

COTTONWOOD CREEK CHURCH

clean slate.

BIBLE READING PLAN



**40 DAYS OF LOVING GOD
& LOVING OTHERS**

A COTTONWOOD CREEK CHURCH DAILY READING PLAN



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introduction

DO YOU WANT A CLEAN SLATE?

What does it mean to get a “clean slate?” Though the phrase originated in Latin as a philosophical concept, the term “clean slate” was revived in the mid-19th century in places like taverns and grocery stores. These community hubs would have large black slates where the debts of those purchasing goods or drinks from these places would be written down in public, stating your name and the dollar amount you owe. There were two ways a name was erased: 1) either they paid their debt, 2) or the owner forgave them their debt. As a result, the slate was cleaned, and they could start over.

While we don't use slates (or even blackboards!) anymore, the concept still rings true: we long for a clean slate. We have “debts” against us: sins, brokenness, bad priorities, things we shouldn't have said, choices we shouldn't have made, time that was wasted, etc. But as mentioned above, there are only two ways to have a clean slate: 1) pay our debt, 2) or be forgiven our debt.

The Bible reminds us that while we are incapable of forgiving our own debt, our God is in the business of forgiveness:

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.

1 PETER 1:18-19

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us.

EPHESIANS 1:7-8A

Though our debt is great, His mercy is greater! Every person who calls on the name of the Lord is saved and wiped clean, not by their own doing but through the work of Jesus on the cross. And here's the best part: in Christ, the Lord is always faithful to give us a clean slate. Every morning, every hour, and every moment God's grace is enough to forgive us and set us back on the right path. Praise God for our salvation in Him!

But as we rest in the forgiveness and grace of God, we have a call to honor Him with our lives. We have a call to obey and worship Him with everything we are. And that's what this 40-day devotion is all about. On one end, we need to constantly remember that God is forgiving, loving, and gracious, but on the other we need to remember that we are given a clean slate so that the Lord would rewrite our life according to His will and plan! What is His plan:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

MATTHEW 22:34-40

Jesus summarizes the entire Law into two commands: Love God and Love Others. Over the next 40 days, our hope is that as you are given a clean slate, and you will allow the Lord to rewrite your life in light of these two commands. Each day you will have a passage of Scripture, a short devotional thought, an evaluation question and a prayer all centered on Loving God and Loving Others.

May we be the kind of people who walk both in His forgiveness and in a life devoted to our great God!

Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for Him."

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-24

day 1

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

DEUTERONOMY 6:5-7

Since the beginning, God's command for His people has been the same: that His people would love Him with everything they have. This means that God doesn't just want some parts of your life – He wants all of it. So much so that His love should pour out of you while you sit, walk, lie down and get up. In other words, He wants all of you as you do all you do!

Evaluate: Are you following the Lord in every aspect of your life?

Pray: Lord, teach me to love you with everything I am so that as I live and interact with others, my love for You would be known.

day 2

I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him.

PSALM 40:1-3

Whether you are in the “slimy pit” due to tough circumstances, difficult people or your own sin, your call to get out is still the same: call upon the Lord and He will give you a firm place to stand. As a result, your life will be marked with a new song of praise to the God who has forgiven you because of His great love, renewed your hope, and strengthened you by His power.

Evaluate: When was the last time you cried out to the Lord for help?

Pray: Lord, hear my cry for help and lift me up from all the mess of my life, so that I may sing a new song that proclaims the glories of Your faithful love.

day 3

But because of His great love for us, God, Who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

EPHESIANS 2:4-5

The more you understand your sin in light of God's perfect character, the more you understand God's grace given to you in Jesus. It truly is amazing that you have received life, love, and forgiveness – even though you don't deserve it. Every day you have the opportunity to live out the love and grace you have received and the more you marvel in His grace, the more you live in worship to Him.

Evaluate: How does your salvation in Jesus affect your everyday life?

Pray: Lord, thank You for saving me by Your grace. Show me how to live out that grace in my life.

day 4

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 8:1

If you have surrendered your life to Jesus and called upon His name to be saved – then this verse is your anthem. The beauty of salvation is that when God sees you, He no longer sees your sin, shame, or guilt. While the enemy wants you to flounder in your sin, God sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus clothing you so that you are free to live a life devoted to praising Him.

Evaluate: Are you living in the freedom of a life that's been saved by Christ?

Pray: Lord, what a miracle it is that I don't stand condemned! Teach me what it means to live in Your freedom: not to indulge my sin but to freely live-in submission to You.

day 5

But You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

PSALM 86:15

When you desire to love God with everything you are, it is vital that you get to know Him. God's compassion communicates His concern for you. God's grace communicates His forgiveness toward you. That God is slow to anger communicates His patience with you. God's love communicates His delight in you. God's faithfulness communicates that He will always make good on these promises to you. If you love Him, get to know Him.

Evaluate: Does your devotion to God flow from your love for God?

Pray: Lord, teach me Your ways that I may walk in Your truth. Teach me who You are so that I live devoted to the only One who deserves my devotion.

day 6

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

JAMES 4:7-8

Submission to God has three steps: Stand firm against the enemy, draw near to the Lord, and continue to pursue a life of grace and purity. When you fail to submit to the Lord but claim to be saved by Him, you are living in this idea of being double-minded. True submission is singularly focused in living in God's way.

Evaluate: Are you guilty of being double-minded?

Pray: Lord, show me where I am not fully submitting to You so that I may honor You with the way I live.

day 7

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

MATTHEW 6:24A

Jesus makes it clear that you can't have two top priorities. There is only room for one. Your top priority is the object in your life to which you give the most time, attention and resources. If someone were to look at an average day in your life, what would they say got the most of your time and attention? This would reveal the object you serve.

Evaluate: What gets the most of your time and attention?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for trying to serve two (or more!) masters. Show me how to direct my time, attention, and resources so that they reflect You as my top priority.

day 8

I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me find Me.

PROVERBS 8:17

Think for a moment if this verse weren't true, that even if you tried to seek the Lord, there was no guarantee that He would love you or that you would find Him. But thank God for His Word: When you commit to love the Lord and devote your life to Him, God promises to reciprocate. He promises to show Himself and have a relationship with you.

Evaluate: Do you believe that when you pursue the Lord, that you will begin to live in His love?

Pray: Lord, as I devote my life to You, continue to be faithful to show me Your love and who You are.

day 9

Whoever has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love them and show Myself to them.

JOHN 14:21

A love for Jesus naturally listens and obeys His commands. Your life should model the life of Jesus: humility, grace, love, compassion, zeal, joy, and so much more. Your devotion to God can't simply be puffed up knowledge but rather a total life transformation.

Evaluate: Does my love for Jesus match my obedience to Jesus?

Pray: Lord, help me match my love for You with my obedience to You.

day 10

*Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always.*

1 CHRONICLES 16:10-11

This passage is a reminder that as God works, moves and acts, you have a call to worship Him, look to Him for strength, and seek His face. Often, we run to God in times of need and trouble. But this last phrase: "seek His face," means to go to God to learn more about Him. This doesn't negate your running to Him in need, but it should remind you that God wants a dynamic relationship with you.

Evaluate: What are some practical steps you can add to your day to "seek His face always?"

Pray: Lord, You are great and the only One whose name should be worshipped. Convict me so that I seek Your face always and that I may have an ever-growing relationship with You.

day 11

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2

To love the Lord with all your mind is a continual process of kicking out the influences of this world and allowing the Lord, through the power of His Word, to shape your thinking. If you want to walk in God's will, you must learn to saturate your thinking with the things of God.

Evaluate: Where has your thinking been shaped by the world?

Pray: Lord, forgive me where I have allowed culture and the world around me to shape my mind. Allow me to sit under the power of Your Word so that I may think rightly.

day 12

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are My friends if you do what I command.

JOHN 15:12-14

As Jesus has loved you, so you are to love others. How has Jesus loved you? He humiliated Himself so that you could confidently approach the throne of God. He suffered so that you wouldn't face the judgment of God. He died so that you would have life with God forever. Your love for others must be based on the selfless love that Jesus gives you.

Evaluate: What relationships do you have that are failing to live up to the way Jesus loves you?

Pray: Lord, thank You for loving me selflessly and humbly. Reveal to me how I can model that in my own relationships with others.

day 13

You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.

PSALM 16:11

The Psalms leave no room for any kind of middle ground: you are either walking in the path of life or the path of death. While the latter is often depicted as the way of destruction and judgment, true joy, satisfaction, delight and contentment are only found for those walking in the presence of God. The closer you follow the Lord, the more you will experience the joy of the Lord.

Evaluate: Is your joy defined by God's presence?

Pray: Lord, teach me how to walk closer with You so that I may experience the fullness of Your joy.

day 14

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

JAMES 4:4

"Adulterous people" seems harsh until you place the phrase in the context of the church as "The Bride of Christ." Just as you would expect singular devotion from a spouse, so the Lord expects singular devotion from you. Even though the world will come along and try to entice you away, the stronger your relationship is with God, the stronger your commitment is to stay.

Evaluate: Are you singularly devoted to God?

Pray: Lord, show me where I am trying to be friends with the world and help me build a strong and committed relationship with You.

day 15

*Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become children of God!*

JOHN 1:12

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a child of God. You have been adopted into His family. No matter your wanderings, you have the opportunity to continually run to your Father and He will always welcome you with open arms. Your responsibility is to always remember the name you represent.

Evaluate: Do you live as one who has been adopted by God?

Pray: Lord, You are far too gracious for me to understand, that You would call me Your child. Continually put before me my responsibility to represent You well.

day 16

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.

GALATIANS 2:20

When you were saved, you surrendered your life to Jesus. The word surrender entails a willful act of submission; that you gave up your rights to continue living under your personal authority. To quote Paul elsewhere, "How can you who died to sin still live in it?" You died with Christ and have been raised in Him, your life is His!

Evaluate: Do you live under your authority or Christ's authority?

Pray: Lord, thank You for raising me up and breathing life into me. Take my life and let it be a living testimony of Your work.

day 17

Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise You.

PSALM 63:3-5

God's love for you is better than life itself because His love never leaves us wanting. A life lived apart from God will always fall short of actually living. Every sin is an attempt to find joy and satisfaction apart from God. But God promises to satisfy your every longing and our praise is the overflow of a life content in Him.

Evaluate: Do you find your full satisfaction in the love of God?

Pray: Lord, thank You for Your love. Let my life be one that is satisfied in You alone and overflows in obedient worship.

day 18

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, Whom they have not seen.

1 JOHN 4:20

Your love of God should fuel your love for people. Your love for people is evidence of your love for God. The Lord has called you to model His love to those around you, but when you fail to do that, you misrepresent God's love and you live out a lie.

Evaluate: Does your love for others communicate your love for God?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for misrepresenting Your love to others. Guide me to see people with Your compassion so that I may love them with Your love.

day 19

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38-39

One of the greatest teachings in the Bible is the doctrine of assurance. When you call upon the name of Jesus to be saved, while you are transformed into a new creation, you begin a constant daily battle of dying to yourself and living in Christ. But the beauty of the Gospel is that we don't sustain our salvation, Jesus does. And we have the assurance that nothing will separate us from His love.

Evaluate: Do you live in the assurance we have in Jesus?

Pray: Lord, thank You for saving me and sustaining that salvation. As I devote my life to You, continually remind me that nothing will separate me from Your love.

day 20

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

PROVERBS 4:23

Your heart is constantly being shaped by something. What you take in, what you think about, and what you dwell on become the source from which your actions flow. If you aren't diligently pursuing a relationship with the Lord, you are leaving your heart open to be shaped by world and as a result, you will act like the world. This is why you are to guard your heart above all else. Let the Lord shape your heart by treasuring Him and your righteous actions will follow.

Evaluate: What shapes your thoughts and affections most?

Pray: Lord, remind me over and over again that my heart is shaped by what I consume most. Shape my heart, my mind, and my thoughts so that I will walk in obedience with You.

day 21

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

1 JOHN 2:15-17

The enemy has designed the world to be flashy and distracting. Like cheese in a trap to a mouse, the world attempts to draw you away from your devotion to God and entice you with temporary happiness. But each moment you spend indulging your flesh is a moment you are living in opposition to God. And that opposition will bring nothing but frustration and disappointment.

Evaluate: What are the worldly pleasures that are drawing you away from God?

Pray: Lord, my attention is weak and my mind is easily distracted. Give me the strength to run to You in the moments my flesh is weak and show me the way out so I can honor You with my life.

day 22

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Selfish ambition, vain conceit, and not looking only to your own interests are all the products of sin inside of you. But this is no surprise, you were born selfish. No one taught you how to be selfish. And this is what makes Jesus' life and your calling in Him so counter-cultural: a lifestyle of denying your selfishness and walking with care and concern for others.

Evaluate: Are you counter-cultural in your love for others?

Pray: Lord, my natural state is selfishness and I need You to transform my thinking. Give me eyes to see the needs around me so that I may walk in humility and love.

day 23

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

COLOSSIANS 3:1-3

When you intentionally think on the things of God, you are choosing to be transformed and gain a perspective that goes beyond the circumstances people and things of this world. The world is temporary. The world brings trouble and stress. The world is devoted to the path of destruction. But you are able to think rightly when you think on the character and workings of God.

Evaluate: Is your mind consumed by things of this earth or the things of God?

Pray: Lord, You are good, glorious, kind, forgiving, gracious, merciful, powerful, loving, just, faithful, perfect, holy and far too wonderful for me. Teach me to set my mind on these things.

day 24

Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like You— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

EXODUS 15:11

This passage is in the middle of a song of Moses as God's people had just witnessed the mighty acts of God: the 10 plagues, the Passover, and the parting of the Red Sea. While you may feel too far removed from this scenario to draw the same conclusions, the Bible continually shows that God never changes. This means that God is still superior to all other ways of life, the perfect holy One, and the only One Who deserves to be worshiped as He continues to work to bring salvation to His people.

Evaluate: How does your view of God shape your worship of God?

Pray: Lord, who is like You among the gods? Who is holy like You? Who is awesome like You? Who compares to Your mighty working? You alone deserve to be worshiped.

day 25

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

ROMANS 12:9-10

As you commit to a lifestyle of worship, your love for God and others must be genuine. In your sinfulness, there is a temptation to love so long as it benefits you. But that is not “sincere” love – that is selfishly motivated love. Rather, authentic love is motivated by the love you have received in Jesus: that in our rebellion, He pursued us and died for us so that you would have life in Him.

Evaluation: How sincere is your love for God and love for others?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for my selfishly motivated love. Let the love You have shown me overflow in my life.

day 26

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

1 JOHN 4:16

How has God loved you? His love is unconditional. His love keeps no record of wrongs. His love is relentless. His love is overwhelming. His love is perfect. It's easy to lose sight of the love of God in a world of hatred, but the more you learn to rely on the love God has given you in your salvation, the more you are able to live the life to which He has called you.

Evaluate: Do you rely on the love of God in your everyday life?

Pray: Lord, thank You for Your love. As the world continues to be filled with hate, let me dwell on Your love and walk in it.

day 27

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

EPHESIANS 3:16-19

Building a relationship with God requires talking with God through prayer because prayer grants us full access to the ear of God. Pray that you may know the glorious riches of God. Pray that your faith would be strengthened by God to do the work of God. Pray that you would come to know and live out the tremendous love of God. And pray that your life would be satisfied in God.

Evaluate: Is your prayer life an obligation or a vital part of your love for God?

Pray: Lord, You are great and marvelous for giving me access to You through prayer. Overwhelm me with who You are, so that I may know just how wide, how long, and how deep Your love is for me so that I may live in You.

day 28

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

MICAH 6:8

God is clear: when you follow Him, you are to live justly, mercifully and humbly. To act justly is to live and pursue His perfect standard in all things. To love mercy is to allow the mercy you have received from God guide your interactions with others. And to walk humbly is the constant reminder that you live to serve God, not yourself.

Evaluate: Does your life humbly model the justice and mercy of God?

Pray: Lord, You have shown me what it means to follow You. In my interactions with others, let me pursue what is right, saturated in Your mercy, and in constant humility.

day 29

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him
Who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*

1 PETER 2:9

In your salvation, God chose you to be a part of His people. This means that your primary allegiance in this life is to God. You have a call to represent Him as you are set apart from the rest of world, so that everyone around you would know the salvation you have received and that they also would praise God.

Evaluate: Is your primary allegiance to God?

Pray: Lord, thank You for choosing me to be a part of Your people. Give me the strength to live out my identity so that everyone I encounter would know where my allegiance lies.

day 30

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 PETER 4:8

Do you remember when Peter denied Jesus three times and still Jesus came back after the resurrection to restore him? Peter experienced firsthand the power of Jesus' love to overlook his failures and he knew that he should love others in the same way. When you love people deeply, the sins of others should be looked on with the same grace you received. You are called to continually model the forgiveness of Jesus in your relationships.

Evaluate: Do you love people with the same grace you received in your salvation?

Pray: Lord, as I dwell on the grace You have given me, let my interactions with others communicate your love.

day 31

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

EPHESIANS 2:10

Humanity was created in the image of God, designed to have a relationship with Him and called to reflect Him in all that they did. Though sin entered the world, God worked to bring about His salvation for His people and as a result, restore the calling placed on every individual. God has saved you for His glory and to do His work, that you would have a relationship with Him and represent Him in everything you do.

Evaluate: Do you live as though you are God's handiwork?

Pray: Lord, I praise You for Your saving grace. Let me live as Your handiwork so that I may do all the good works You have called me to do.

day 32

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

MATTHEW 6:33-34

One of the greatest revealers of where your faith and devotion lie is found in where you turn when you are stressed, worried, and anxious. When you fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith, He will be the anchor you need to weather any storm. When you seek God, rather than focus on circumstances or people, your perspective shifts to the one who holds all things in His hands.

Evaluate: Where do you turn when you are worried and anxious?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for my doubt and worry. I need You to remind me that You hold all things in Your hands, that even when I can't see what tomorrow might bring, You always know and are working for Your glory and my good.

day 33

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

COLOSSIANS 4:2

Your devotion to God is displayed in your prayers to God. In many ways, prayer is an act of submission that is the expression of your confidence and trust that God is in control and you are not. The more often you pray, the more alert you stay and the more thankful you become. As a result, your commitment to God is amplified.

Evaluate: Is your devotion to God displayed in your prayer life?

Pray: Lord, teach me to pray so that I may constantly remember that You are God and I am not.

day 34

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

MATTHEW 5:43-44

It's easy to love someone who is nice to you. But even unbelievers can do that. Your salvation makes you different than the world because it is a call to come and die: die to your preferences, die to your conveniences, and die to your desires. You may want to embrace the kind person and shun the mean one, but that's not your calling in the Gospel. You are commanded to love and pray for everyone, regardless of how they treat you.

Evaluate: Do you love your enemies?

Pray: Lord, I pray for those people in my life who are hard to love. I pray You would soften both my heart and their heart so that each of us would experience Your love.

day 35

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.

PSALM 34:8

Each moment, of every day, you have an opportunity to taste and see that the Lord is good: Dwell on His faithfulness. Live in His grace and forgiveness. Sit under His sovereignty. Soak in His love. Meditate on His justice. God is good and every day He is calling us to come rest in Him and be blessed by Him.

Evaluate: When was the last time you experienced the goodness of God?

Pray: Lord, in the midst of the bitterness of the world, let me taste and see that You are good.

day 36

We love because He first loved us.

1 JOHN 4:19

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Love is Love?" It sounds nice, but what does that actually mean? Love is not defined by your experiences, your feelings, or your emotions; Love is defined by God. How does God love? He has relentlessly pursued His people even to the point of sending His Son into the world to die on a cross. Your love for others must be rooted in God's love for you.

Evaluate: How is God represented in your love?

Pray: Lord, thank You for defining love by Your actions. Show me how to love like You have loved me.

day 37

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

COLOSSIANS 3:12-14

Your identity in Christ means you should look, think and behave differently than the world. When the world is indifferent, be compassionate. When the world is mean, be kind. When the world is selfish, be humble. When the world is harsh, be gentle. When the world is full of complaints, be patient. When you clothe yourself in this way, God is honored and you model the forgiveness and love of Jesus.

Evaluate: Do you look, think and behave differently than the world?

Pray: Lord, help me take off my old ways and put on Your new ways, so that I may be a conduit of Your love.

day 38

Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

PSALM 37:4-6

Everyone longs for a life of fulfillment. When you take joy in knowing and worshiping God, your deepest desire for satisfaction is achieved. As you commit your way to Him by trusting in Him, obeying His way, dwelling in His Word, and delighting in His presence, you will be fulfilled. And as a result, the world will see through you that God's way is the only way to have life.

Evaluate: Are you trying to find fulfillment apart from God?

Pray: Lord, satisfy me with Your unfailing love so that I may proclaim Your glory to everyone around me.

day 39

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

Many of your coworkers, friends, family, and neighbors live in darkness. They have no hope. They don't know joy. And most of them don't even realize it. When you love God and love others, you become a beacon of light in a dark world. Like a lighthouse for a wave-tossed ship, your life should be a place of hope, joy, and love for everyone who has lost their way.

Evaluate: Is the light of Jesus hidden or visible in your life?

Pray: Lord, help me remember that without You, the world around me will remain in their darkness. Give me the strength to boldly be a light in the world so that more may come to know You.

day 40

*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.
Do everything in love.*

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14

As the forty days come to a close, these final words to the Corinthians are true for you as well. The enemy will always try to distract you and attempt to derail your commitment to God. You can't fight this on your own or you will lose. Instead, ask the Lord to give you the strength and courage to stand your ground and remain fully devoted in your love for God and your love for others.

Evaluate: Are you standing on your own or with the help of the Lord?

Pray: Lord, thank You for these forty days in Your Word. May this time I have spent not be in vain, but rather be a catalyst for a lifelong love and devotion to You.

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