading was "coincidentally" in Jeremiah 31.

Also, at one time we were all new to WBC, and perhaps too shy or afraid to "break into the groove." God said in 2 Timothy 1:7 (NASB) "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."

We need to pray and listen to the Holy Spirit to determine our true "spiritual gifts," as those are the gifts that will honor God, strengthen, and grow our church. Please make the commitment today to go forward to identify your gifts to use in the Body of Christ.

**Day 15**

**Phyllis Mayfield**

### **Identifying and Using Your Gifts to Serve God**

In the second step of the Church Renewal Journey, we are approaching the Awakening Weekend. As Brother Steve stated in his letter to our church, "The purpose here is to help us begin to discover our spiritual gifts and how to practically apply them in the Body of Christ," at Wilsonville Baptist Church (WBC).

God has given us different talents, gifts, and abilities and He works in us through different ways to use them to glorify Him. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men." (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NASB) We should use our gifts to honor God and to encourage and strengthen our fellow Christians. Some of us are gifted in more than one area. "If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." (Romans 12:6-8 NASB)

On a personal note, I hope each of you will join me in identifying your spiritual gifts during the Awakening Weekend. Our church needs to be the leader in our community and to grow as God would desire, not necessarily in numbers, but in strength to spread God's Word and make disciples. "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." (Romans 12:11 NASB) I, as probably many of you, have done things in the church to "help when needed," but all of those things were not truly our gifts.

When I got to verse 3, my heart stopped. It said God loves me with an everlasting love and with loving kindness He had drawn me. To me the keyword in this verse was the word drawn. Even in this terrible situation he was there drawing me closer to Him. It was such a comfort to have this feeling at this low point.

Here, now ten years later, I find comfort in these words as trials continue to appear in my/our daily life. I count on God's provision in everything and from the world's standpoint don't see how I make it through every month.

### **Prayer:**

Lord, thank You for Your love and continued drawing of me to you. Thank you for your extraordinary provision that brings me/us through every day. Help me to recognize Your mercy and grace in the people you bring into my life that help me and help me show the same whenever I can assist others. I pray, dear Lord, that Your will for my life not be hindered by my own decisions or actions. LORD, draw me to You in all circumstances and help me see You at work in my life.

Day 11

Mike Mims

### Obedience to God Has Great Rewards and Blessings

**“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.” Exodus 19:5**

It is a fact that obeying God pleases Him. It's not always easy to be our best, however, we should try to do just that. God loves us so much and is aware that we will fall short sometimes. We all have times of temptation and must respond wisely to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to do the right thing.

We choose to obey God. Of all the choices we have daily in life, this is the big one! God's blessings far outweigh anything we think we might gain by being disobedient. To not obey God is a sin to us and it always pays off with counterfeit money.

Obeying God is for sure the path of wisdom. People who choose this path of wisdom live with more peace in their hearts and have a better capacity to love others and forgiveness will come not so hard for you.

Obedience sends a message to the Lord that we want a close relationship with Him.

God knows how devastating it is for His children who choose to live a life of disobedience.

Dr. Charles Stanley puts it this way, “Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him!” I love that!

Day 14

Don Belcher

### Overcoming the Forgotten Sin

**James 4:17 tells us: “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.”**

In Genesis 1:26 we read: “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all creatures that move along the ground.’” Then in Genesis 3:1-7 we read that Eve and Adam were tempted by the crafty serpent and yielded to the temptation based on their selfish desire to be like God. God had already charged them with ruling over all creatures; therefore, He gave them the responsibility to keep the serpent and all other animals in check. However, failing to carry out what God had charged them to do, they were guilty of the sin of omission.

When you consider any sin man or woman may commit, it is (in my opinion) always preceded by the sin of omission. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we are told, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

Our responsibility, then, is to trust our heavenly Father to do what He says He will do. Spending quality time in His Word and on our knees will go a long way to avoiding the hidden sin of omission.

Day 13

Steve Thomas

**The Gifts of the Spirit:**

I Corinthians 12:8-10;

Ephesians 4:7-13; Romans 12:3-8; II Peter 1:3

We receive many gifts in our lives. Some come at Christmas, some come on birthdays, and some come just because someone loves us. No gift compares with any gift God gives. The greatest gift of God is salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. He follows that with the gift of The Holy Spirit, and along with The Holy Spirit come spiritual gifts. Every Christian has at least one and they are to be used in the building up of the church.

God has given you everything you need to accomplish anything He wants you to accomplish. It may be something you cannot accomplish in your own strength, but nothing is impossible with God. We see Him performing many miraculous things in The Bible, and if we open our eyes, we see them happening today. God is still the same God He has always been, and He is still at work in His church.

The Holy Spirit gives us gifts as He sees fit to each individual to accomplish His will and His purpose. We need to accept the gift He is giving to us so that we can get to work doing God's will God's way. God will do things in our lives that only He can do.

Try not to worry about the gift God has given to others. Your gift is important, and you cannot use it properly if you are focused on someone else. Put your eyes on Jesus and allow Him to grow that gift to fruition in you. When used properly, others will feel God's love and presence, as well as being encouraged and uplifted. When gifts are not used properly, they accomplish nothing for God and hurt the church.

Together, we accomplish God's purpose as we use the gifts He has given to serve others and bring honor and glory to God. You are needed. We cannot be the church God wants us to be when there are only a few parts working.

Pray for God to move in your life to help you discover your gift(s) and begin serving in the church the way God intends for you to. If you are already serving, pray that God will give you an attitude of love and of service for Him.

Day 12

Angelia Taylor

**“Because of the Lord’s faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! I say, “The Lord is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him.” Lamentations 3:22-24**

Merriam-Webster defines “faithful” as “steadfast in affections or allegiance; firm in adherence to promises; given with strong assurance.”

The Lord is faithful in his love and forgiveness toward us.

We all make mistakes. It's easy to drift toward believing our mistakes diminish God's love toward us, or that our mistakes somehow exclude us from his forgiveness. However, in his word, God promises us never ending mercies extended toward us every morning. The Lord has promised us His faithfulness, love and forgiveness. Each morning's sunrise is a reminder of God's faithfulness, love and forgiveness toward us.

His mercies extend to us every day. God always keeps his promises!