

Bon Appetite!

Get F.A.T.



Be Beautiful

A Daily Diet to Nourish Your Soul

Forever F.A.T.!

This is a format that can follow you for the rest of your life. I've been doing this for over 40 years and the blessings continue!

- 1) **Look:** Read Scripture until a verse stands out to you, then write it out.
- 2) **Listen:** Record your observations, sharing them with Jesus, asking Him why He highlighted this verse and any questions you might have about the verse. Then write down whatever thoughts come to mind as you ponder the verse with Him.
- 3) **Live It Out:** Ask the Lord what He wants you to do in response to what He's highlighted for you. This may be as short and sweet as praising Him for something new you learned about Him or it may be much more involved! For more ideas see below.* Record what comes to mind, then be sure to do it! (James 1:22-24)
- 4) **Let It Last:** Draw a quick picture (stick figures count!) to illustrate the main highlight that stood out to you.

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* One acronym that's really helped me through the years is S.P.E.C.K.:

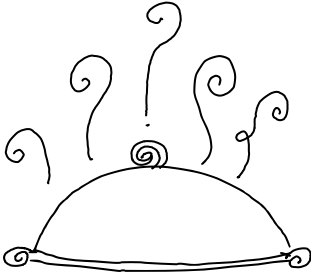
- S*_{in}: Is there a sin I need to confess?
- P*_{inciple}: Is there a principle that currently applies to my life?
- E*_{xample}: Is there an example I need to follow?
- C*_{ommand}: Is there a command I need to obey?
- K*_{nowledge of God}: Did I learn something new about God I can praise Him for?

Weekly Meal Plan Review

Look back over the past 7 days and write down any themes or big lessons God blessed you with! Take time to consider, how did you respond? And what happened as a result?

NOURISHING TREASURE	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

EXERCISE	
(what did you plan to do?)	(what happened as a result?)
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Dedicated to Lolly Swanson

My F.A.T. Friend
 who first introduced me to the concept
 and continues to spur me on!

Get F.A.T. Be Beautiful

Overview

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.

Week 1: Introduction 4
 * *How F.A.T. Are You?*
 * *Consider Esther*
 * *Day of Fasting - Vitally Important! Do not skip!*
Assignment: Day 1-7 Quiet Times & Weekly Review Summary

Week 2: Growing in Faithfulness 34
 * *Becoming Like Your Daddy: Faithful*
Assignment: Day 8-14 Quiet Times & Weekly Review Summary

Week 3: Growing in Being Available to God 59
 * *Becoming Like Your Daddy: Available*
Assignment: Day 15-21 Quiet Times & Weekly Review Summary

Week 4: The Key Role of Confession & Repentance in being Available to God..... 88
 * *When You Start To Feel Discouraged Because of Your Sin*
 * *God's Gifts to Us*
Assignment: Day 22-28 Quiet Times & Weekly Review Summary

Week 5: Growing In Being Teachable 121
 * *Assess Your Teachability*
Assignment: Day 29-35 Quiet Times & Weekly Review Summary

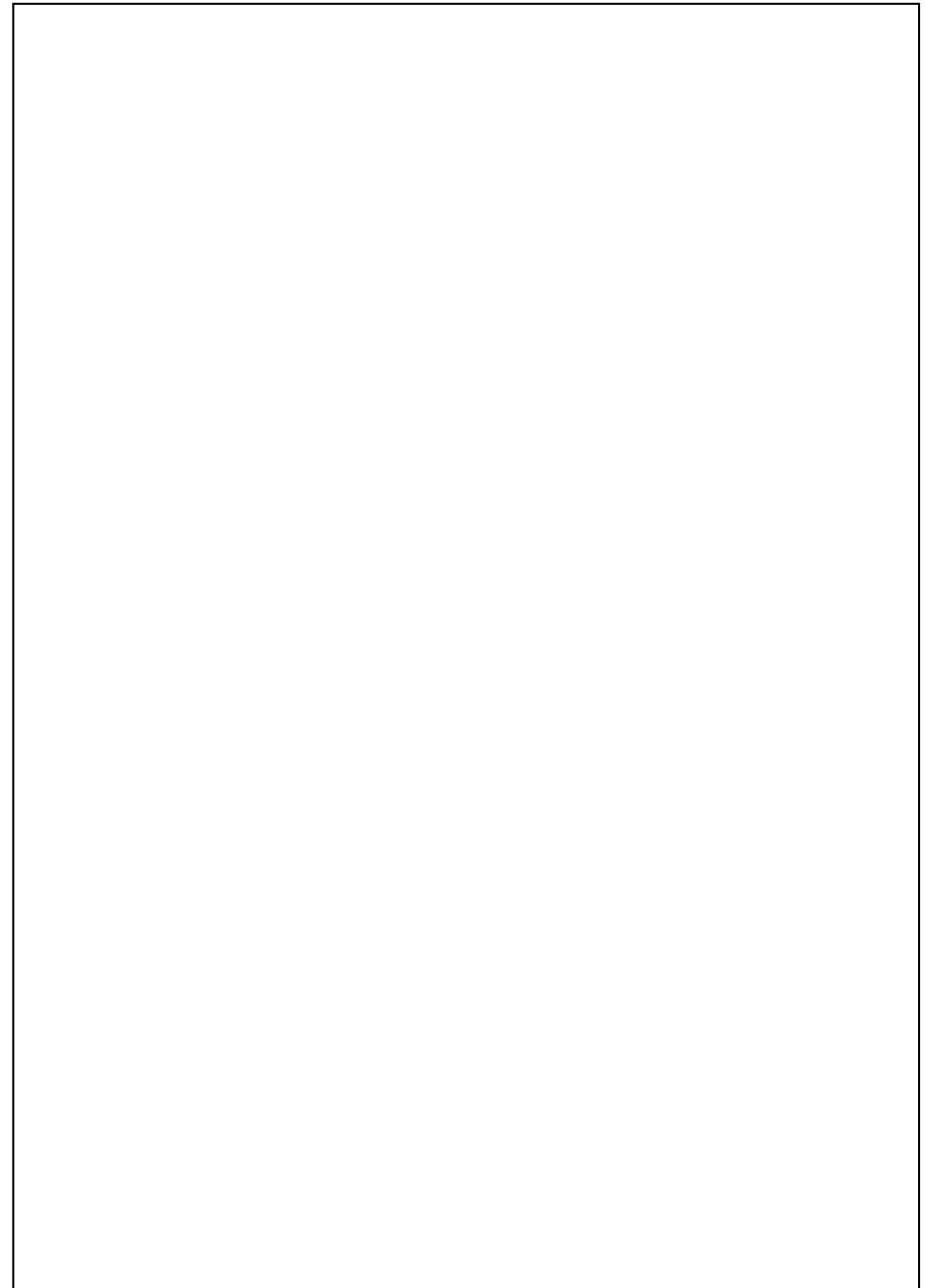
Week 6: The Key Role of Listening in Being Teachable 148
 * *The Role of Listening in Creation, the Fall & Redemption*
Assignment: Day 36 - 42 Quiet Times & Weekly Review Summary

Week 7: F.A.T. for Life! 174
 * *Diet Analysis*
 * *Meal Plans Can Help*
 * *Forever F.A.T.*
Assignment: Forever F.A.T. & Weekly Review Summary

NOTE: On days when time is limited make the Quiet Time the key focus and skip the life lessons which are optional!

NOTE: Taking 30 seconds to draw a quick picture summary each day will be a HUGE help in remembering and sharing when you meet one on one, even if your drawing doesn't look like much! In your weekly review summary look back at your pictures and write down the main idea the Lord impressed on your heart along with how He led you to respond to this. Then when you meet together: Show and tell! And enjoy!

* This denotes additional resources you can use in your one-on-ones. It can be incredibly humbling to work through this material, so during week 4 there is material on confession and repentance to keep our eyes on Jesus and help us stay available to Him as we become aware of how much we fall short.



Date: _____

Feast: Read a chapter from the Bible. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?



Get What?

Fat has acquired a bad reputation. In truth, we sure do need it. Can you imagine how hard sitting would be without a natural cushion on your backside? And what do you think breasts are composed of?

Fat gives our bodies shape and is also needed for nourishment. It is vital for life because it is a source of essential nutrients, linoleic and linolenic acid; we need it to transport and store fat-soluble vitamins A,D,E, and K; to make certain hormones; to insulate the body from extreme changes in temperature; to protect the body from injury; and as a source of energy.

Fat also gives food flavor (have you ever had a salad without the dressing?) and an irresistible smell (just think of McDonald's french fries). It is often preferred for its smooth texture—want some cheese on that burger?

Every year, women die from lack of fat. As they try to eliminate fat from their bodies, they also eliminate life!

Fat isn't just important for your physical well being. It's also important spiritually. In fact, it's a key ingredient in determining how beautiful a woman is.

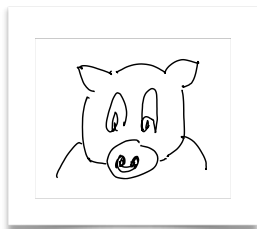
I'll never forget the first time my friend Lolly shared with me, "My goal is to be fat." I thought she was crazy! But then, I learned she wanted to be:

F = Faithful
A = Available
T = Teachable

Now that's the kind of fat I'd like to have in abundance! But it doesn't just happen.

Like the physical version, you need to eat to get it - in this case, it comes from feasting on God's Word. But that's not all. Thorough chewing is so important for digestion. This chewing takes time - time to consider, time to ask (Jeremiah 33:3), time to listen. You see, with this kind of F.A.T., you must exercise - actively doing what you've read - to store it. If you don't, it's promptly eliminated from your system. And you won't know how to exercise (or have much energy for it) unless you first take time to digest.

So feast, chew and exercise. You'll be amazed at how your F.A.T. levels increase ...and your beauty!



Your Beauty?

Proverbs 11:22 states, “Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion.” How beautiful do you think a man considers his wife when he finds her in bed with someone else?

Twice in Proverbs it states it’s better to live on the corner of a roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife (Proverbs 21:9 and 25:24). What makes a person quarrelsome? How about thinking you know better? A sure sign of not being teachable!

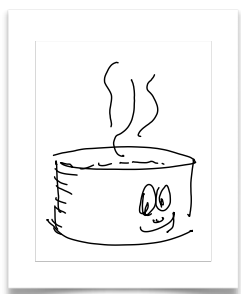
Beauty that’s only skin deep is a fading asset. As we age, it starts declining - even for cover girls. But it doesn’t take age for beauty to quickly fade! Have you ever known someone who was gorgeous to look at until she opened her mouth?

Beauty itself is an intriguing concept. Remember the saying, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”? This statement acknowledges there is great variety in what people consider beautiful. Have you ever wondered what God considers beautiful?

In 1 Peter 3: 3-5, God tells us, “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past used to make themselves beautiful.”

Note how it says “make themselves” - even if you weren’t born a natural beauty - there’s still hope! And for those born with beautiful features - take note of Jesus’ warning. In Matthew 23:27, he states, don’t be like “whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean!”

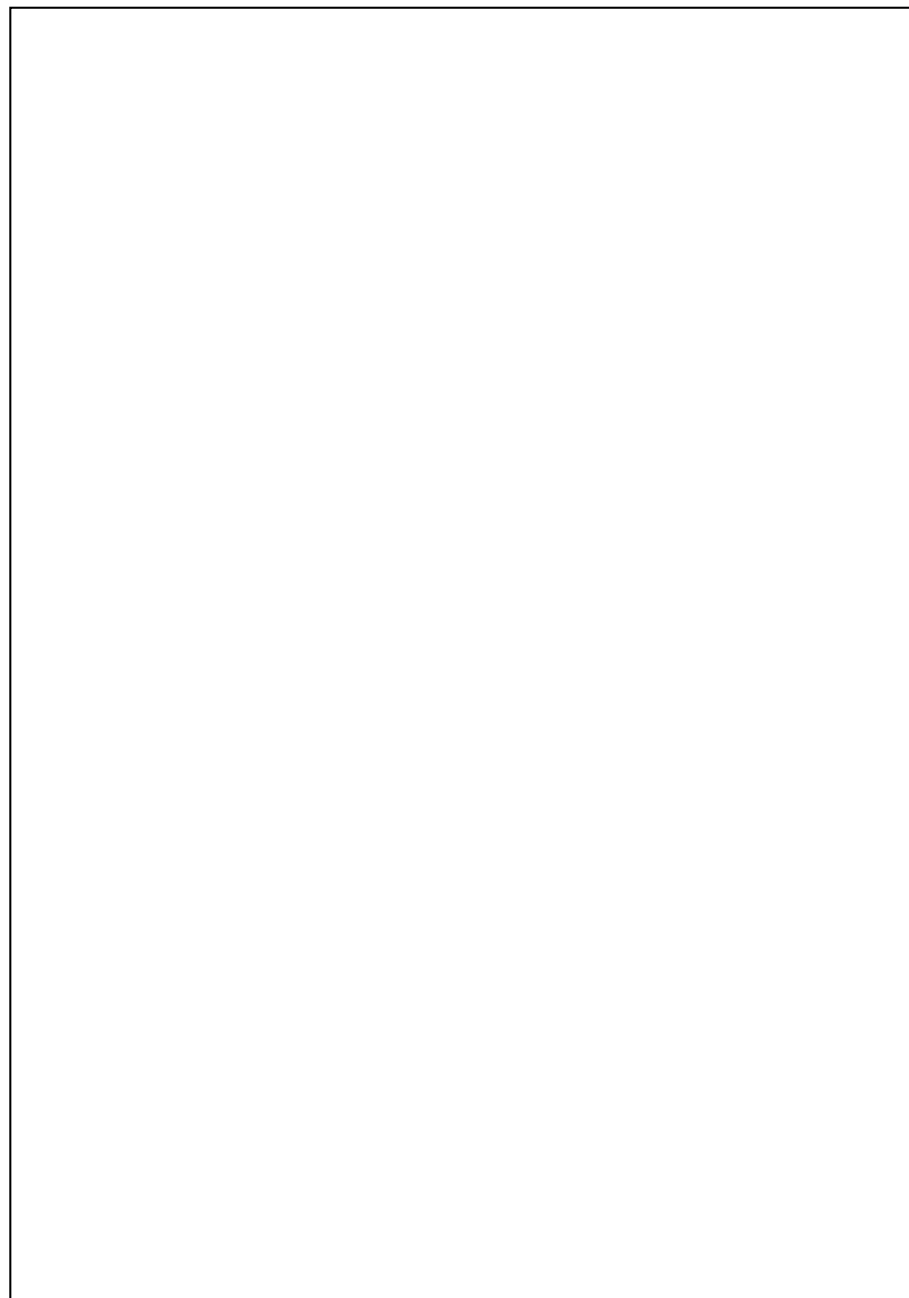
Instead, get F.A.T., be beautiful!



This is a diet?!

The term “diet” has two different meanings. First, it is “an allowed plan of food and drink set down for the loss of weight or a prescribed plan for medical purposes. The word can also be used to mean the habitual food intake of people or animals.” (https://en.termwiki.com/EN/diet_3)

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Date: _____

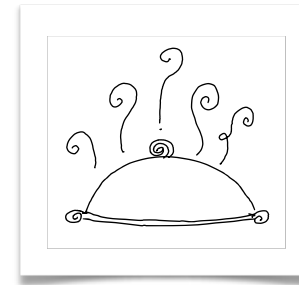
Feast: Read a chapter from the Bible. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?

By using this term, we are acknowledging that our F.A.T. level is greatly influenced by our diet - what we take into our minds soon passes into our hearts, influencing our whole being. Our hope is that this diet will alter your normal diet for the rest of your life, helping your F.A.T. levels keep increasing forever!

Diets are never easy. That's probably why there are so many. Any diet that promises quick results, probably isn't worth much. As with the tortoise and the hare - slow and steady wins the race. No one can eat a huge feast once a week, letting that be their only food intake and function well. You need to "eat" daily! This "diet" provides you with daily nourishment that also teaches you how to keep feeding your soul... for life!



Feeding My Soul?

Yep! If you don't feed your soul, it wastes away...just like your body would without food!

I once knew a girl who ate only potato chips and ice cream. She ended up in the hospital! What you eat really does make a difference!

True, there are things you can eat that will kill you. But that's not all you need to beware. For example, alcohol isn't bad. Paul even tells Timothy to have a little wine for his stomach. But alcohol contains nothing of nutritional value, though it sure can fill you up. Alcoholics can die of starvation - while feeling full!

The same is true for your soul. What do you think happens if you feed it a steady diet of junk food?

Perhaps the greatest danger can come from things that seem harmless enough - things that may not have any immoral content but no spiritual nutrition either. Unfortunately, junk food abounds - on T.V., in magazines, on the radio - it's all around us! Every day, we are bombarded by things that contain no nutritional or spiritual value. It's so easy to fill up with "empty calories" and starve.

Just as it takes extra effort to eat healthy physically, it takes much more energy to nourish your soul. Everything you eat either spurs you on to Jesus or tries to fill you with something else, so you lose your appetite for Him. Only He provides the true nourishment your soul needs.

Day 1: How F.A.T. are you?

Take some time today to prayerfully evaluate.

On each scale, circle where you currently see yourself: 1 represents fat-free, 10 fully saturated)

Faithful:

Do you do what you say you will do?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
Can people count on you?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How well do you finish the things you start?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How diligent are you to apply God's Word to your life?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How much do you do of what God asks you to do?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How consistent are you in spending time with Jesus?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
Do you sacrifice to keep your word?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Available:

How busy are you?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
Is your schedule packed or is there margin in your life?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
Do you have time for God and friends?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
Do you have time for unexpected needs?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How do you respond when God asks you to do something hard?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How equipped are you to do what God asks you to do?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Teachable:

How much do you hunger to learn?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How much do you listen?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
Do you take the initiative to seek out those you can learn from?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How much are you willing to sacrifice to learn?	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.

Date: _____

Esther

Read the first two chapters of the book of Esther.

Feast: Read a chapter from the Bible. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?

1. What can you learn from Vashti?

2. What evidence do you see that Esther was...

Faithful:

Available:

Teachable:

2. Read Esther 3-7. What happened as a result of Esther being F.A.T.?

Day 2: Before Fasting

1. Make today a day of fasting from food. Unless you can't for medical reasons, resolve to not eat anything for 24 hours.



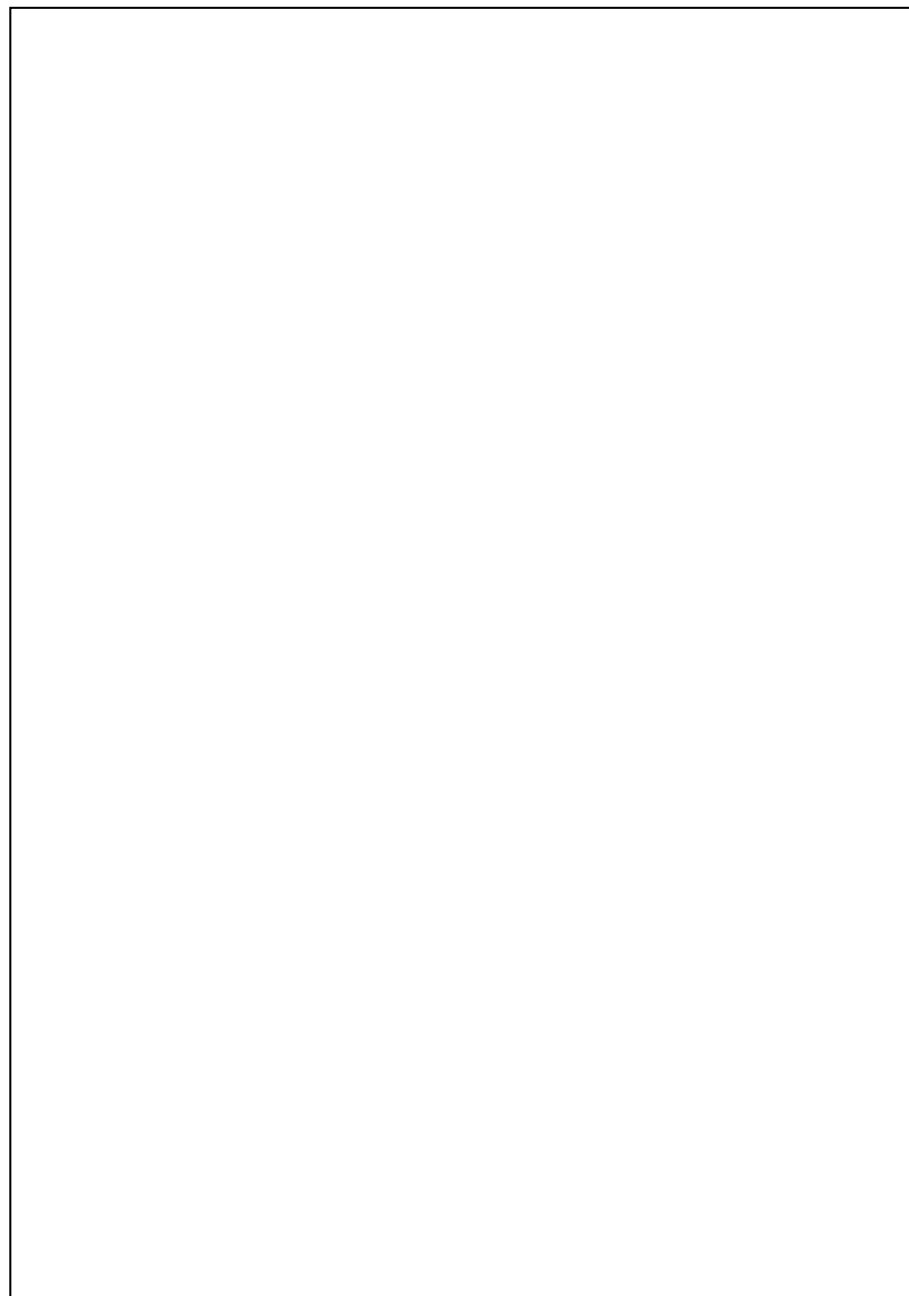
***“I can do everything
through Him who gives me strength!”***

Philippians 4:13

NOTE: If you cannot fast from food for medical reasons, ask the Lord to give you an idea of something else you can fast from. One pregnant friend decided to fast from everything except rice for the day. Another friend who struggles with an eating disorder and needed to eat, sensed the Lord leading her to fast from social media.

But if you can abstain from eating food for 24 hours, you will experience this as the most powerful metaphor. Remember that the 24 hours start after your last meal. So if you finish dinner at 8 pm one night, you can break your fast after 8 pm the next night. Others may find it helpful to fast beginning after lunch one day and then resume eating 24 hours later with a late lunch.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Date: _____

Day 3: What Was It Like?

Feast: Read a chapter from the Bible. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?

1. What was it like to go for twenty-four hours without food? How did you feel?

2. What impact did it have on your energy level?

3. What impact did it have on how you related to others?

4. How do you think this relates to our need to “eat” God’s Word daily?

Consider...

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.

CREATED WONDERFUL



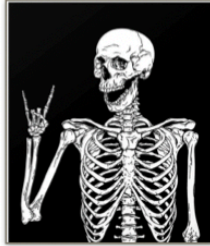
Genesis 1:1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void...

Genesis 1:26 Let us make man in our image...

Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Psalms 139:13-16 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body;

BORN DEAD...



Genesis 2:16 "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned--

Ephesians 2:1-3 "As for you, you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once waked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we once all lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Romans 3:11-12 There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not a single one.

BUT GOD...!



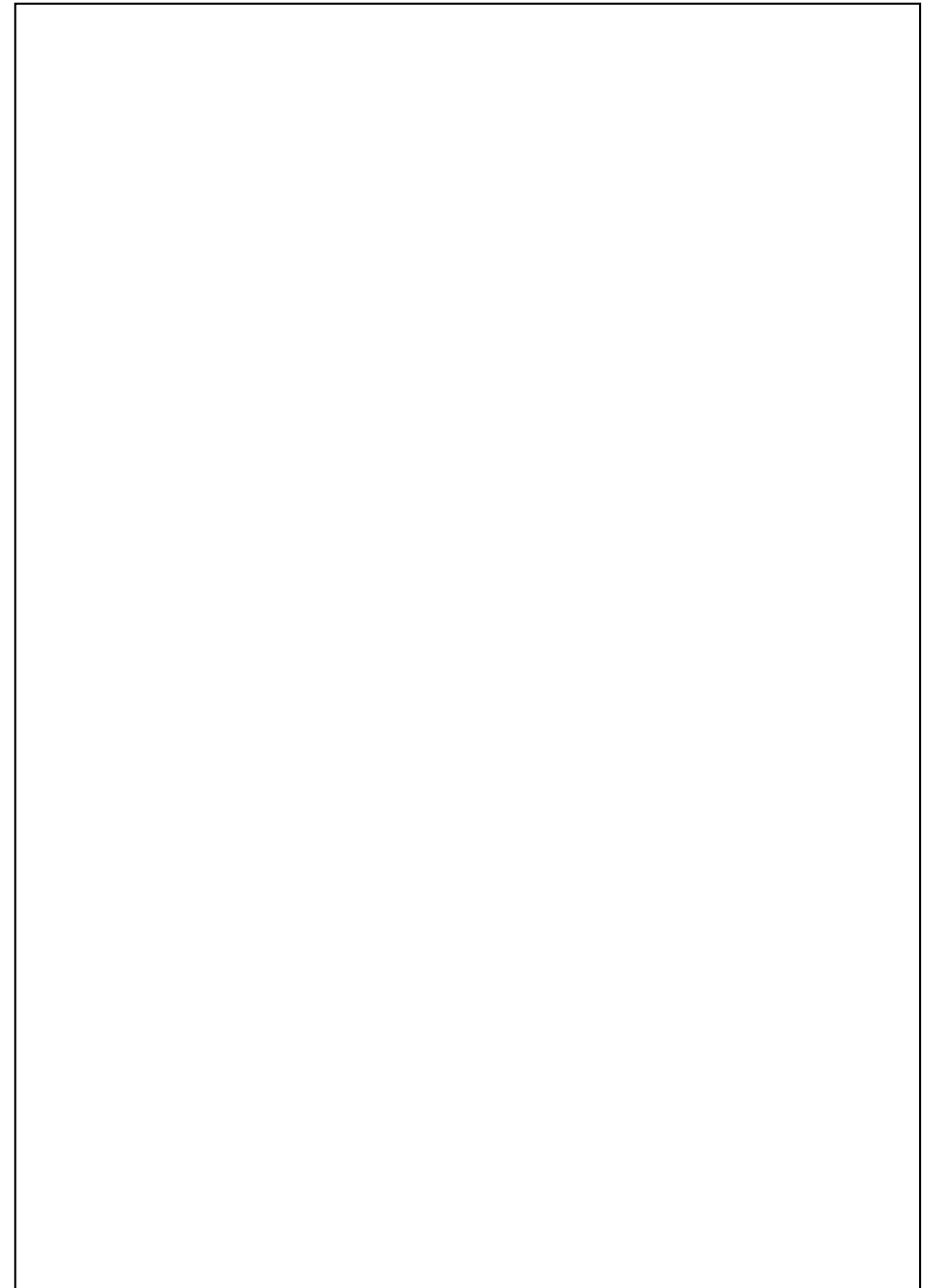
Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive Him who believed in His name He gave the right to become children of God!

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.



Date: _____

BORN AGAIN!



John 3:3 Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

THE CHOICE



Matthew 4:4 But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

EMACIATED



Matthew 13:22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Isaiah 55:2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

John 5:39-40 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

MATURING



Ephesians 4:14 The goal is that we would no longer be little children...

Isaiah 55:3. Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live;"

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you will be able test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Feast: Read a chapter from the Bible. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?

The emaciated child and the maturing child pictured above are the SAME child.

What thoughts come to mind as you consider this?

Let The Feasting Begin!

I looked at the Bible with new eyes the day I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The same words I'd muddled through, now came alive. I couldn't get enough! For hours I would sit and read as if I'd never read any of it before.

When I met Barb Choat, she challenged me, saying, "This is great Deb. But what will you do during midterm exams? Or after you get a job? Will you still take time for the Word? Or will you start to think, 'I don't have an hour today,' then end up skipping it? How much better it is to develop the discipline of taking one bite, chewing on it, and seeking to live it out every single day of your life. You can always read more later. A little dose daily will get you farther in the long run."

Thus began my adventure with shared quiet times. Right then and there Barb sat down, opened her Bible and gave me one of the best gifts I ever received!

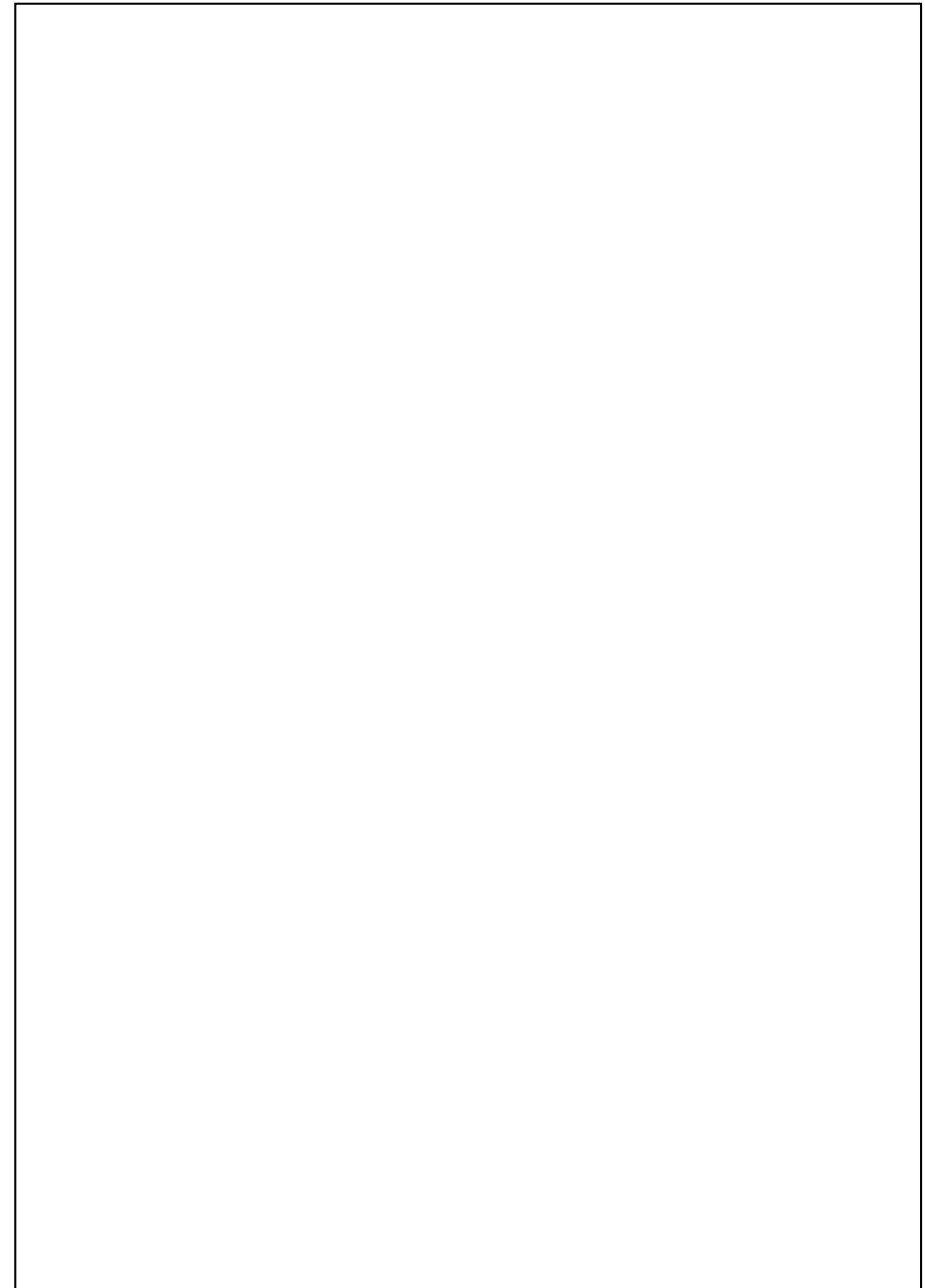
Now there are many different ways to have a quiet time. Indeed, the words "quiet time" seem to be a catch-all for just about any activity: reading through the Bible, praying, or simply sitting quietly and listening. All of these activities are valuable, but what Barb shared with me is transforming my life more than any other spiritual discipline.

Basically there are three components. In this booklet we will refer to them as: **Feast**, **Chew**, and **Exercise**. Barb began by showing me her quiet time from the previous day so I could see this format, and then we dove in! We started together and finished together, but each completed most of it on our own with Jesus. As a result, I knew exactly what to do the next day. This also made it easy to share with another friend.

FEAST (focus) : First we prayed, asking the Lord to open our eyes so we could see wonderful things in His Word and cried out to him for wisdom (James 1:5). We asked him to show us where He wanted us to focus. Next, we started reading aloud through Psalm 1 and stopped when a verse stood out to me.

CHEW (meditate): Then, we each wrote our verse at the top of a page, and separately began to record whatever thoughts came to mind. I remember writing observations, pondering the meanings of different words, and asking God questions. Was I ever surprised when I wrote down what came to mind and He took me in a direction I never expected!

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Date: _____

Feast: Read a chapter from the Bible. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?

EXERCISE (apply): Next, (still individually) we asked the Lord: What do you want me to do in response to what I've just read? How do you want this lived out? What difference will knowing this make in my life? Then, we took time to share with each other the verse we selected, our best thoughts on it, and applications. We had a brief discussion about how we could help hold each other accountable. We concluded by praying for each other, especially asking for help to complete our applications.

Forty years later, I'm still doing this.

Bon Appetite!

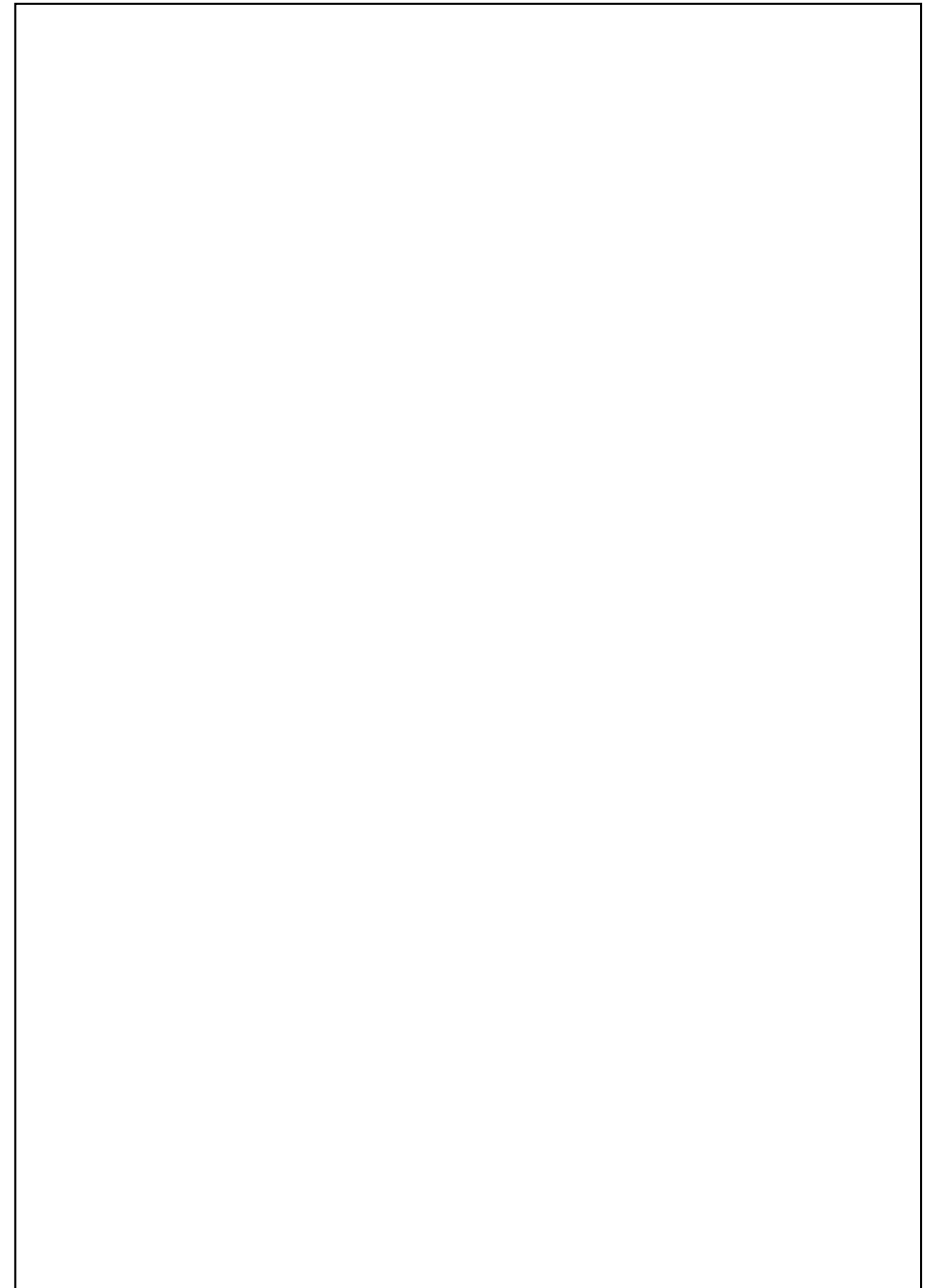
Feast: Read Isaiah 55:1-3. Record below the portion of this passage that stands out to you:

Chew: What does God compare His Word to?

Ask Him why He uses this analogy. Remembering the effect not eating had on you yesterday, share with Him how you think you're impacted when you go a whole day without "eating" His Word? How might it impact your spiritual energy level? What about the way you relate to others?

Exercise: Ask God what He'd like you to do in response to what you've heard from him today in His Word. This doesn't have to be elaborate. It may be as simple as praising Him for something you've observed about Him or thanking Him.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



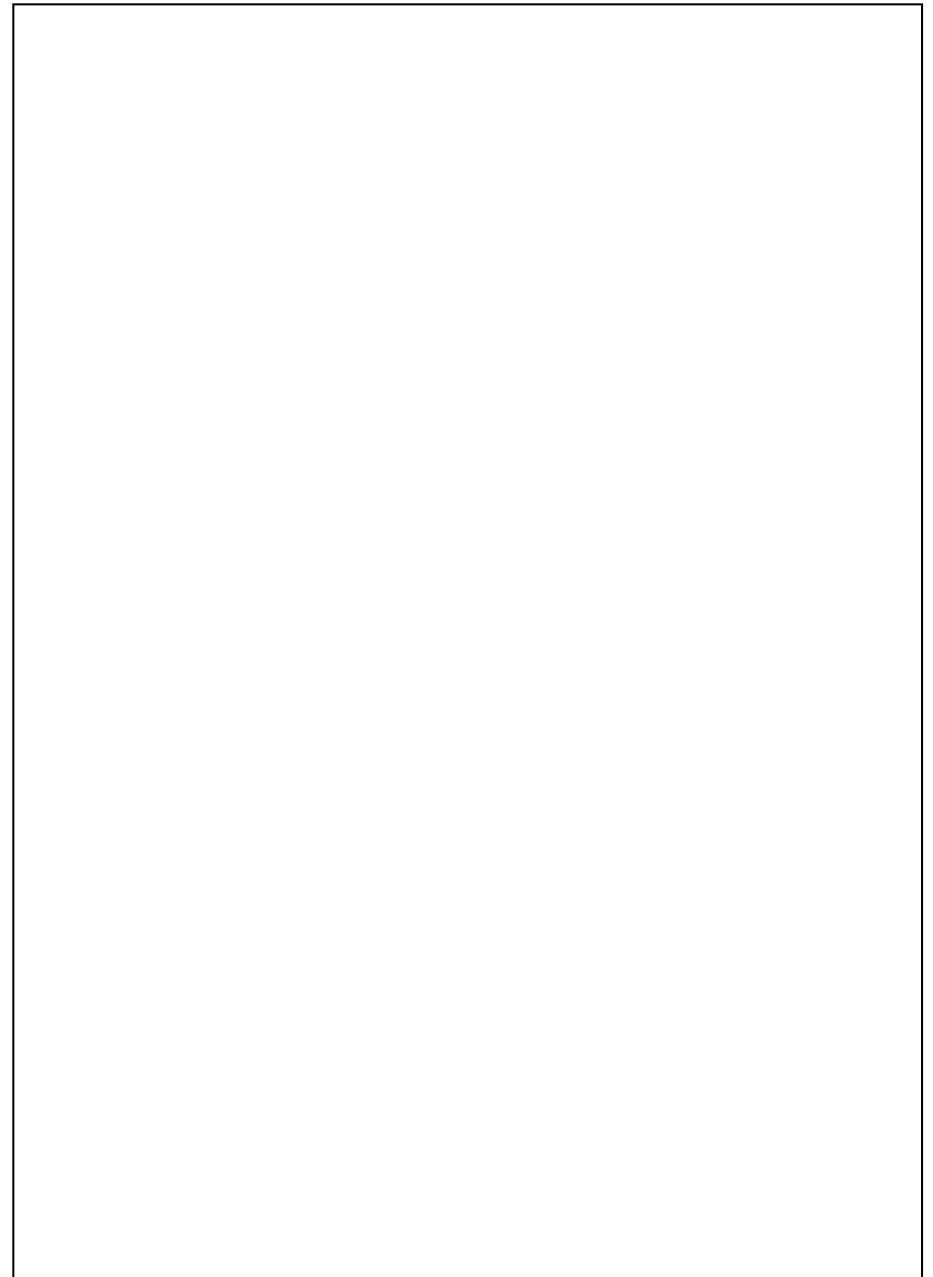
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Chew: Why did this verse stand out to you? Dialogue with God about it and write here the thoughts that come:

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response to this?



Life Lessons

I am deaf. I began losing my hearing in college, and the loss progressed until ten years ago when I could no longer hear anything. Then, six years ago, through cochlear implants, the Lord restored my hearing! I went from hearing zero to regaining 95% voice recognition! I honestly thought I'd end my days in quiet. Instead, I live a miracle every single day!

It says in Luke 12:48, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." I have been given a gift to carefully steward. How will I use my new hearing? Will I employ this gift in ways that draw me closer to the Lord? Or be pulled away, as listening to other things drowns out His voice? I'm discovering the world is a very noisy place.

Even with cochlear implants, I am still handicapped. Yes, the technology making it possible for me to hear is incredible. However, this still barely approximates the majesty and breadth of a real ear's functions in limited ways.

Do you realize what a marvel, what an utter miracle your ears are? If you can hear, you, too, are blessed and have received an incredible gift to steward. What will you do with this powerful ability? Will you utilize this gift to draw closer to the One who so wonderfully hand-fashioned you? Or not?

I used to wonder how the wisest man on earth could end his days so poorly, at a distance from God. Then, one day, while doing Bible study, I looked at Solomon's request in Hebrew.

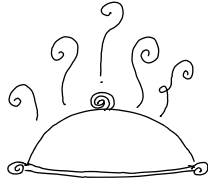
When God gives Solomon the ultimate opportunity, "Ask for whatever you want," Solomon requests a hearing heart (*shama* literally means "to hear" intelligently, often with the implication of attention and obedience), and this greatly pleased the Lord. But we learn in 1 Kings 3:11 that God tells Solomon he will give him a wise (*chakam* intelligent, skillful or artful) and understanding (*biyn* to separate mentally or distinguish) heart.

Solomon is asking God to give him a heart that hears (pays attention to and obeys Him); instead, God gives him wisdom and understanding. God isn't going to give you a heart that makes you hear and obey Him. That's a relational choice He leaves up to you!

Sadly, Solomon chose instead to listen to his wives and they drew his heart away from the Lord. The same gift given to draw him closer to the Lord was used to draw him away!

One More Week To Get You Going!





What's Your Plan?

1. What “diet” do you sense the Lord inviting you to follow next as you enjoy time with Him?

Specific: What Specifically do you sense him leading you to do?

Measurable - How will you know whether you've done it or not?

Accountable: who could you invite to hold you accountable?

Realistic: Is it realistic for you to do this at this time? If not, Revise.

Time: How much time will you invest in doing this? When do you plan to do this? For how long?

2. Commit your plans to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to establish them. (Proverbs 16:3)

The ability to hear is a gift from the Lord. A gift with great potential. But this gift needs to be developed to be used at a level that is beneficial and life-giving.

Time spent listening to Jesus, growing in His grace, getting to know Him is the best use of our hearing and the best protection for our hearts from getting sidetracked and ending life poorly like Solomon. Being a faithful hearer, listening to God to obey Him, is so key for experiencing the abundance of life Jesus paid dearly to bless us with.

The Father longs for this time! He's done everything He can to make it possible. He's even made Himself available 24/7.

God has created you with an incredible ability to hear, both Him and others. He's also given you the ability to choose what or whom you will listen to.

How's your hearing?

Day 4: Growing in Faithfulness

Feast: Read Daniel 1:1-20. Record below one verse that stands out to you:

Chew: Ask God what this reveals about being faithful. What do you sense Him saying to you about this?

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord would like you to do in response to what you've read today in His Word? How does Daniel's example connect with your life? Is there anything you've ever resolved? How did it go? Anything you sense the Lord leading you to resolve so you can better follow Him?

Remember, keep it simple sweetie! Instead of saying "I'm only going to eat vegetables for the rest of my life," pick something you can do that takes five minutes over the next 24 hours. (And beware coming up with your own applications - you want to listen to hear Jesus and follow Him in this!)

Meal Plans Can Help!

To ensure adequate variety and avoid the quandary of
"What should I read today?"
Bible Reading Plans can be so helpful!

There are a number of these available. Some of my favorites can be found at www.discipleshipjournal.com (this will take you to the Navpress website - look for Bible Reading Plans in the left hand column and click on it. You will find three to select from that you can download).

These will give you a Meal Plan and you can select one based on how much you want to eat! The 5x5x5 plan has you read through the New Testament in a year, by reading 1 chapter a day for five days each week. (I recommend on the other two days you work your way through Psalms, doing one Psalm on each of the "Reflection" days!) Just jump right in and start on whatever date it happens to be - eventually you'll work your way through the whole New Testament, finishing exactly a year from when you began. You don't have to start at the beginning of either the Old or New Testament. It can be really neat to go from Revelations right into Genesis or the Gospels. This can really help you see how it all fits together.

Time after time I've been amazed while following a plan how the scheduled reading for the day will be exactly what I need. God is so incredible!

But if you don't have a meal plan or prefer to not use one, just pick a book of the Bible and start working your way through it, a chapter a day. I remember when I decided to do this, reading through the whole Bible. It took me three years - but was it ever precious! Especially on those days I expected it to be dry - like when I hit the genealogies at the beginning of 2 Chronicles! I cried out to God, "You said, "All Scripture is useful" so that includes these verses, but I sure don't see much use for them. Please show me why you put them in here." And did He ever! That was one of my favorite quiet times yet.

The Special Treasures Bookmark can be a great help for getting started with this! You will find that in the Tool section of Collection 3 in the Heart of Discipling Women Library.

Never forget, God invites you to ask Him your questions. In Jeremiah 33:3 He says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and mighty things you do not know." Have I ever found Him faithful to do this! In fact, I often will start my "meal" by asking Him to "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your word." Psalm 119:18. Does He ever love to answer that prayer!

1. Review these verses and consider, how would you answer the following questions from your observations?

Which of the people mentioned above most inspires you to keep enjoying daily time with the Lord in His Word? Why?

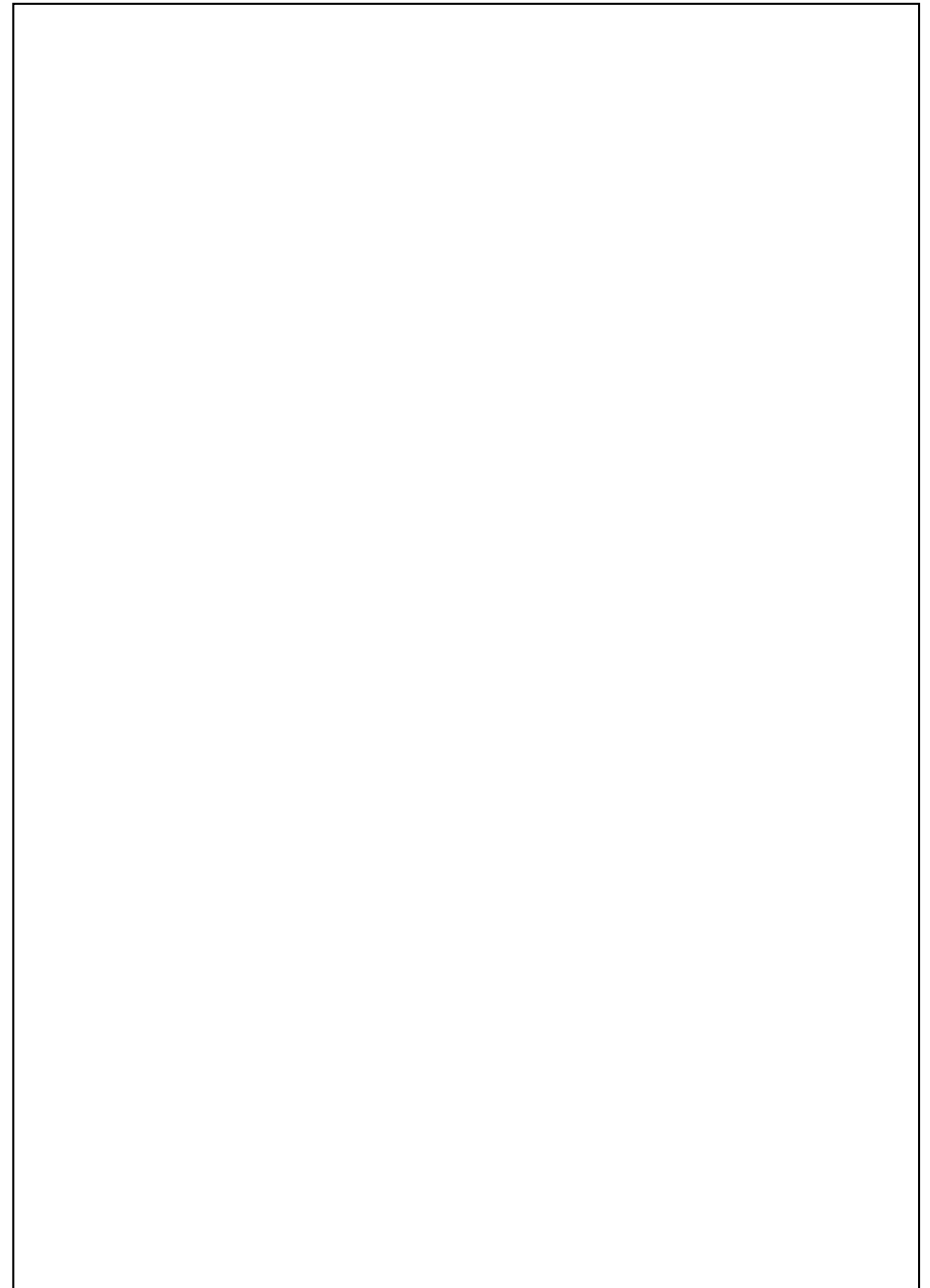
What new ideas can you glean from the Scriptures for continuing to engage with the Lord through His Word?

What promises do you observe the Lord has made in these verses? What difference can knowing these make in your life?

What are the main things the Lord is highlighting for you as you read these verses?

Why should you continue this journey of daily feasting on God's Word? What most motivates you to do this? What's your why? Summarize below.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 4: *Life Lessons*

When I end my days with Jesus praying through the ACTS acrostic (where I start out with prayers of Adoration then move into prayers of Confession, then on to Thanksgiving and end with Supplication, laying before the Lord the concerns of my heart as well as those others have shared with me), I find the easiest part is giving thanks. At the end of each day, I almost always have much to thank the Lord for. Want to guess which I struggle with the most? Confession.

This isn't usually because I'm hesitant to agree with God when I blow it, but often I'm not always certain when I've sinned. One thing that has proven a huge help is recalling the advice Susanna Wesley wrote to her son John when he was 22 years old. Realizing he might struggle to "see" the sin in his life, she shared:

Take this rule:
 Whatever weakens your reason,
 Impairs the tenderness of your conscience,
 Obscures your sense of God,
 Or takes off the relish of spiritual things;
 In short, Whatever increases the strength and authority
 Of your body over your mind, That thing is sin for you,
 However innocent it may be in itself.

- Susanna Wesley
 (Letter, June 8, 1725)

Some sins are glaringly obvious: Murder, Adultery, Lying... but others aren't as easy to identify. But eventually, can we ever feel the effect, especially when something obscures our sense of God or takes off the relish of spiritual things. For one friend, this is watching James Bond movies; for another, it's reading romance novels (even Christian ones!); for me, it's often scrolling mindlessly through Facebook, especially when I should be doing something else. For Daniel, it was eating the King's food. What a difference it made for good when he resolved to abstain from this!

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul writes: "As a Christian, I may do anything, but that does not mean that everything is good for me. I may do everything, but I must not be a slave of anything" (Phillips).

You won't find anywhere in the Bible, "Thou shalt not eat a box of cookies!" (Or whatever constitutes a delicacy for you). But if you're doing that to numb, rather than running to God, do you see how even something as innocent as a cookie can negatively impact your walk with God?

Can it ever help to remember Susanna Wesley's advice and ask, "How will doing this influence my walk with God and my thought life?"

<p>The law of the Lord is perfect refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:7-11</p>	
<p>Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. Proverbs 8:34</p>	
<p>When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty. Jeremiah 15:16</p>	
<p>And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. Ezekiel 3:1-3</p>	
<p>And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. Mark 4:24</p>	
<p>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16</p>	

Day 5: Growing in Faithfulness

F.A.T. for Life!

Continuing to Feast on God's Word
So You will Continue To Grow For Life!

1. What do you learn from the following verses about continuing to grow in being F.A.T?

VERSES	OBSERVATIONS
They are not just idle words for you— they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess. Deuteronomy 32:47	
For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. Ezra 7:10	
I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. Job 23:12	
“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who [meditates] on his law day and night.” Psalm 1:1-2	
“I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.” Psalm 81:10	

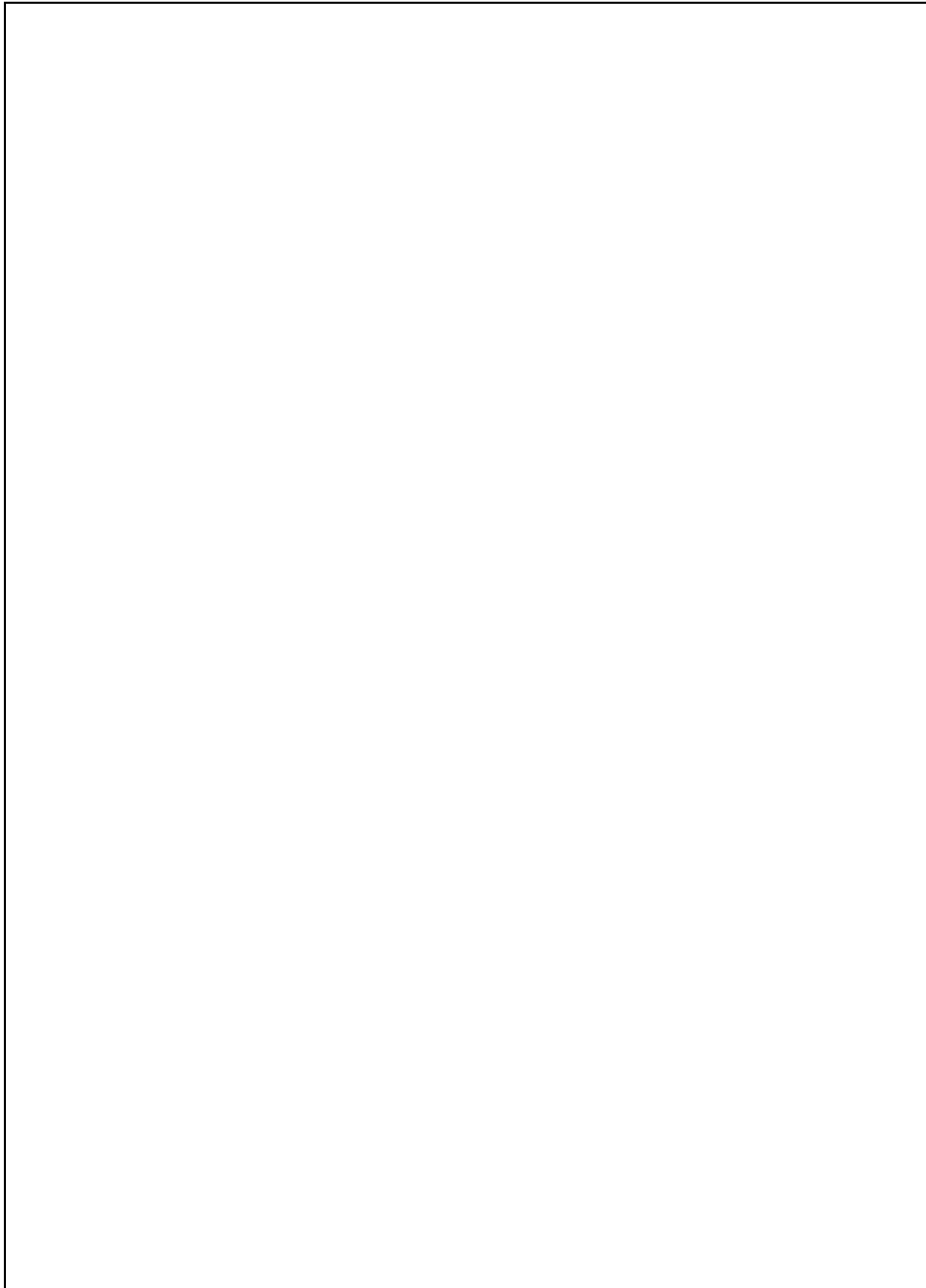
Feast: Read Proverbs 8:32-36.

Record below the main verse that stands out to you:

Chew: Ask God what this reveals about being faithful. What does He want to say to you through this?

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord is leading you to do in response? What specifically could it look like for you to do this? How will you know whether you've done this or not?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



We've Only Just Begun...

Just because our six week "diet" has come to an end,
doesn't mean you no longer need to eat!!!
Quite the contrary, fat is one of those things
that if you don't continue to eat you lose it!

Sumo wrestlers actually have to maintain
a very disciplined diet to keep their fat!

And so do you!

But here's where the fun begins.

Now you can have a lot more freedom in selecting what you eat.
Be sure to go for variety!

Remember,

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful....!"

2 Timothy 3:16

Don't just keep chewing on your favorite morsels!

Day 5: Life Lessons

FOREVER

F.A.T.



Continuing to Nourish Your Soul...

This morning I'm in a Japanese restaurant overlooking the city of Ome (O-may), sipping grapefruit juice and roasted tea. My daughter-in-law and a woman from her Bible study are in the onsen (hot springs bath). I'm waiting here to join them for lunch. Waiting is a form of luxury for me IF I have my Bible and computer at hand. I am reading in Luke. What I read this morning slowed me way down. Jesus is speaking to His disciples:

“Let these words sink into your ears; The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.’ But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask Him about this saying” (Mark 9:44,45).

I prayed, Lord, may Your words sink into my ears. And into my mind, into my heart, into my will.

The words He wanted to sink deep into their ears were hard words to receive. Confusing words. Unthinkable words. What could He mean? “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.” These words do not fit their current and growing understanding of who Jesus is and what He is about. Jesus asks them to take in these words, to set them in their ears, even though they are kept from understanding them. He wants them to hold this saying in their minds for another time, a time when He will open their minds to understand.

I tuck verses away, too. Verses I that can't get my mind around. I set them in my ear acknowledging that I'm still wandering on the edges of the riches embedded there. The words live as embryos, developing out of sight, waiting on revelation to come to birth. I need this reminder: I must wait on revelation. I can pray and study, but understanding comes from God in His timing. The Holy Spirit is our Instructor Who unfolds truth to us over time. Layer upon layer. There is always more. God breathes His eternal, holy, infinite Word into our ear (a glory beyond the human mind) and, then reveals long hidden truths to us (a grace unimaginable).

What's in your ear? Live the mystery.

- Jean Fleming

Day 6: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read James 1:22-25 (write out the verse or phrase that stands out to you)

Chew: How important is being faithful to do what God says? What happens if you're not?

Exercise: What can help you be a “doer who acts” on what the Lord has laid on your heart today? Sometimes I like to write on an index card the main treasure the Lord impresses on my heart each morning and put it up on my car dashboard (one of my friends likes to write the main thought in lipstick on her bathroom mirror!) so I'm reminded of it each time I walk by throughout the day. What will you do to remember the treasure the Lord's blessed you with?

You just survived your sixth week of this diet!
We'd so appreciate your feedback:



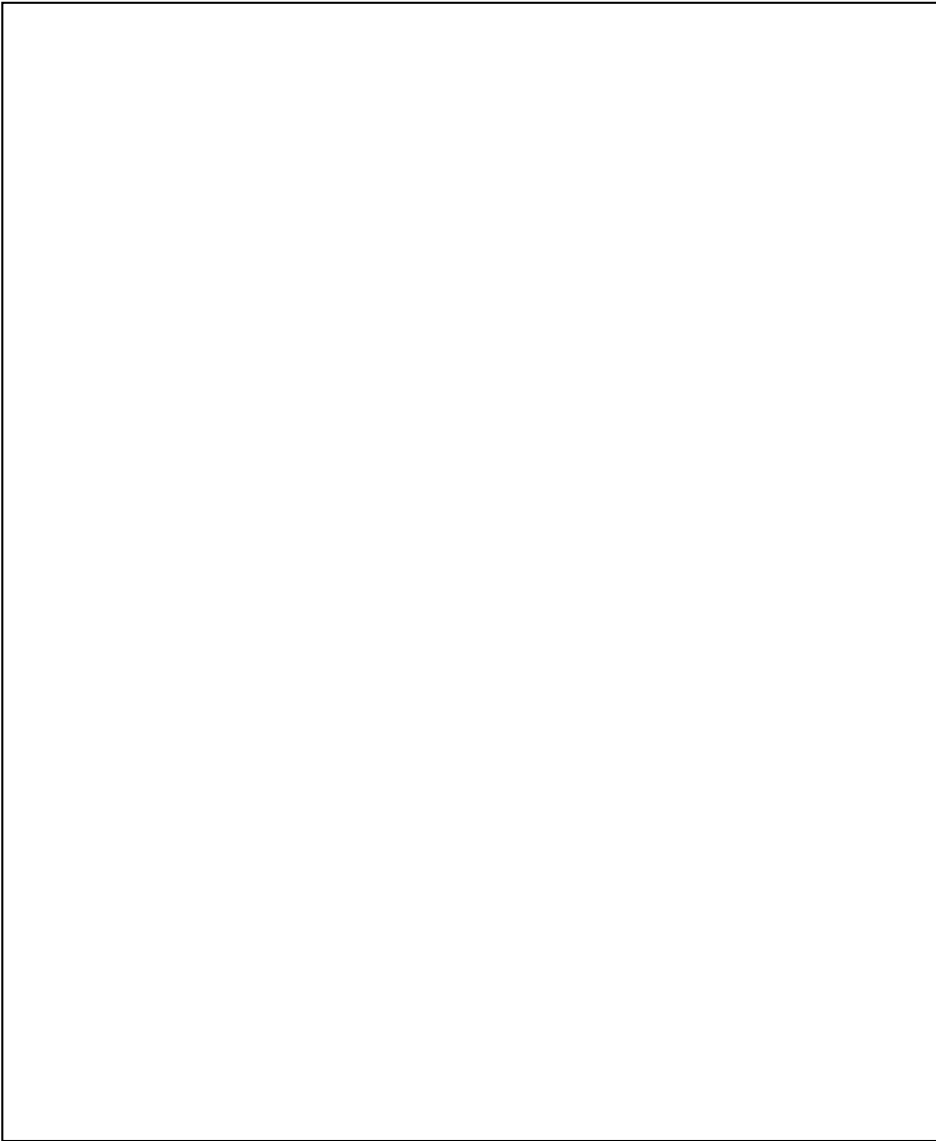
Weekly Meal Plan Review

Look back over the past 7 days and write down any themes or big lessons God blessed you with! Take time to consider, how did you respond? And what happened as a result?

NOURISHING TREASURE	
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EXERCISE	
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Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Still Hungry? For an extra helping that compliments this meal, check out Matthew 21:28-32 and Matthew 7:24-27

Day 6: Life Lessons

How in the world can you deceive yourself if you aren't doing the Word? Like most answers in life, I had to learn that one the hard way.

In 1993, we moved away from Gainesville and relocated to Sarasota so Jim could help expand his family's business. We were moving closer to his family for his job. He was excited about the change, but I had nothing to look forward to and felt I was leaving everything behind. I felt a deep ache inside that lasted for months. To make new friends, I began attending an intense Bible Study that required an hour of homework every day on the book of James. I was so excited about all I was learning, especially as we started studying the Greek words. I was in the Word more than ever before and loved it!

Jim, however, was working long hours. Opening a new store takes a lot of energy and time, and they had chosen an old pet shop that was in horrible condition. It took hours to clean it out before they could start rebuilding the inside to transform the site into a silk plant and home decor shop. At one point, he worked twelve-hour days for six weeks straight without a day off.

Meanwhile, I was diligently studying the Bible, and one day I started musing, "I'm learning so much, but compared to me, he's barely in the Word." And I felt my heart and head begin to puff—until I sensed the Lord say, "If all that Bible study is resulting in pride, how much are you really 'learning'?"

I had deceived myself into thinking I was "pretty spiritual" because of all the studying I was doing. Instead, I'd fallen into the 1 Corinthians 8:1b trap! "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." It's not the amount of time you're in the Word that makes you more like Jesus, but the amount of the Word you're living out in your life! And the measure of that is ALWAYS how well you love.

Love is patient, Love is kind.
It does not envy, It does not boast.
It is not proud, It is not rude.
It is not self-seeking, It is not easily angered.
It keeps no record of wrongs,
Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth
It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres,
Love never fails.

Teachable:

1. What key things have you learned about being teachable during the past six weeks?
2. How have you grown in this area?
3. Is there anything else God is laying on your heart to do so you can keep growing in this area?

Available:

1. What key things have you learned about being available during the past six weeks?

2. How have you grown in this area?

3. Is there anything else God is laying on your heart to do so you can keep growing in this area?

Day 7: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read Matthew 24:42-51. Circle each time you see the word “faithful.”

Record below the main verse that stands out to you:

Chew: Ask God what this reveals about being faithful. What does He want to say to you about this?

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord is leading you to do in response?

Take a moment to consider how you can make your application SMART?

Specific: (what specifically do you sense the Lord leading you to do in response to what you’ve read in His Word today?)

Measurable: (How will you know whether you’ve done it or not?)

Accountable: (Is there anyone you could share what you intend to do with who will pray for you?)

Realistic: (Keep it Simple Sweetie! ;0)

Timely: When do you plan to have this done by?

**Most of all, be sure to follow Jesus’ lead in this!
You are SO LOVED whether or not you do anything in response.
Doing what you sense the Lord leading you to do won’t get you loved more,
but it can help you experience more of that abundance of life
He paid dearly for you to experience!**

Day 7: Life Lessons

From my beginning with Christ, all through the middle part of my life, through sin-skinned knees, dark scary times, some mud-wading, and much sweet blessing and fruitfulness, I've chosen daily to reserve part of my day for the Lord and his Word. Now in the last quarter of my life, the mingling of desire and discipline wrapped up in this choice is my sweet spot. My energy level is diminished. I must still make choices where my time and energies will go. As I look to the finish line, one thing becomes clear for me: the life we end up with is the life we've chosen amidst life's complexities and alternative possibilities. Life is short. Our choices matter. Good choices must be chosen again and again. Perhaps this is gaining a heart of wisdom and a path to finishing strong.

- Jean Fleming

In "A Rule against Murder" by Canadian author Louise Penny, Inspector Gamache confronts Bert Finney, now an old man: "Why did you say you weren't a prisoner?"

"I wasn't a prisoner...You were right, I was in a Japanese prison camp, but I wasn't a prisoner. It's not semantics, you know. It's an important distinction. Crucial...I saw a lot of men die there. Most men, Do you know what killed them?...Despair. They believed themselves to be prisoners. I lived with those men, ate the same maggot-infested food, slept in the same beds, did the same back-breaking work. But they died and I lived. Do you know why?"

"You were free."

"I was free, Milton was right, you know. **The mind is its own place.** I was never a prisoner. Not then, not now."

Bert Finney refers to John Milton's words in "Paradise Lost": "**The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.**"

My mind is a place. It can be governed. It can be cultivated. It can be invaded and ruled over by enemies if I permit. I can choose to let another rule my land or I can give Christ the reign. Victimization is a choice.

Recent studies show that the brain is changed by pornography. Studies, also, show that changes occur in the brains of people who pray. How we occupy our minds makes observable changes in our brains. New choices, new root systems of thought, can reverse destructive pathways. We all have shaped our brains to some extent by what we choose to dwell upon.

We need to resist the detrimental loops of text that persist in our minds, the replaying the wrongs done to us, chasing the tail of hurts and injustices, feeding on things unworthy. What we think and what we think about shapes our lives. Our minds color how we view life. What we feed on is who we are.

Ter Steegen wrote a long, long time ago:

**Man earthy, of the earth, an hungerd feeds
On earth's dark poison tree—
Wild gourds, and deadly roots, and bitter weeds;
And as his food is he.
And hungry souls there are, that find and eat
God's manna day by day;
And glad they are, their life is fresh and sweet,
For as their food are they.**

Day 42: Life Lessons

When I trusted Christ, I died, so that, I might rise to share His resurrection-power life. Jesus was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit and so am I. I walk now in a new life, a life of resurrection-substance.

“We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Rom. 6:4

The old relationship to sin is broken. I am no longer a prisoner to my sin nature. The years I lived under sin’s dominion wore ruts, pathways of response. Now as a free woman I choose to establish new channels under Christ’s control. I establish new channels in my brain (just like the pornographer and the pray-er does). My mind will shape my brain, my perceptions, my appetites, my attitudes and my actions.

Lord, I want to have a brain shaped by the authority of Your Word and by the power of Your Spirit. I choose not to yield my members to bondage again; that is a choice. Please help me. I’m not doing so well in some areas. Either sin unto death OR righteousness unto sanctification. I choose righteousness unto sanctification, by Your gracious enabling.

- Jean Fleming

Moses was thinking of the brevity of life and need for wisdom to live well when he prayed, “Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (**Ps. 90:12**). Numbering our days is not a mathematical calculation, but a call to wide-awake living. No one knows how many years, days, hours, or minutes are left in his life. I hear in Moses’s prayer a warning to spare us from realizing too late that we missed God’s intention for our vaporous earth-days. It’s the wisdom we need to finish strong.

At seventy-four years of age, I’m thinking back over my life: my beginning as a follower of Jesus Christ, my middle years, and now my stumbling kick to the finish line. I’m thinking too, of you, my reader, who may be twenty, thirty or fifty. No matter the age, we never know how close we are to the finish line. It’s not the number of years, after all, that is the issue. Jesus lived only thirty-three years on earth, but He lived well and finished strong.

The phrase “finishing strong” implies a start, middle, and end. Every life is a story, a narrative, threaded with choices. The choices made over a lifetime impact—perhaps even determine—if we finish strong. As for me, I’ve made good choices and poor choices. But I believe that one choice I made will, by God’s grace, help me live well to the end.

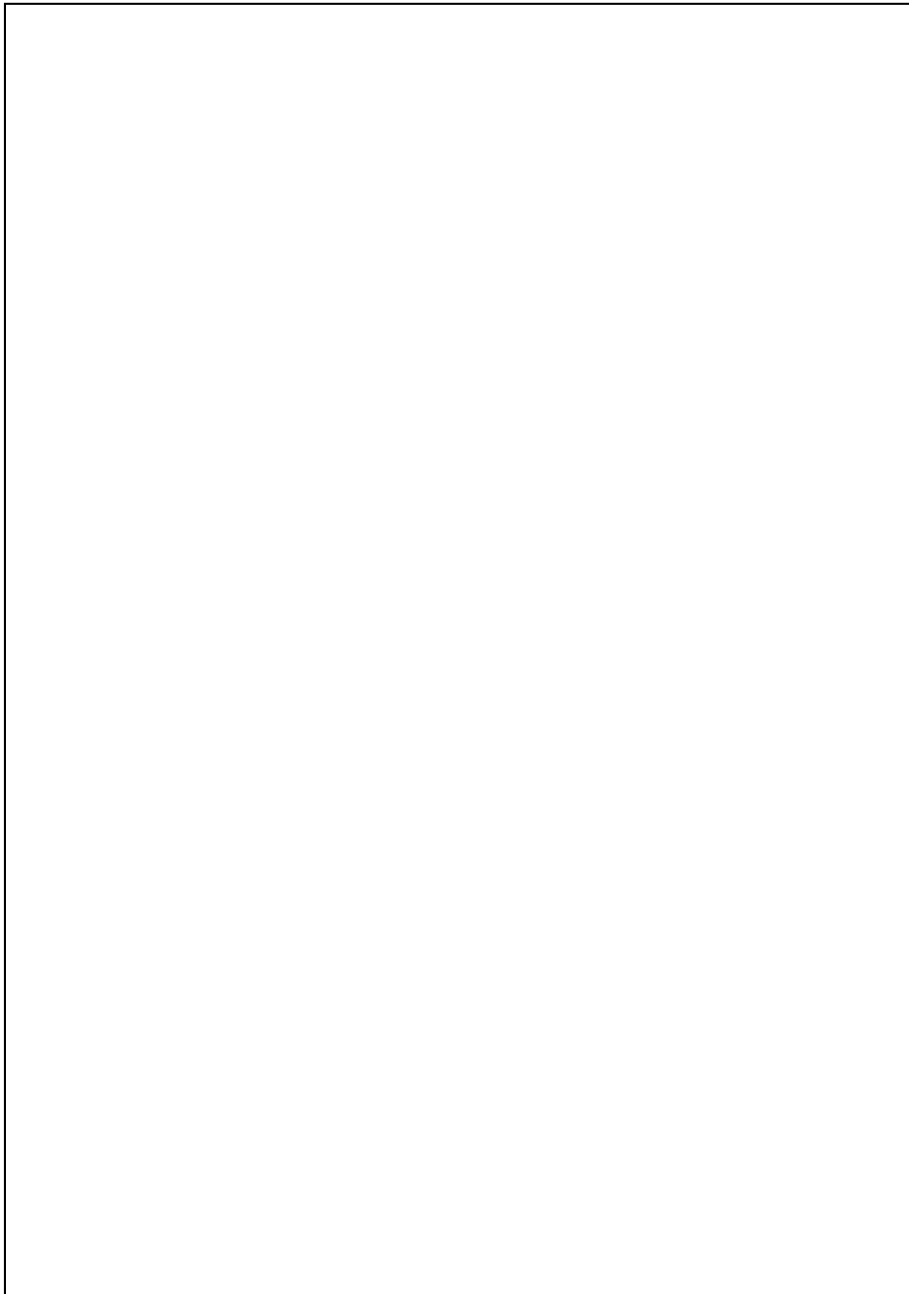
I was a senior in high school when I responded to Christ. I knew little, but the gospel was clear in my mind. I prayed, “God, I want what Jesus did on the Cross to count for me.” He flooded in. For the first time I came to the Bible with spiritual connection. Reading the Bible and praying wasn’t a discipline; it was a spiritual aphrodisiac. The terms *devotions*, *quiet time*, etc. were unknown to me. I was engaged in an affair of the heart. But sometime in my first year of college, I hit the gravel. It shook me.

The heady sense of God’s presence was gone, but I kept returning for my morning date with Jesus. One day in this dry period, God met with me as I read, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (**Eze. 36:26**). Jesus was speaking words into my heart.

In times of heady richness and in parching drought, he is present.

Later, as a mom of three children born in four years, with spit-up on my shoulder and a fatigued brain bordering on hamburger, I turned my cloudy mind to his word again and again. Those times with the Lord took a different shape, but the choice and the heart, cobwebby though it was, remained consistent. Good choices must be made over and over. Our choices shape our lives. Morning after morning for fifty-seven years, Jesus has met with me as I bend over my open Bible.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Weekly Meal Plan Review

Look back over the past 7 days and write down any themes or big lessons God blessed you with! Take time to consider, how did you respond? And what happened as a result?

NOURISHING TREASURE	
<i>1</i>	
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EXERCISE	
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You just survived your first week of this diet!!!

We'd so appreciate your feedback:



Turn to the camera on your phone and hover it over the QR code, then click on the link that comes up. This will take you to a feedback form. We would so appreciate hearing your thoughts on the booklet this past week. There are three question prompts on this form:

I liked...

I wish...

I wonder...

It will only take a few moments to fill this out and will be a BIG help to us!

Day 42: *Growing In Being Teachable*

Feast: Read Isaiah 55:1-13

Chew: According to this passage why is it important to be teachable to God? What difference can being teachable make in your life?

Exercise: We read this passage at the beginning of our six week journey. How does it hit you now?

God. The psalmist isn't just talking to himself; he is talking to himself based on the content of the Scripture. This meditation is rooted in Truth. Like the meditating man in Psalm 1, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water..."

I put Psalm 1 beside Joshua 1:8 and continue my interior murmuring. I see the word "delight" connected to meditation in Psalm 1. A warm chuckle of recognition bubbles up in me. He was haw-gawing: *to murmur in pleasure*. His meditation fed his delight and his delight fed his meditation.

When I consider Joshua 1:8 this time I notice the link between *meditate* and *obey*. This idea starts my juices. The murmuring inside my head purrs away. I chew on God's Word to fully engage it, to enter into the depths of it, that I might DO it. This takes meditation out of a hazy-mist-spirituality or a mind-puffing-academic realm. Meditation is about *talking* God's Word through my mind to shape my understanding and values that my everyday life might express it.

The final sentence of Joshua 1:8 promises success and prosperity. *Meditate to prosper*. Lord, how do You want me to think about this? What is the success and prosperity You give to the obedient meditator? What evidence of this prosperity do I see in my life?

I find that the internal murmuring slips easily into prayer. Prayer questions. Prayer insights. Prayer wonder and exaltation. Communion. Is this something of the success and prosperity He promises?

Keep muttering. Live the mystery.

- Jean Fleming

Week 2: Growing In Faithfulness

Becoming Like Your Daddy

*People tend to become like the person they spend the most time with.
Be with your Daddy much, and you'll Be like Him much!*

What do you learn about your Heavenly Father from the following Verses?

Deuteronomy 7:9

Psalm 145:13

1 Corinthians 10:13

1.Thessalonians 5:24

2.Thessalonians 3:3

2 Timothy 2:13

Hebrews 10:23

1 John 1:9

Revelations 19:11

How does it make you feel to know this?

In light of this, why is it important for you to be faithful?

Day 8: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read Judges 11:30-40 and record below the verse that stands out to you:

Chew: Was Jephthah faithful to do what He said he'd do? Do you want to be like him? Why or why not? How seriously does God take vows? (for more info see the extra helping below)

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord is leading you to do in response?

Extra Helpings: Numbers 30:1-16, Proverbs 20:25, Matthew 5:33-37 and James 5:12.

Day 41: Life Lessons

Do you talk to yourself about what you read in the Bible? Do you walk around muttering and murmuring internally? This is not trick question. As hesitant as we all may be to acknowledge such seemingly demented behavior, the answer should be “Yes.”

Old Testament writers used two words for *meditate*:

One, haw-gaw: to murmur in pleasure or anger, by implication, to ponder, imagine, meditate.

Two, siyach: to ponder, to converse with oneself.

These two ideas give me a fresh picture of what it is to MEDITATE. Meditation is an internal conversation about the things of God, His Person, His Word, and how to live in harmony with Him and His intentions.

I read Joshua 1:8.

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

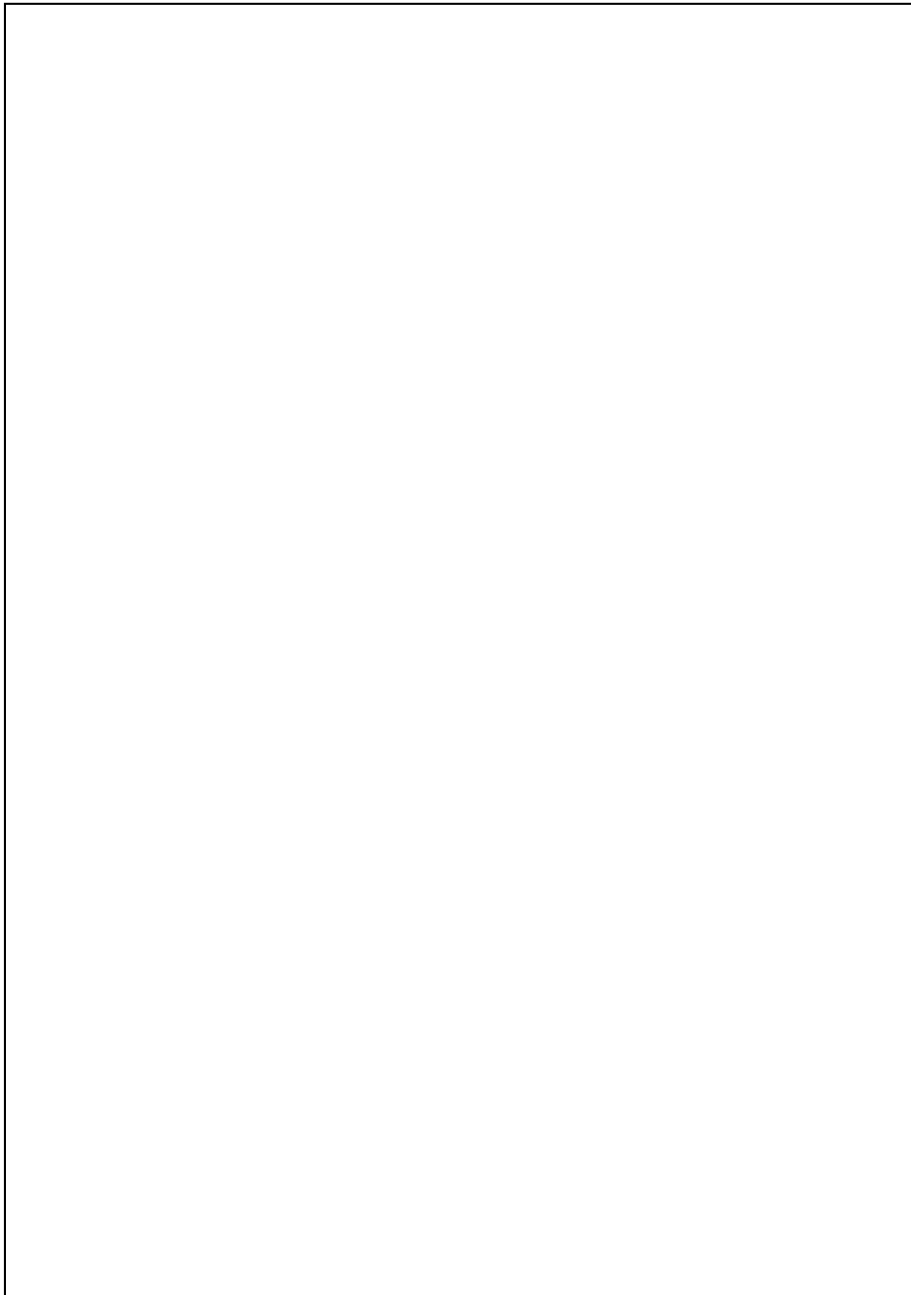
“*This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth.*” My internal conversation begins. I remember a question a woman asked in our verse analysis Bible study group. “I thought we were supposed to speak out the Word. Why does it say that it shouldn’t depart from our mouths?”

Good question. I return to the Hebrew definition of meditate: “to murmur, ponder, converse with oneself.” Is it that we need to preach it to ourselves first? Is God asking us to roll it around inside ourselves, coming at it from different directions, bombarding it with atoms, dissecting it with glistening scalpel, kneading it like bread, sucking out the sweetness and laying aside the bones of things we don’t yet understand—before we speak it to others?

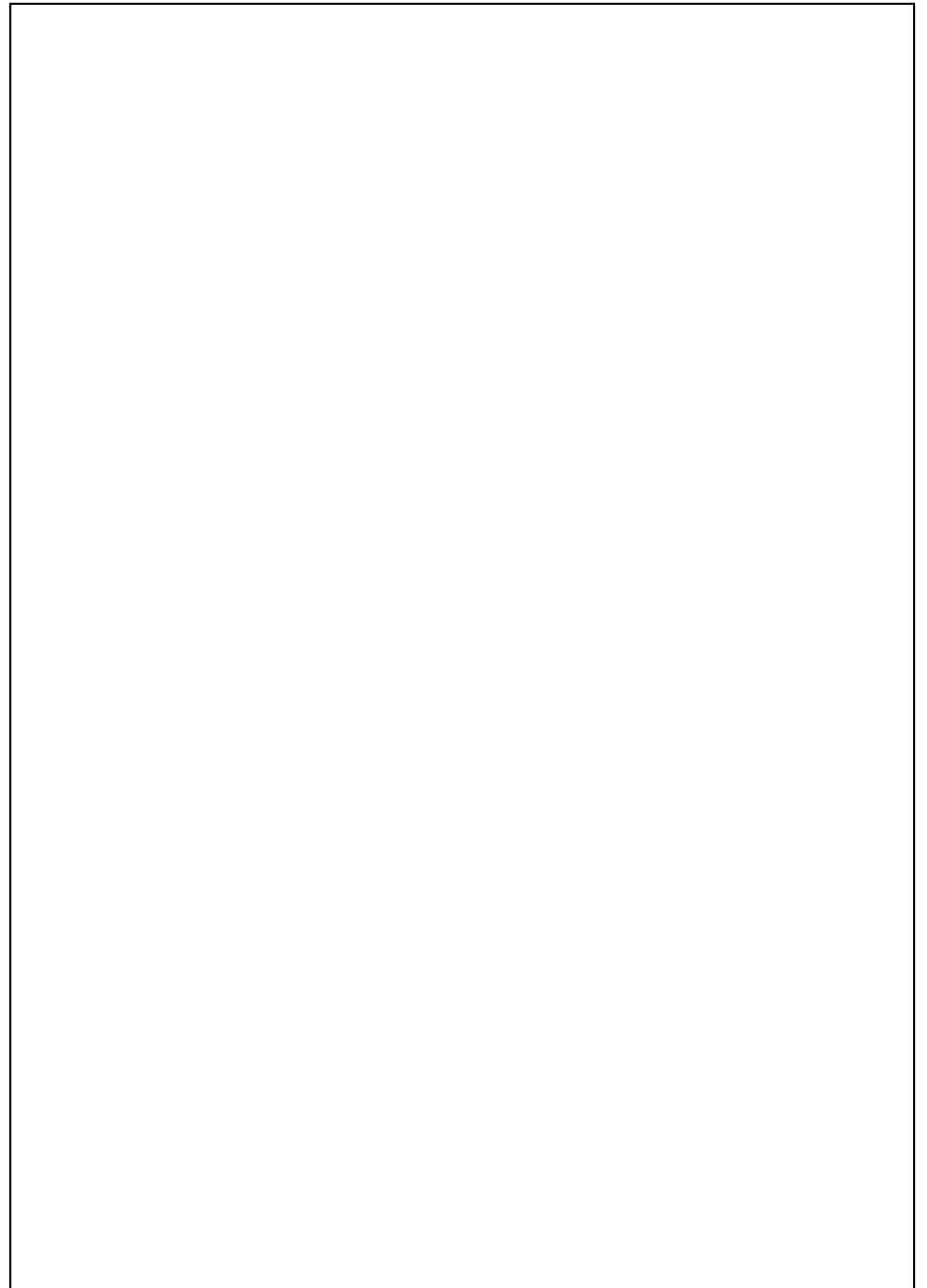
I turn my attention to the next phrase: “*but you shall meditate on it day and night.*” What does it look like to meditate day and night? How do I keep the mental conversation alive? What is my current experience and practice? I imagine the indwelling Holy Spirit waiting to enter the conversation as I encounter various circumstances throughout the day. Ready to process the Truths of God with me.

I read Joshua 1:8 again and I notice that meditation is entwined with the Word of

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 8: Life Lessons

This is a hard story. A dad makes a foolish vow. A vow God does not ask him to make and it goes horribly wrong. I find it easy to sit in judgment on Jephthah. How could a dad do that? But I wonder... am I guilty of this?

A vow is a promise. In marriage, the bride and groom exchange vows promising “For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others to be committed to each other till death.” But vows can also be something we make to self-protect rather than rely on God.

Jephthah’s story contains a lot of pain. While he was a mighty man of valor (the Hebrew word can denote strength, might, efficiency, ability and wealth), he was born the son of a prostitute, eventually cast out, rejected by his half brothers, who refused to let him have an inheritance in their father’s house. Can you imagine how hard that had to be?

His rejection was so complete, he had to flee from his brothers to another country. But he ended up living in a land called Tob (a word which can mean good, physically as well as fertile, pleasant, agreeable, well off, happy, distinguished, cheerful, and merry). Most scholars believe this was a region east of the Jordan, probably Aramean, though the location is uncertain. While he lived there, a daughter was born to him. She was his only child and loved him dearly! (See Judges 11:34)

But then the Ammonites made war against Israel, and Jephthah’s brothers came calling, asking him to be their leader so they could fight against the Ammonites.

At first, he couldn’t believe it. “Why do you come to me? You cast me out?” Then he sought verification: “If you bring me home again to fight against the Ammonites, and the LORD gives them over to me, shall I be your head?” When they affirm he would be, he agreed to leave Tob and became their leader. I bet this felt like a dream come true!

But the dream soon turned into a nightmare...

How many times have I agreed to do something and committed to it without realizing how it would impact people around me, especially my husband? I’ve had to learn the hard way that saying yes to too much can be toxic for our relationship.

As I read Jephthah’s story, I’m convicted that I need to be slower to commit. In fact, I need to not commit to doing anything without first asking God for wisdom. Proverbs 20:25 states, “It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one’s vows.”

What’s sad is how many people sacrifice their children on the altar of ambition so

Day 41: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read Psalm 119:9-16

Chew: How did the Psalmist feel about God’s word? What does he ask God to do? Is there a connection between these two thoughts? What is the difference between head knowledge and having embraced something with your heart as a conviction?

Exercise: How much do you long to know and live out God’s Word? How much is your life being impacted by what you are reading?

Am I willing to **pay a price** to learn?

I may never walk 250 miles, but what effort will I make to learn from others?

What **direction** might my learning take at this point in my life?

Can I identify areas of study to pursue? What's my plan?

Are there opportunities nearby that I'm **overlooking**?

Who in my church or community might add significantly to my life?

What books on my bookshelf might stimulate my growth in Christ, my worship, my ability to help others?

How might I **profit more** from the people already in my life? my husband? my children? my pastor? my Bible study group? people outside the church I attend?

Do I ask good questions? Do I ask good follow-up questions? Do I process their answers to understand and develop my own thinking?

Opportunities to learn are all around us. Live the mystery.

- Jean Fleming

they can get deep needs met, like being accepted by people who once rejected them. Even in ministry...

I expect Jephthah never would've offered his daughter directly but she was impacted by his vow. We need to be careful with our words. They matter. They can get you, and others around you, into a lot of trouble.

It's no wonder Jesus says in Matthew 5 not to make an oath but to let your yes be yes and your no be no. Otherwise, we can be faithful... in doing evil!

Is there anything you've committed to (internally or externally) that is more for self-protection rather than what God has asked of you?

Or have you ever found yourself overcommitted? What would it look like to be faithful to what God is leading you to, no more, no less?

Day 9: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read Matthew 25:14-30. Circle each time you see the word “faithful” Record below the main verse that stands out to you:

Chew: Ask God what this reveals about being faithful. What does He want to say to you about this? Which servant do you most resemble? Why?

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord is leading you to do in response? What could it look like for you to do this

Day 40: Life Lessons

The Lord is stirring me to be a more fervent learner. This theme kept popping into my line of vision this week.

In a few brief comments introducing a Bach piece on a classical music station, I heard that when Bach was a young man, he walked 250 miles to hear an acclaimed organist perform.

Later, while watching the NCAA women’s basketball championships, another example of choosing to be a learner: The head coach of women’s college basketball team frequently traveled to spend time with the legendary coach John Wooten in California. She said something to the effect, “If you want to be great, you need to be around greatness.”

The church history book I’m reading records of Peter Abelard (1079-1142): “Abelard for the love of learning had given up his inheritance rights to his younger brothers, and roamed France to sit at the feet of the great masters.”

Of one eleventh century scholar it was written: “*Olbert was not able to satiate his thirst for study. When he would hear of someone distinguished in the arts he flew there at once, and the more he thirsted the more he absorbed something delightful from each master.*”

These challenging examples came one after another, stacking up, leaning in, exerting a delicious pressure, calling me higher. The Lord is answering my prayer: “Please don’t leave me to myself. Keep breaking in on me.”

Once I read that a genius never stands as a solitary mountain peak; geniuses come in mountain ranges. I think of the great artists that lived at the same time (Michelangelo, DaVinci, etc.). I think of the Founding Fathers of our country. They were a mighty mountain range of great minds.

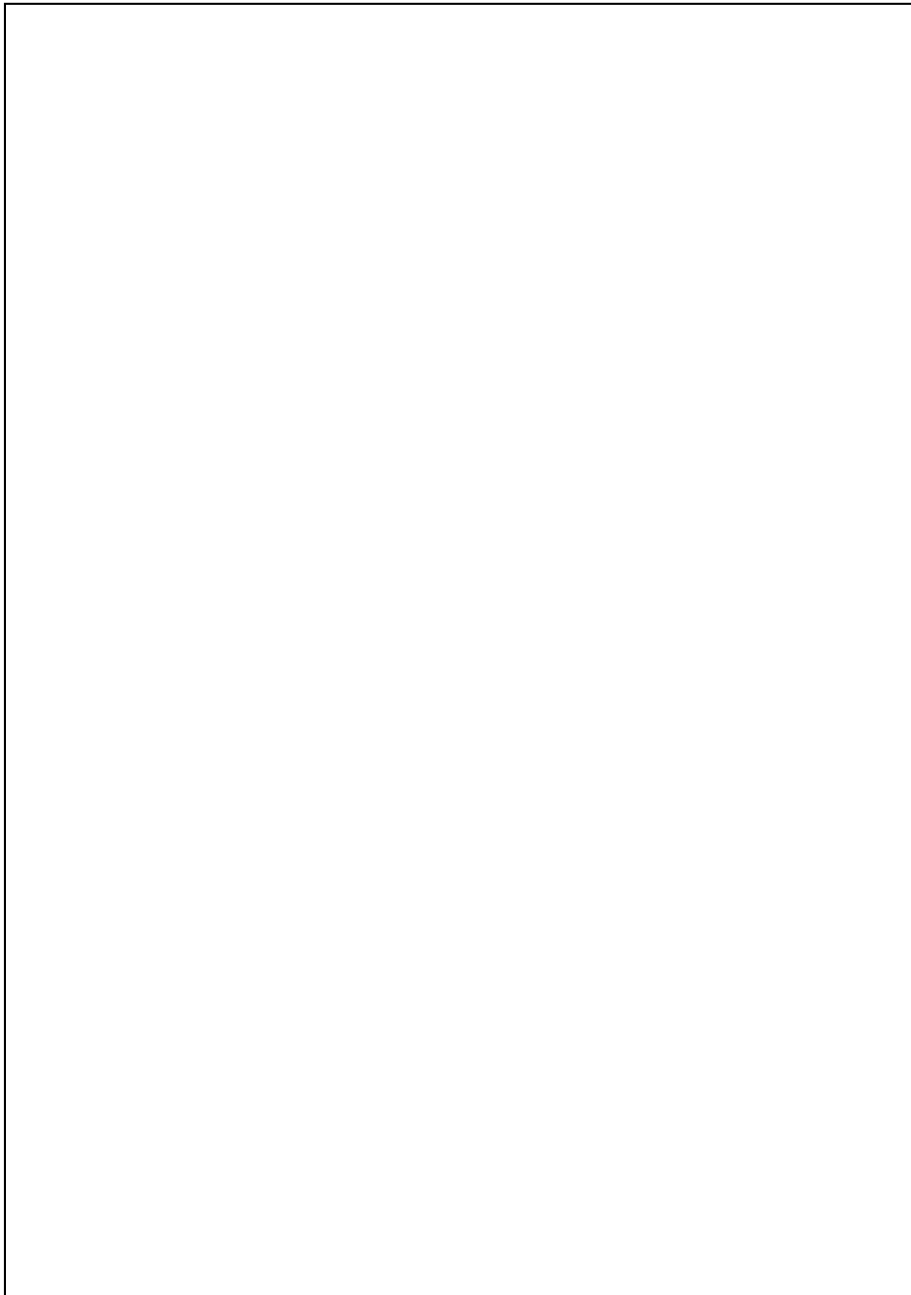
The same truth is relevant for non-geniuses as well. I need the stimulation and insights of others. King Solomon captured this truth concisely: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).

All these examples challenge me to ask myself some questions:

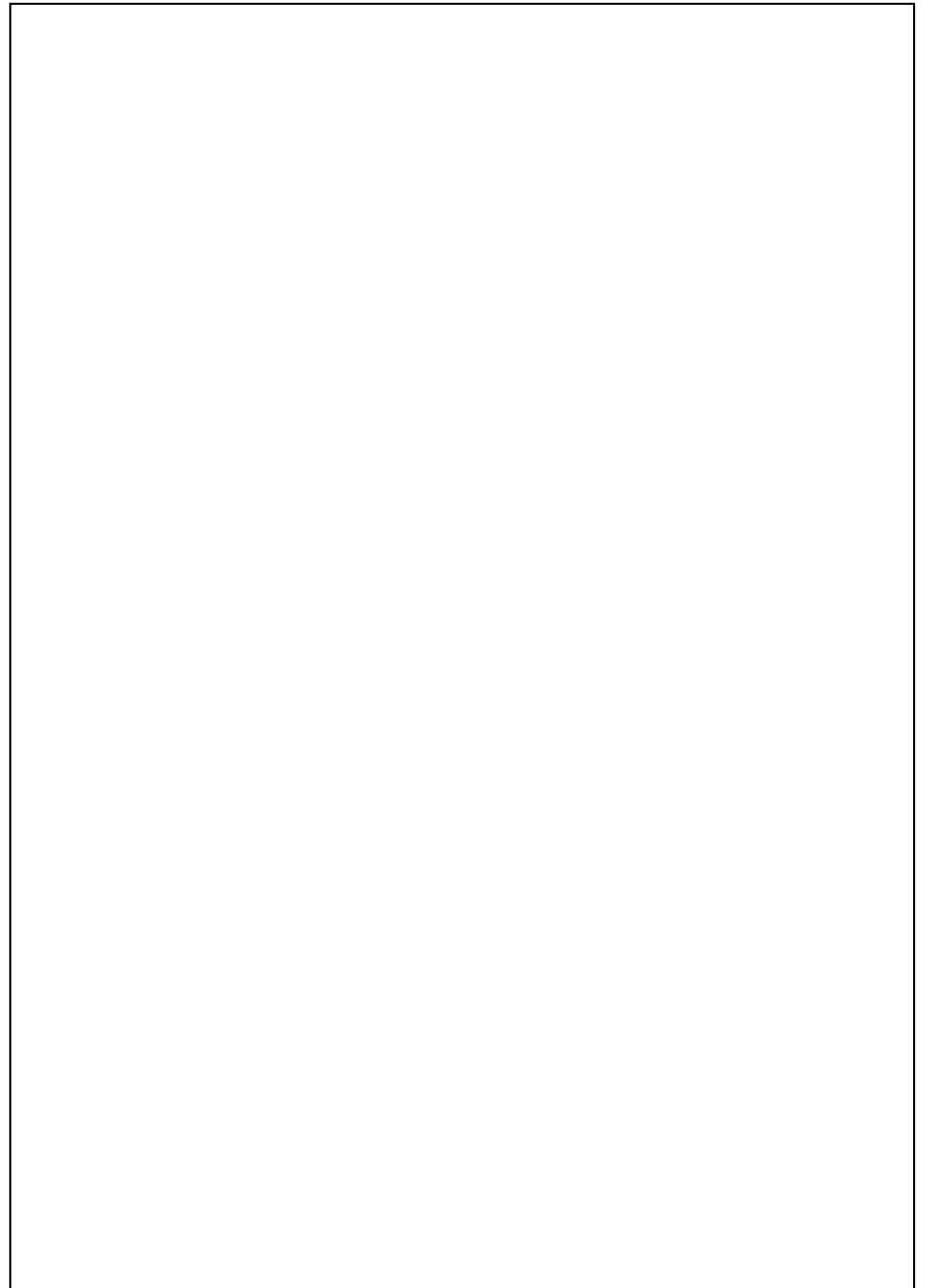
Is learning a **high value** for me?

A disciple is a learner. The roots of the word ‘disciple’ rumble with meanings related to learning.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 9: Life Lessons

While reading Randy Alcorn's book, Edge of Eternity, the following interaction grabbed my attention... and heart! (*Note: in the allegory, Charis represents heaven*)

"I do long for Charis," I said. "But there are things I'd like to do before I arrive. I want to do more, make a difference, play my part, find my role in the story."

(Marcus replied), "Each character is placed in a setting by the novelist; each expands or contracts his part through the choices he makes. Play your part gladly, but do not waste your time trying to make your role more important. The more a player in the drama elevates his part, the less he fulfills it. And the less is written of him in the Book, no matter how much is written in the shadowlands."

--Randy Alcorn,
Edge of Eternity, p. 257

Did you catch that? We all have roles that the Father has given to us (check out Ephesians 2:10). You can't get a greater role for yourself. You can only expand or diminish the role God gives you. If you grab for a greater role you will only end up diminishing the role He has given you.

Day 40: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read Psalm 119:71, Hebrews 5:8 and James 1:2-4.

Chew: What is a key teacher the Lord uses in our lives? What can keep us from being teachable to it? How does the Lord want us to respond so we can learn the most from the circumstances He sends our way?

Exercise: How do you respond when trials come? Do you see them as an opportunity to learn and grow? Or do you react and look to get out of them as quickly as possible?

Day 39: Life Lessons

Ask any teacher, and she'll tell you: A teacher learns more than her students. It's one thing to receive information, but when you pass it on to someone else, something deeper and richer occurs.

First, it helps you see what you really do and don't understand. There's nothing like explaining something to someone else to help you discover gaps in your knowledge and motivate you to fill them.

Second, you often have to work with the material, processing it on a deeper level to make it suitable and appropriate for the person you're passing it on to.

Third, going over the material another time further embeds it in your mind.

But for the believer, something even greater takes place. You see, if anyone is in Jesus, she has the Holy Spirit inside who instructs and teaches... even those teaching! You never teach alone!

One thing I love about sharing Jesus with unchurched friends is that they often ask questions that are "out of the box." Things I've never thought to ask.

That's when I'm most thankful for the Holy Spirit. Inside, I'll cry out, "Help! What's the answer to that question?"

Many times as I answer, I learn from the words the Holy Spirit gives. This is a great way to experience God, as my friend and I learn together.

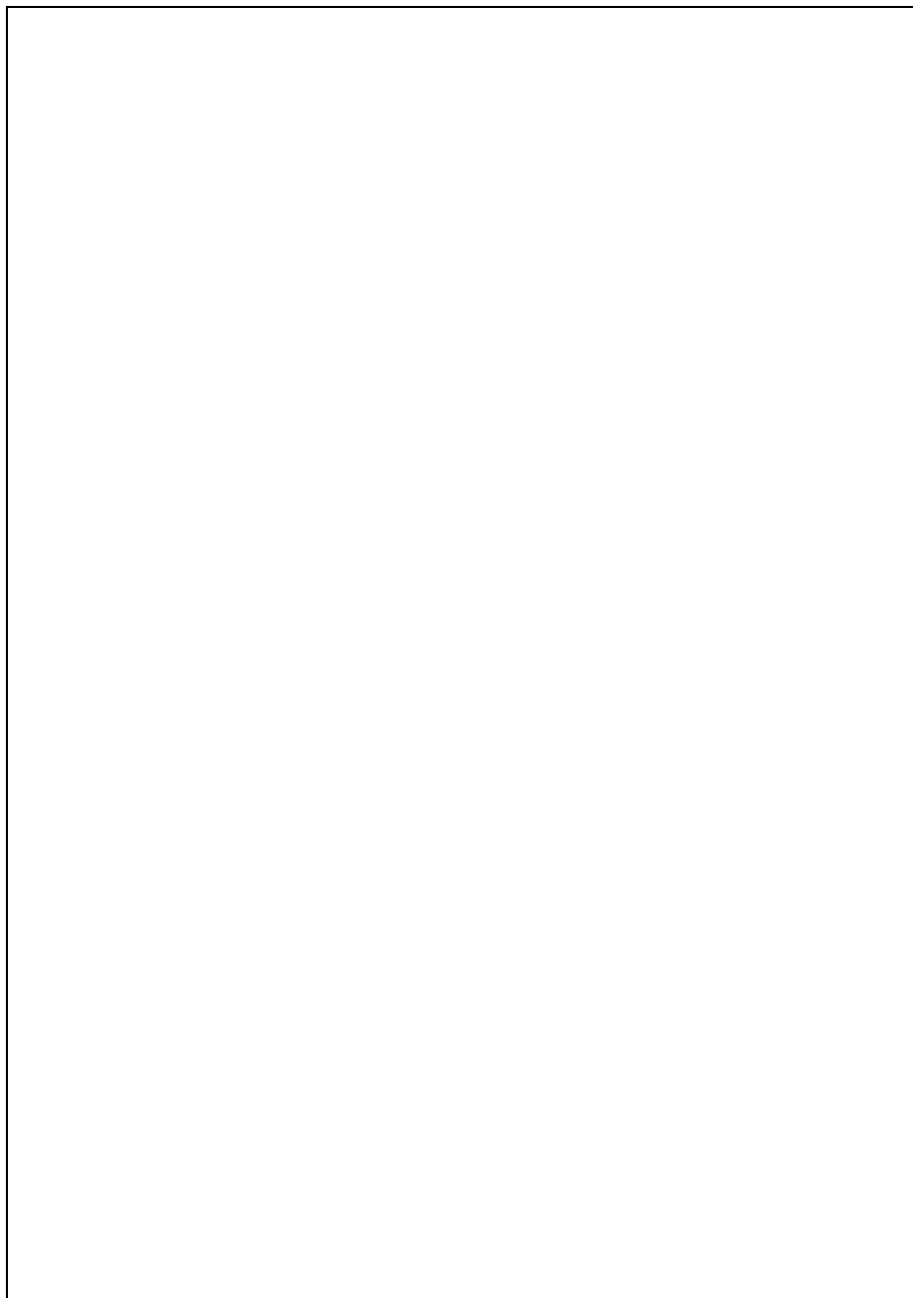
Day 10: Growing in Faithfulness

Feast: Read 1 Samuel 15:1-35. Record below the main verse that stands out to you:

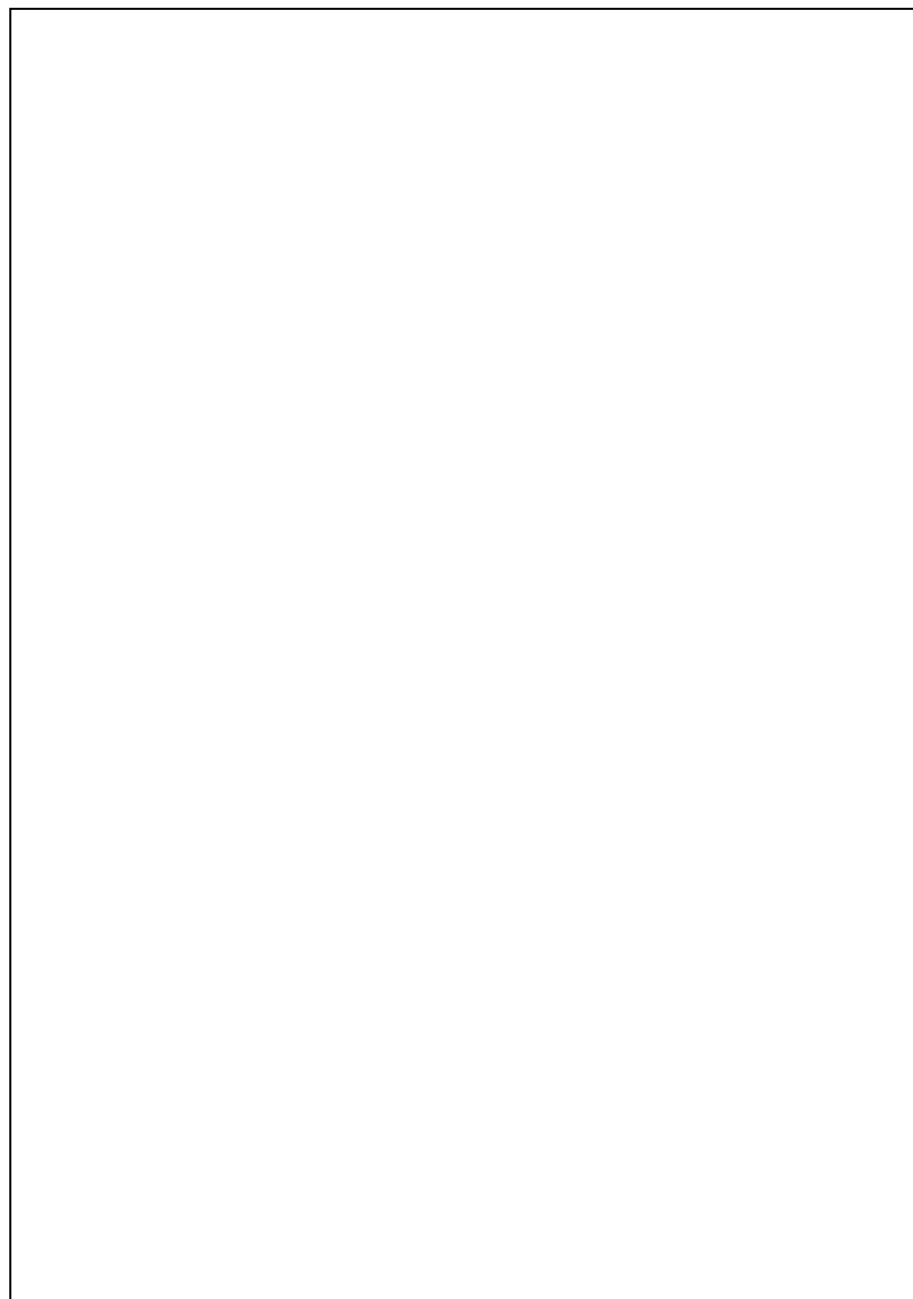
Chew: What can you learn from this story about being faithful?

Exercise: When God gives you an opportunity are you faithful to do all that He wants you to do? Ask Him! What do you sense He wants you to do in response?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 39: *Growing In Being Teachable*

Feast: Read Philemon 1:6

Chew: What is a key thing that can help you learn?

Exercise: How active are you in sharing your faith? What have you learned by doing this?

Day 10: Life Lessons

“James,” the Colonel exclaimed, “get the carriage ready. Tell the driver we will commence our journey at once.”

“Is there anything else, Sir?”

“Yes,” the Colonel stopped and rubbed his chin, “There is one other thing. Tell Miss Melanie I will meet her at the Port in a fortnight. That is all.”

“As you wish, my lord.” James nodded, then vacated the room.

When I’m homeschooling my son, he likes for me to give him a list of what he needs to do for the day. When I do, what do you think gets done first? Usually, it’s the thing he enjoys doing the most, which is reading. In fact, I’ve often had to tell him he can’t read until after the rest of the list is completed. It’s too easy for the day to slip by and the rest of the items never get accomplished.

If someone gives you a list of things to do, when have you faithfully done what they asked? To be faithful is to do all that is asked of you. Faithful is defined as being loyal, constant and steadfast. It also means to be reliable. When someone asks you to do something, can they rely on you to do it? When God gives you things to do, can He depend on you to do all of it? Or do you only do what you want to do?

Like Saul, it’s easy to do part of the list and rationalize we’ve obeyed God. Sometimes, I know I’m guilty of not listening long enough to hear all the Lord wants me to do. I really struggle with this. Like if God wants me to share something with someone. if I say anything, it’s easy to feel off the hook. Instead, I need to wait and ask the Lord, is that all you want me to say or do? Or is there something more?

In Ephesians 5:15-16 we are commanded: “Be very careful then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish but understand what the Lord’s will is.”

One of the best ways we can do this is by imitating the servant above in the fictional account I wrote to remind myself what faithfulness can look like when we take the initiative to ask the Lord if there’s anything else He has for us to do... and then do it. All of it!

Day 11: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read Colossians 3:22-24. Write below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: How does this relate to being faithful? Does it only apply to slaves?

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord is leading you to do in response? What could it look like for you to do this?

Day 38: Life Lessons

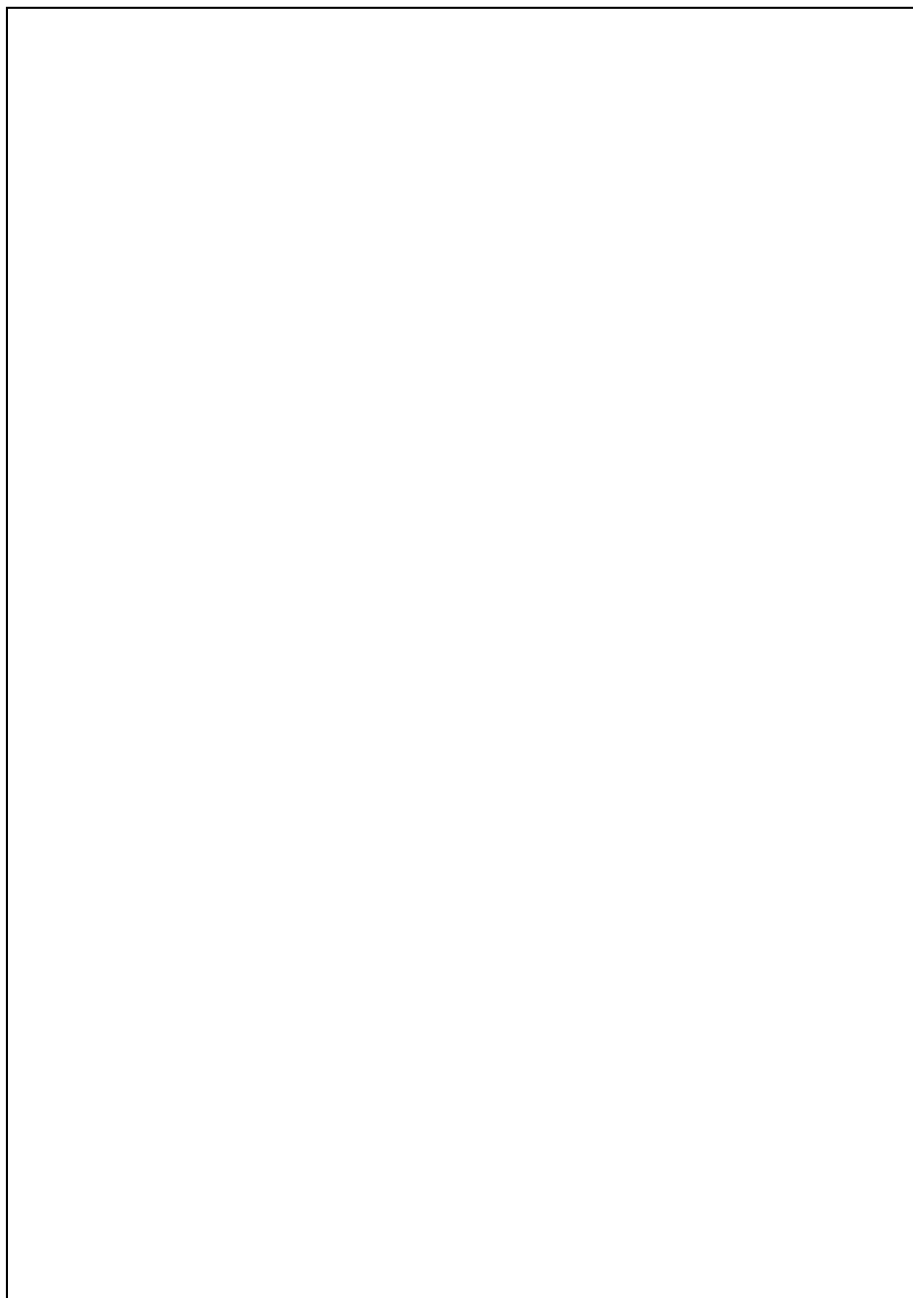
Only God is perfect! Every word of Jesus is flawless, accurate, and trustworthy. But every other person misses the mark somewhere. Don't be a sponge, soaking up all you hear, even if the source is a good one. Always, ALWAYS let God's Word be your filter.

Seek to be an active learner. When you passively listen to a lecture you only retain a small portion of what you hear. But when you take notes and then go back and check to see, "Does God's Word really say that?" It's never a waste.

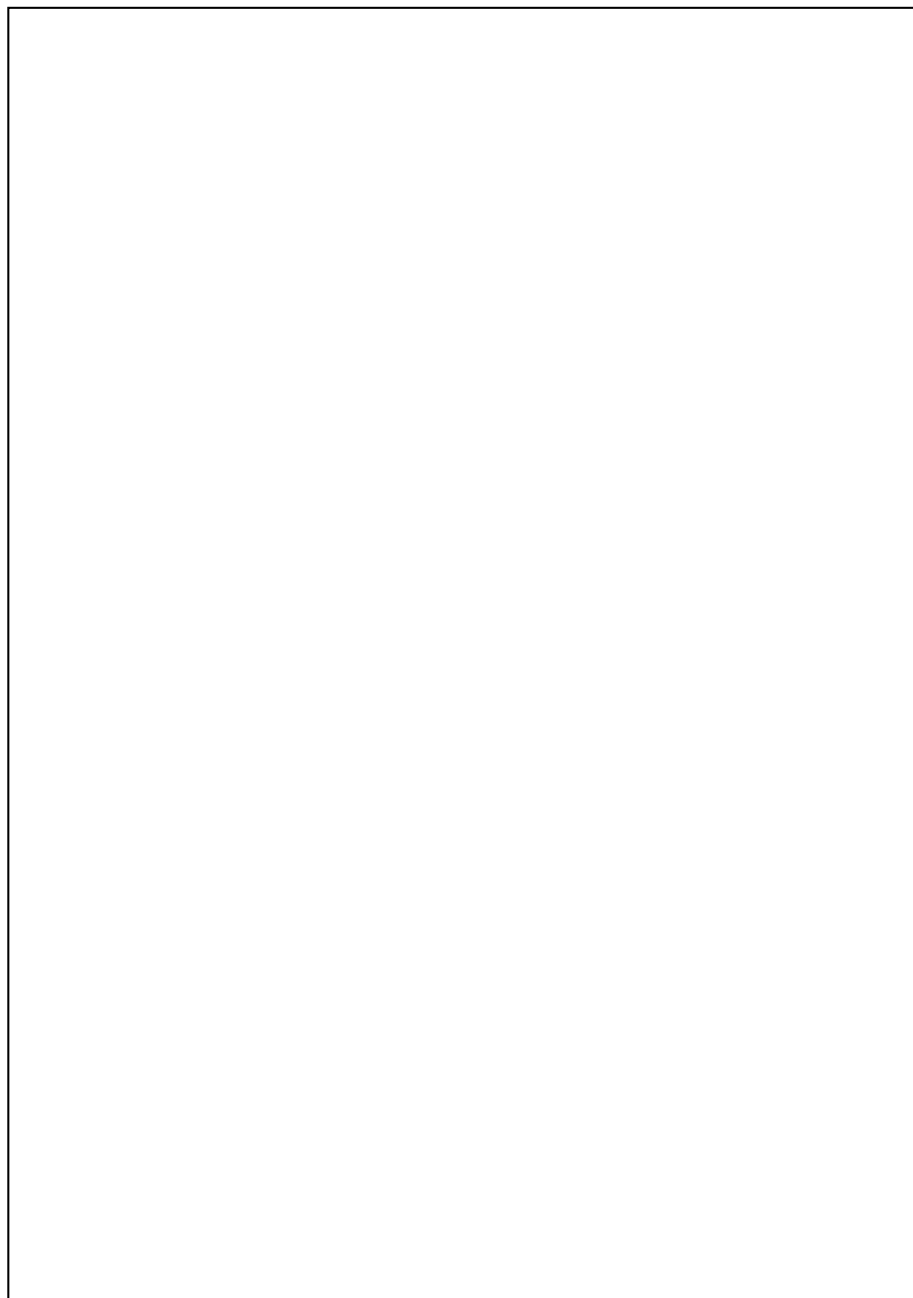
One of two things happens when you do this:

- 1) It's a protection - you never know when something off-track might slip in there. Anyone is capable of this because only God's wisdom is fully complete (1 Corinthians 13:12). Even the apostle Paul admitted he only knew in part.
- 2) It's encouraging! I'll never forget the time an older woman on staff with Navs shared how God rejoices over us with singing. My first response was, "No way! It doesn't say that in the Bible." So I checked on it. I can't even describe my delight when I found out it really does say that in the Bible! There were a lot of other things she shared but because I checked on that one, I've never forgotten it. (Zephaniah 3:17)

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 11: Life Lessons

The letter to the Colossians is a fascinating letter - and not just because of the wonderful verses it contains, but especially because of the messenger who brought it... and his traveling companion. Colossians 4:7 tells us the letter is brought by Tychicus and verse 9 says he is coming with "Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you." The book of Philemon, also delivered on that trip, reveals that Onesimus was more than just a fellow Colossian. He was a slave, an escaped slave, who came to know Jesus while on the run.

Onesimus was a slave of Philemon and had run away, having evidently robbed his master (v. 18). His travels somehow brought him to Rome where, in the providence of God, he came in contact with Paul. Through this contact, Paul led Onesimus to know the Savior. Then Onesimus in some way became useful to Paul.

But Paul realized that Onesimus had a responsibility to Philemon and should make restitution for what he stole. Thus, Paul deemed it right to return Onesimus to Philemon. In the letter, Paul explained his situation and asked Philemon to treat Onesimus not as a runaway slave and thief but as a beloved brother in Christ.

I'm sure Onesimus was very thankful to have Paul's letter in hand as he approached his former master. Still, can you imagine being in Onesimus' shoes?

In Rome he was free. Many slaves were able to stay undetected in large cities or isolated areas, never to be returned to their masters. To return not only meant being enslaved again, but he also faced the possibility of death for his crime. So why did he go back?

Paul's description of Onesimus in Colossians 4:9 gives us the reason. He was faithful. Faithful to do what needed to be done, what God wanted him to do, even though it meant risking his life. When God laid it on his heart to make restitution to someone he had wronged before becoming a Christian, he willingly did it even though it promised to cost him dearly.

Onesimus didn't start out faithful. He certainly wasn't a faithful servant when he ran away and robbed his master. But then he met Jesus. What a difference yielding to Him can make. After encountering Jesus and surrendering to Him, Onesimus was transformed so much that he is recorded in Scripture as faithful!

Does this ever give me hope.

Day 38: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read Acts 17:11

Chew: What made the Bereans noble? How much time and effort do you think this took? Why was it important?

Exercise: Are you a passive or an active learner? Do you just soak in whatever comes your way, or do you check everything against what the Bible has to say... when you go to church? or a conference? what about in your classes at school?

Day 37: Life Lessons

At my first Navigator conference, I thought meal times were so we could eat. Then I noticed most of the attendees were in small groups intently sharing hearts. I remember thinking, "I wish someone would come up to me and ask me to eat." But later I overheard a student asking the speaker if she could get time with her. The speaker's eyes lit up when she was asked!

In the Navigators, there is a high value placed on the individual.

Talking to groups is great, but so much life change can happen when you're meeting one-on-one! This is one of the things I love about Navs. (If you want to understand this better, check out Lorne Sanny's article *A Heart for Individuals*.)

Because of this, Nav staff make themselves available to meet one-on-one with anyone who asks but I quickly learned you need to ask early on while there's time. If you take initiative to do this, you'll be amazed at what you learn. I know for me, many of the best treasures usually come not from what I hear in the larger group meetings but from the one-on-one times when I can ask questions.

And that's not only true for speakers. Keep your eyes open for anyone who's been walking with Jesus longer than you. There's so much you can learn, and many times it's the quieter people who have the greatest treasures to share.

It can be scary to take the initiative like this, but is it ever worth it. And it can involve sacrifice, like giving up time doing something fun with your friends. But talk about making the most of an opportunity.

Just remember to go to listen. And pray before you meet with someone, asking the Lord to speak to you through them. Remember how King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba all she desired? Go in ready to ask for much (it's really good to spend time praying in advance asking God what He wants you to ask. If you come to the time prepared with questions to ask, can that ever yield treasures. Or if it's spur of the moment, ask for them to share their story of how they came to know Jesus and what He's currently teaching them.)

There is so much we can learn from each other.

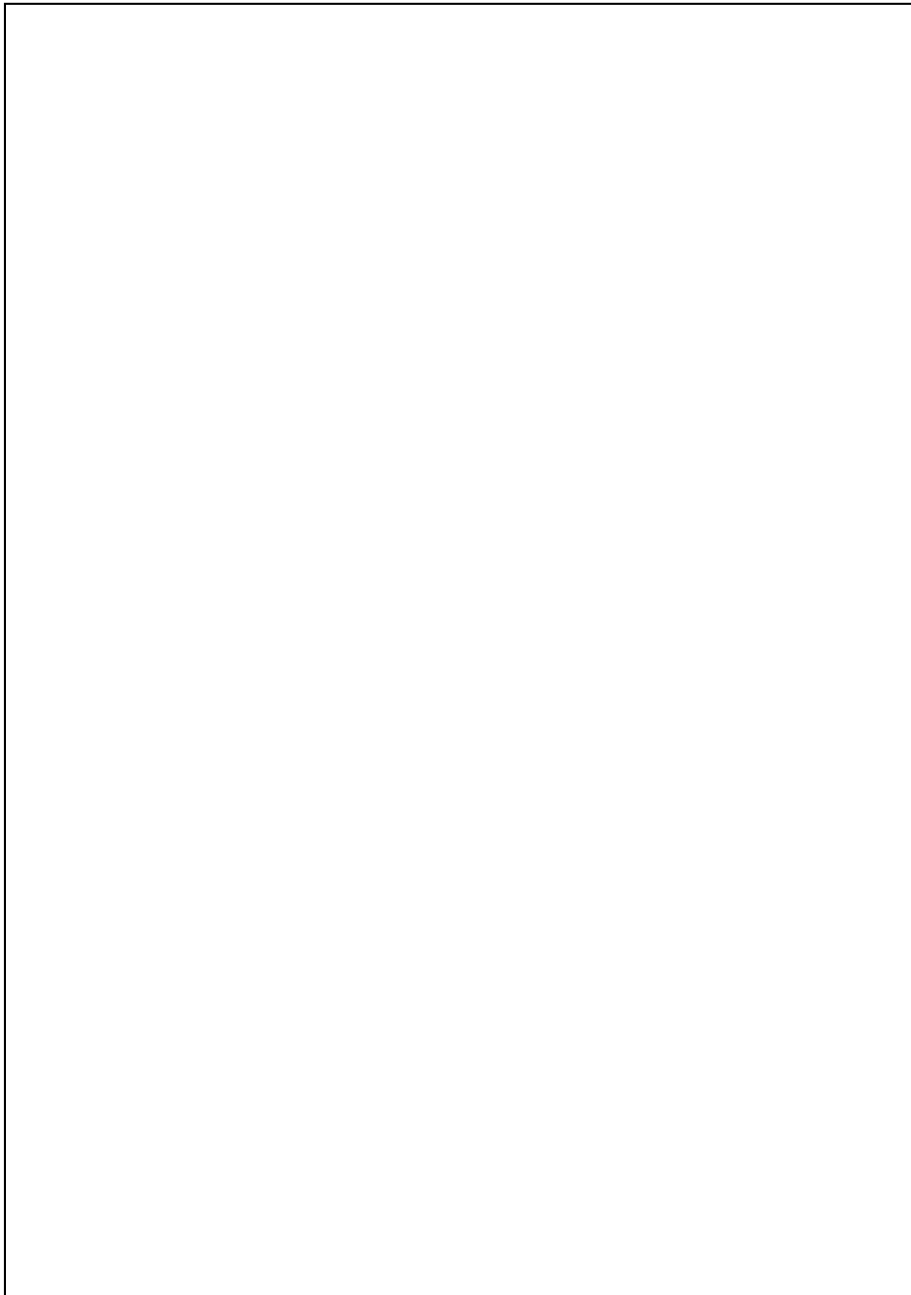
Day 12: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read Genesis 39:1-23. Write below the main verse that stands out to you:

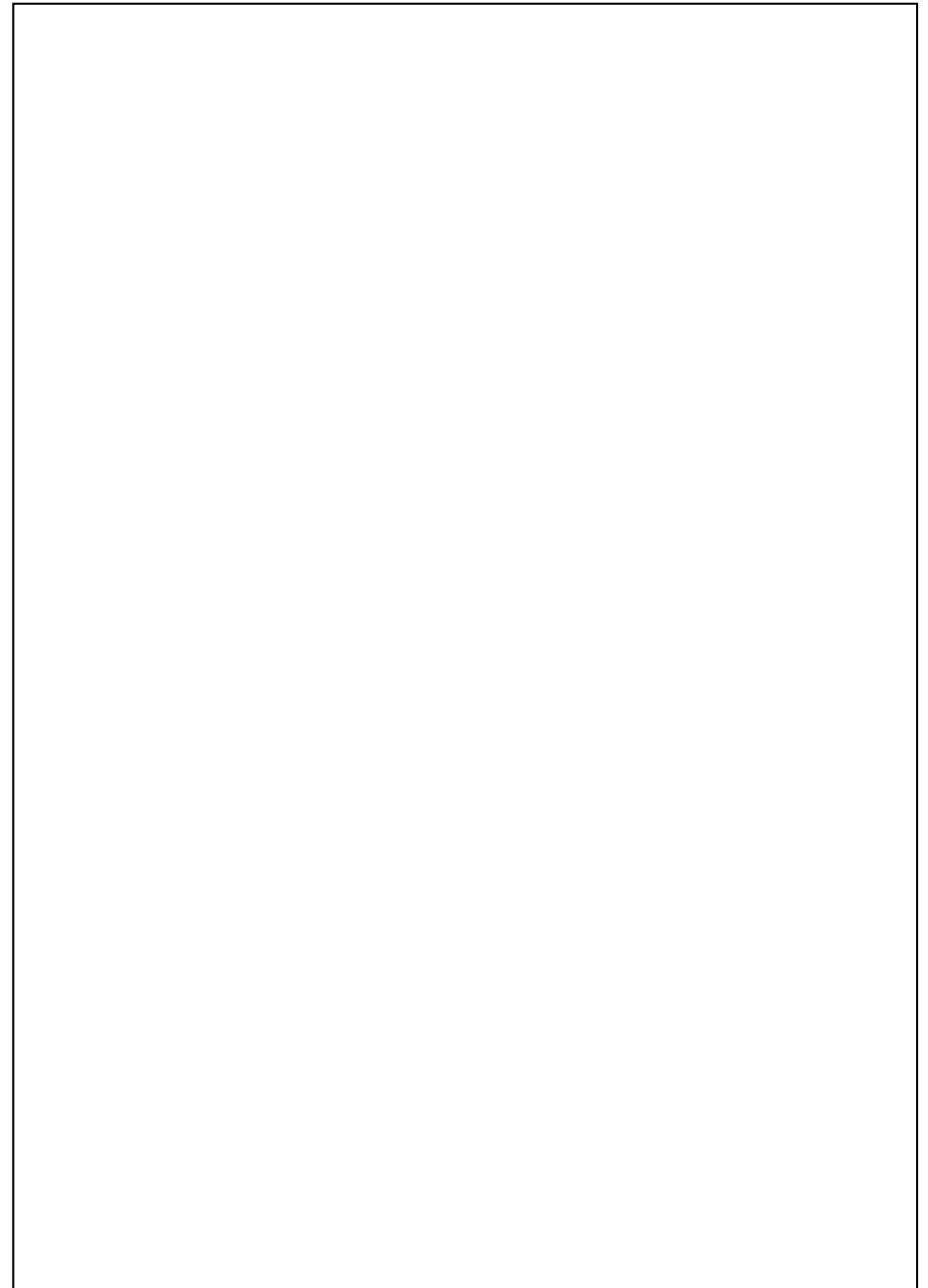
Chew: Ask God to reveal to you what He wants you to learn from Joseph about remaining faithful when tempted (and when you get into trouble for choosing to do the right thing!!!)

Exercise: What do you sense the Lord is leading you to do in response? What could it look like for you to do this?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 37: *Growing In Being Teachable*

Feast: Read Luke 11:31 and 1 Kings 10:1-13

Chew: What effort did the Queen of Sheba make when she wanted to learn? What did King Solomon give her?

Exercise: How much effort do you put into seeking out people to learn from?

Day 12: Life Lessons

Ever hear a voice saying, “Oh, go ahead, do it. You know you’re going to anyway. You can’t resist this one.” That is a lie from the enemy. There is no temptation a believer in Jesus will ever face that is more than they can bear.

Why not?

Because God has promised to protect His children from anything that’s more than they can handle.

“No temptation has overtaken you
except what is common to man.

God is faithful.

He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability

But with the temptation,

He will also provide a way of escape
so you may be able to endure it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13

That doesn’t mean it won’t still be tough. But you can trust Jesus, if you’re facing a temptation, He’s going to give you what you need to withstand it or else work it out so that you don’t face it. He is your protector and provider.

Do you realize there is a hedge of protection around you, and nothing can get to you without God first giving permission?

Check out the first few chapters of Job to see Him in action doing this!

And thank God we don’t have to battle temptation alone! In fact, our ability to be faithful when facing temptation rests completely on His faithfulness.

When temptation comes - open your eyes and actively look for the way out that God will provide. It may be a friend calling or a knock on the door. Don’t ignore it. That’s God in His faithfulness giving you a way out so you can remain faithful.

Whenever you face a sin you struggle with, 1 Corinthians 10:13 should give you hope.

Remember, this verse is a promise from God, and He ALWAYS keeps His promises!

Day 13: Growing In Faithfulness

Feast: Read Luke 16:1-13. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: What do you learn from this about being faithful with money? Why is this important? What does Jesus encourage his disciples to do with their wealth? (see vs. 9)

Exercise: How does this verse challenge you to grow in faithfulness? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind that you sense He wants you to do in response?

Barb, God laid a foundation that was solid and still impacts my life today. On my own, I was growing, I was learning, but it was all over the place...a little here, a little there... and pretty much what I wanted to do.

Barb got me to “eat my vegetables” (especially scripture memory!) and slow down so I could go deeper with Jesus. What a difference a skilled master builder can make. (1 Cor. 3:10)

Day 36: Life Lessons

I became a Christian my first week at the University of Florida. No one prayed with me. Instead, after observing the lives of my roommates who were walking closely with Jesus, I cried out, “Lord, if it’s true... If you really want a personal relationship with me, I want you!” I knew I was a sinner, and I knew Jesus had died to pay the penalty for my sins, and as I accepted His gift, crying out to Him in desperation, I was forever changed.

One key difference was that after I became a Christian, I had an intense hunger for God’s Word. When I read it, I could understand it like never before! I’d spend hours reading the Bible and talking to Jesus. About a month later, the Lord led me to a church where the Word was taught. I joined a Bible study and got involved in their college group, but something was missing. I was eager to grow, but I wanted more.

I began to notice a difference in the lives of those around me who were being disciplined and learning how to disciple others. Whereas I was calling the shots on what I was learning (ex, I’ll go to this conference and that Bible study but not that one), they had someone who’d been walking with Jesus longer, helping to guide them.

Even great athletes don’t reach the Olympics without coaches. I prayed, “Jesus, I want all of you I can get – would you please lead me to someone who can coach me, guide me, spiritually parent me?” That’s when he brought Barb Choat into my life.

When I asked a mutual friend to tell Barb I’d like to be disciplined, he returned, “She says she’ll only disciple you if you go a month without saying yes to anything.”

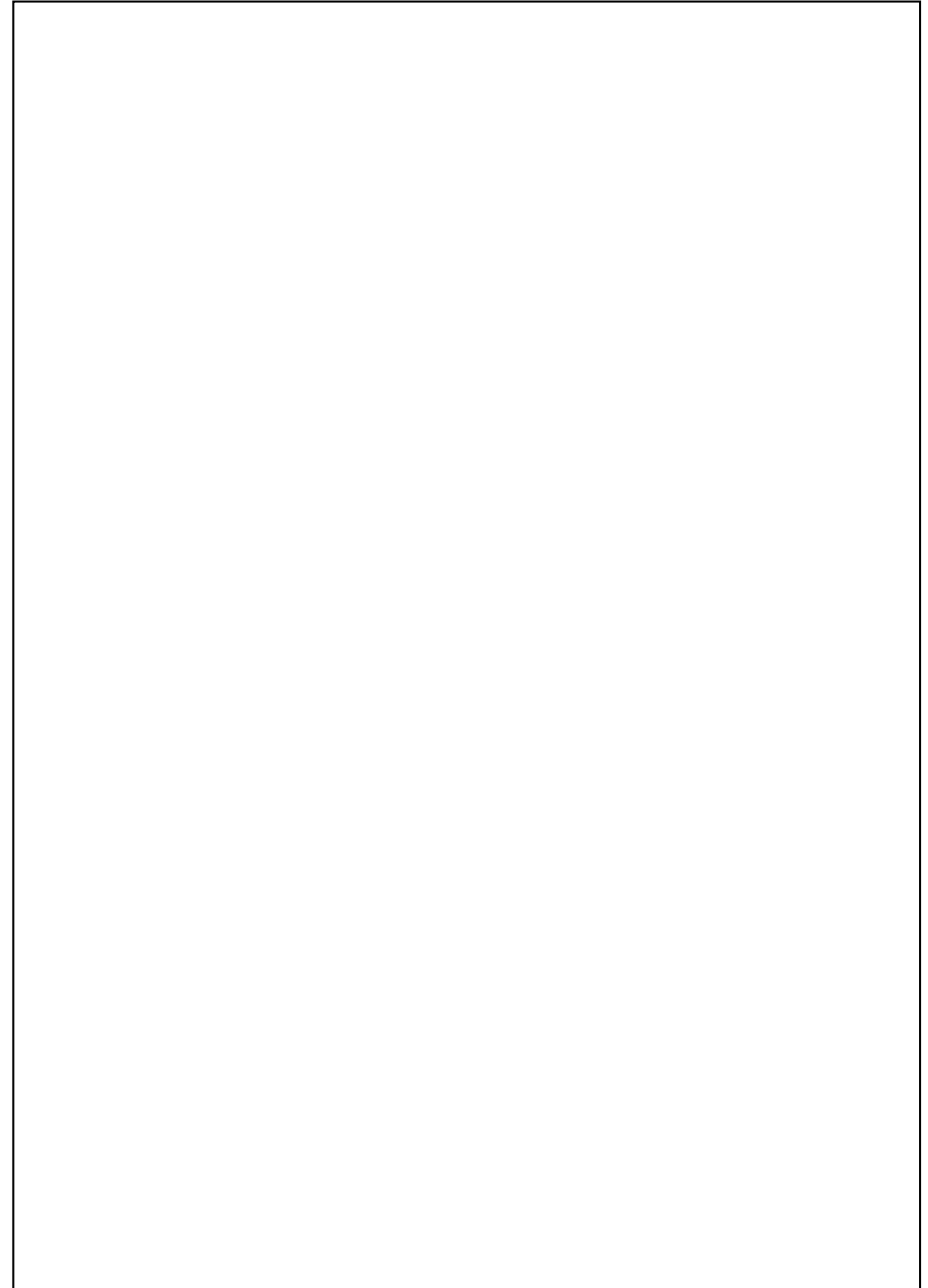
A month? I played Ado Annie, the Girl Who Cain’t Say No, in the musical Oklahoma my senior year of high school. That role was definitely type-casted!

Sure enough, that night the phone rang. The Children’s ministry director from my church called to ask if I’d design and lead a Missions program for children at church on Wednesday nights. Design? Lead? Missions? I would love... ugh, sigh. “I’m so sorry, I can’t,” were some of the hardest words I’ve uttered.

Somehow, by the grace of God, I made it through that month and I am forever grateful for the wisdom of Barb. Without this trial, discipleship would’ve been something tacked onto a full schedule, but with each “no,” I became more committed and available.

After surviving that month, we met weekly for the next two years and through

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 13: Life Lessons

I serve on staff with the Navigators. Part of being on staff is raising support. That means individuals and churches donate money, some monthly, some as one time gifts so we can live and have funds to purchase things that are needed for the ministry. The entire Heart of Discipling Women Library was funded through this.

Let's imagine someone gave us money to be used for ministry purposes. What if Jim and I spend it all on an air-conditioned dog house? Are we being good stewards of that money? What if we are diligent to "save" it, watching the account grow bigger and bigger, doing everything we can to not spend it for the sole purpose of seeing a lot in the account, maybe even so we'll have a cushion in case hard times come up. Are we being faithful stewards of this money? Why or why not?

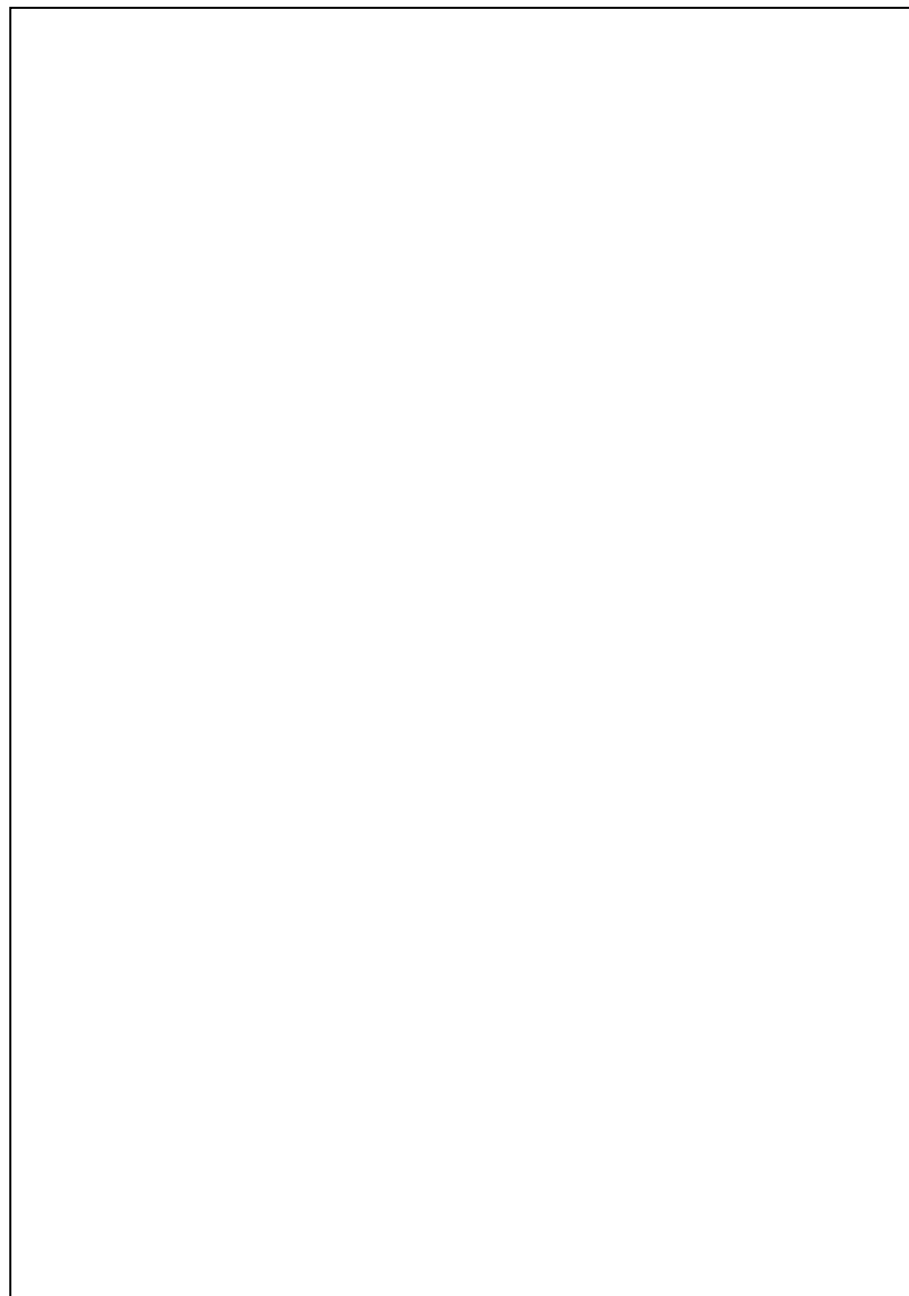
Now forget us being on Navigator staff. Let's say we're back working in the careers we had before coming on staff and we're receiving a regular paycheck. Where does the money come from? To whom does the money belong? What does God want us doing with that money? If we diligently save it all, barely spending it on anything except the bare necessities we need to live, are we being faithful stewards of it? What if we spend it all on things that bring us pleasure?

Remember how Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also?"(Matthew 6:21) This is so true!

Luke 16:1-9 can be a tough passage. Is Jesus promoting dishonesty? Remember, parables are simple stories with a simple message. Don't try to figure out a hidden meaning for everything. Jesus tells you exactly what He wants you to get beginning in verse 9. Use your money to make forever friends. Be faithful to do this. It's not your money anyway. God's given you what He has to test you and see if you'll be ready to handle the true riches that await.

Take out your checkbook (or credit card statement) and ask yourself: What does my spending reveal about who I faithfully serve?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 36:
Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read 1 Corinthians 4:15-17 and 11:1

Chew: What is a key way we can learn? What has to happen for this to take place?

Exercise: Is there anyone in your life you are seeking to learn from? Do you actively look for others to help you grow?

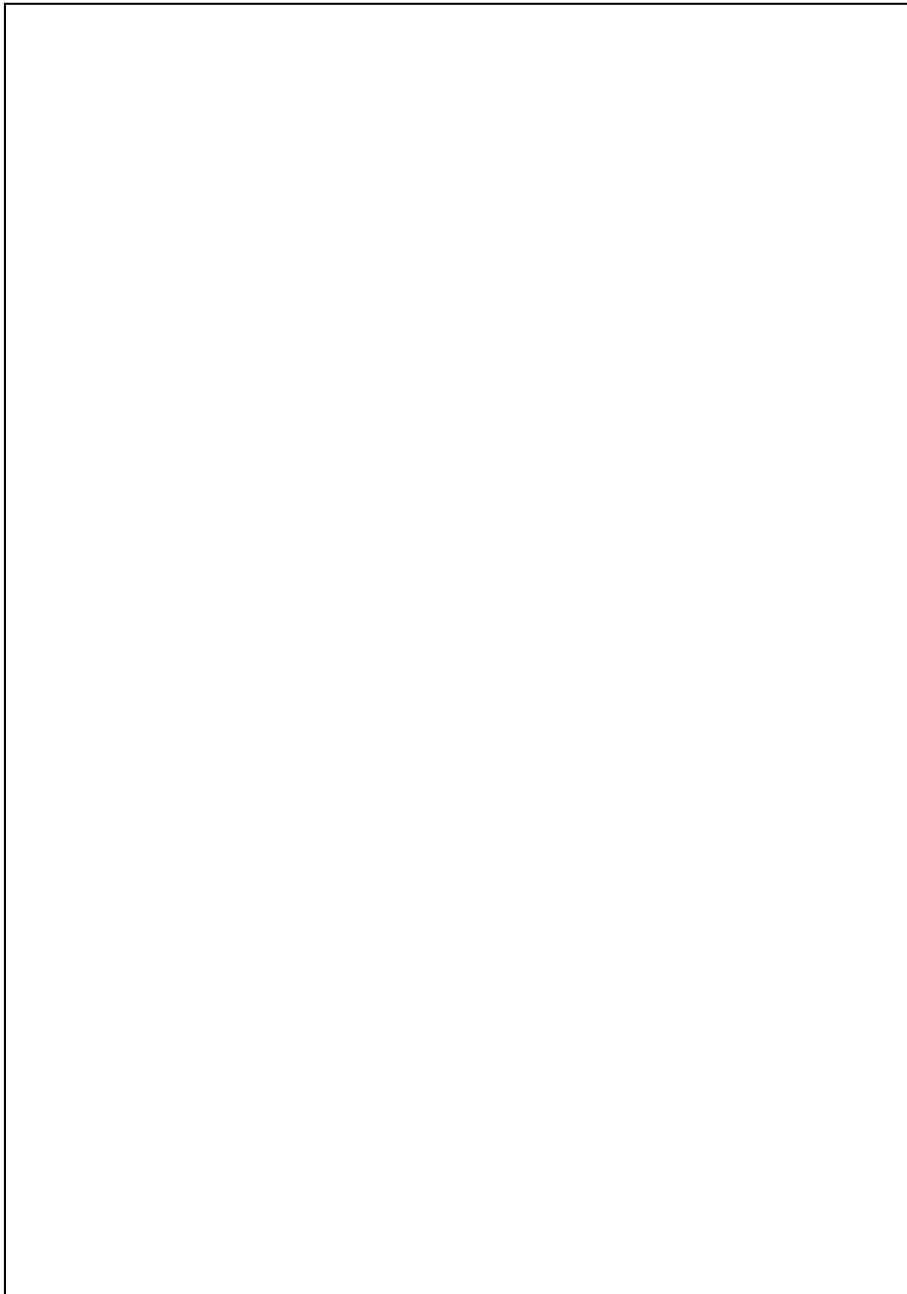
Day 14: Growing in Faithfulness

Feast: Read Revelation 2:8-11. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: How much can faithfulness cost?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in faithfulness? What do you sense the Lord leading you to do in response?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Week 6: The Role of Listening In Being Teachable

Created to Listen

Read Genesis 1. Where do you see listening in here?

(Clue: Check out John 1:1-3, 14)

Read Genesis 2. What role did listening play in the Creation of man and woman?
What did they hear?

Read Genesis 3. What role did listening play in the Fall?

How does this relate to being teachable?

Read John 5:24, Romans 10:14, Hebrews 3:15, Revelations 3:20.

What role does listening play in redemption?

How does this relate to being teachable?

Day 14: Life Lessons

One afternoon during a very busy week at school I was really struggling with a lack of desire to go to campus after work. I rationalized I was too tired and too busy. So, I decided I was not going to go to campus that night even though I had an investigative Bible discussion scheduled.

When I was 5 minutes from home, I got a call from my husband saying he forgot his shoes and didn't know how he was going to get them. He didn't have time to make it home and back to campus so he asked me if I could bring them to him. I was so upset because I knew exactly what that meant - I had to go to campus now! Frustrated, I sped home, got his shoes and headed to campus. When I got there, I met up with my husband, and then quickly went on my way. I still was thinking I'd just head home when the Lord really laid it on my heart to go meet with the girls. So I did. Am I ever thankful!

That night was so different. During the discussion the girls shared more than ever before. We enjoyed such an awesome time in the Word. Then afterwards, for the first time ever, the girls told me how much it meant to them that I came to spend time with them each week. They shared they had learned more with me than ever before. They shared what a positive time our time together was for them. WOW! Did God ever convict me!

The entire drive home I just sat in silence trying to process everything that happened. I thought about my selfishness, I thought about my pouting, and then I thought about how God chose to bless me. He reminded me He wants people to be faithful to do what He's called us to so we don't miss the many blessings He has in store for us as well as for those we share our lives with. It was also a wonderful reminder that I need less of me and more of HIM.

-- Jana Gatlyn

You just survived your fifth week of this diet!
We'd so appreciate your feedback:



Day 35: Life Lessons

We celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in Hawaii on our way to visit our son in Japan. My husband and I are early risers, even on holiday. Even so, surfers were already riding the waves before I began my time with the Lord. First light, and they were there. They were still at it at dusk. Before 6 a.m., I counted approximately thirty surfers waiting for the next good wave.

All this seemed especially significant in light of a recent study about teenagers and sleep. Some high schools are considering a later start time because of teen's natural sleep cycle. As you remember, teens like to sleep late. So I was impressed by the numbers of surfers out at dawn.

I'm assuming that surfers' mothers are not nagging them to get up and off to the beach. What's happening here?

DESIRE. Desire is that internal valuing, that fervent longing, that energizing motivation to know, do, have. The surfer boys' example reminds me that desire and discipline feed one another. I suspect that surfers never ask themselves if getting up early to surf is legalistic. Surfers know that the discipline of getting out of bed enables them to experience their desire—and to feed it.

Desire for God is a gift bestowed on every believer. It comes with the new birth. We cannot create desire for God, but we can feed it. We can also dissipate it, drain it of its holy energy. Desire for God shrivels with neglect and flourishes with nurture.

In case I've been unclear, my point is NOT that I should be reading my Bible before the surfer boys paddle out. For me, the surfers desire-motivated lives reminds me that desire plus discipline often equals delight. Catch the wave. Live the mystery.

- Jean Fleming

You just survived your second week of this diet!

We'd so appreciate your feedback:



Week 3: Growing In Being Available

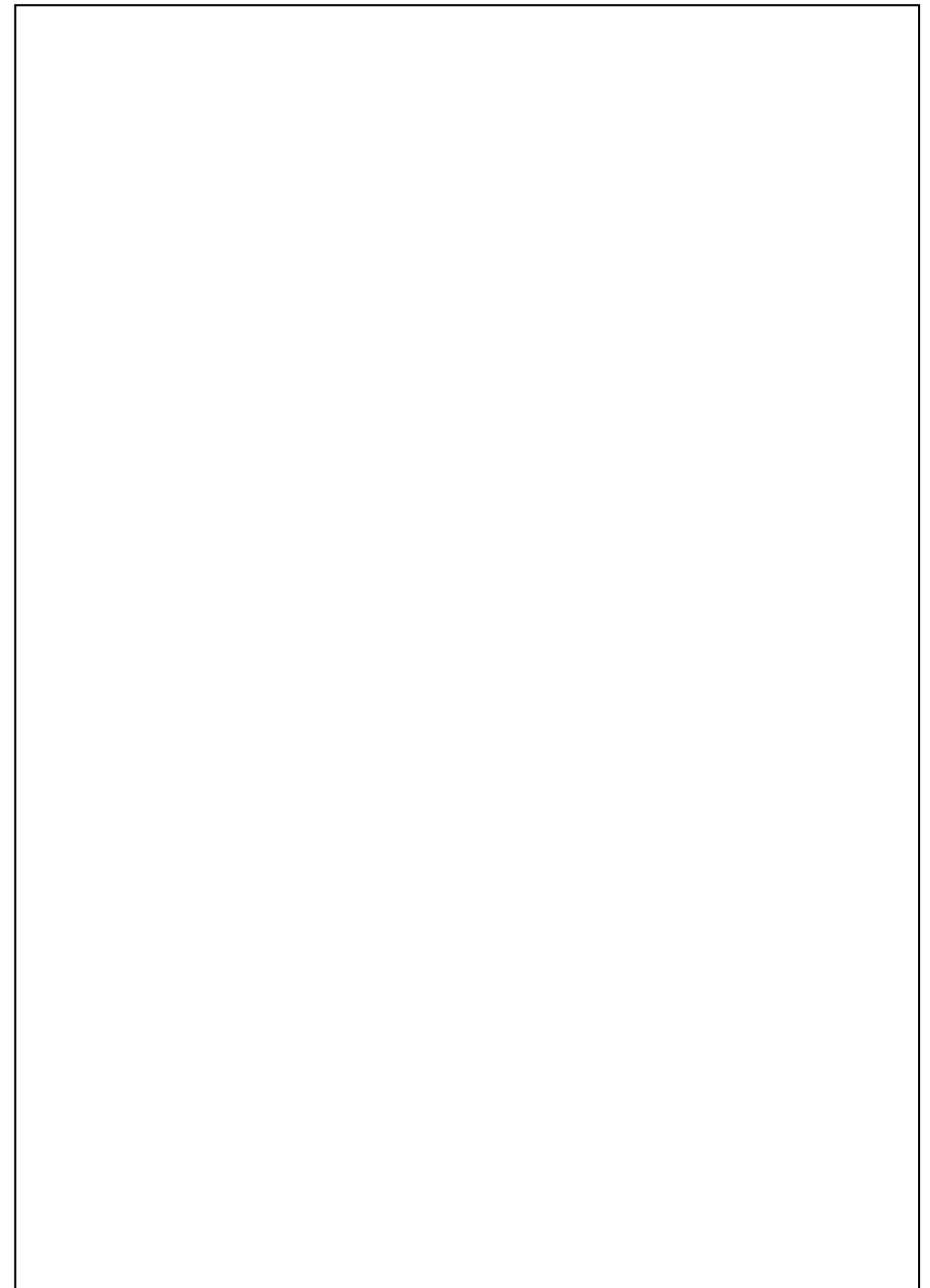
Becoming Like Your Daddy

People tend to become like the person they spend the most time with.

Be with your Heavenly Father much, and you'll become like Him much!

<p><i>What do you learn about your Heavenly Father from the following verses? Underline what stands out to you</i></p>	<p>Write your response as a prayer to your Heavenly Father.</p>	<p>How does it make you feel to know this? Draw a picture that illustrates this for each passage.</p>
<p>Psalm 73:23-24 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.</p>		

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 35:
Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read Proverbs 12:1

Chew: What role does discipline play in being teachable?

Exercise: In what areas of your life are you disciplined? How does this help/hinder you in being teachable?

<p>Psalm 139: 5-10 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.</p>		
<p>Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.</p>		
<p>Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'</p>		

<p>Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”</p>		
<p>Matthew 11:28-29 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”</p>		

Day 34: Life Lessons

David Livingstone, (1813-1873) a medical missionary to Africa, a courageous explorer, and a fervent anti-slavery advocate, wrote in his diary: “I have found that I have no unusual endowments of intellect, but I this day resolved that I would be an uncommon Christian.”

What would it look like for you or me to be an “uncommon” Christian today?

The call is not to heroic jungle exploits for Christ—except in the geography of the heart.

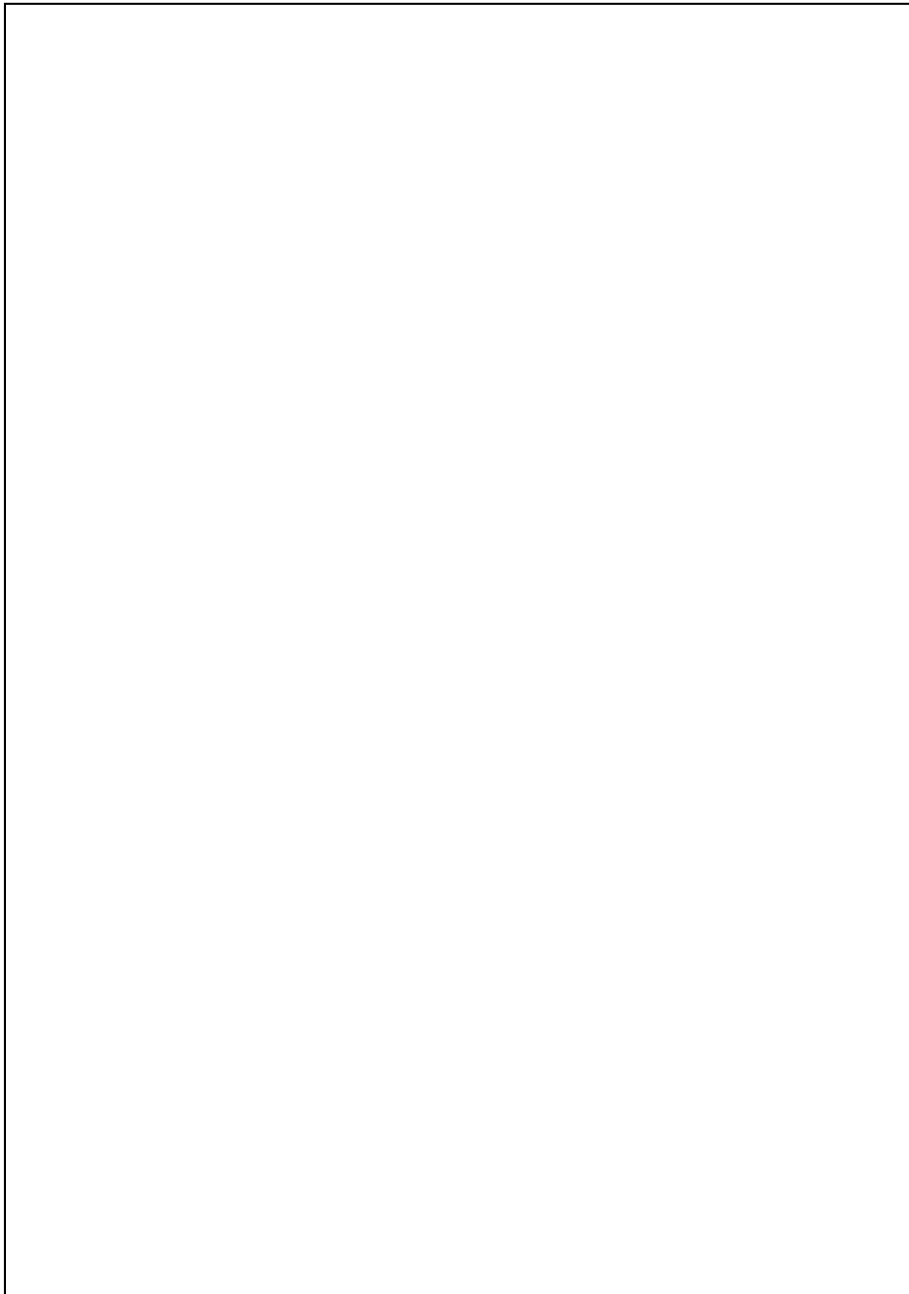
The Lord has someone uncommon in mind when He created each of us. And we will not become that uncommon person by matching stride with the “common” Christian. The measure is always Jesus Himself (Romans 8:29). The person God had in mind when He created you is a little-Christ (a Christ-ian). The “uncommon” Christian is God’s intention for all Christians.

The world needs uncommon Christians. Together let’s learn Jesus and resolve to let Him express His life more fully in us and through us.

Let’s live the mystery.

—Jean Fleming

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



<p>Matthew 28:18-20 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.”</p>		
<p>Mark 10:13-14 (also in Matthew 19:14 & Luke 18:16) People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.</p>		

<p>Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”</p>		
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In light of this, why is it important for you to be available?

Day 34: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read Psalm 1:2

Chew: Consider each word in this verse:

But =

His =

Delight =

is in =

the Law =

of the LORD =

and on =

His Law =

He meditates =

Day =

and =

Night =

Exercise: How much time and energy do you invest in learning?

Extra Helping: Read Proverbs 18:15

Day 33: Life Lessons

Before a tremor made it impossible for me to jot notes, I captured insights on index cards for future reference. Thoughts that had special resonance—passages that lit my heart and mind—crabbed across the card in different color inks. The colored inks had no significance, except to separate thoughts and verses for easier consumption.

This practice was my response to my husband's challenge to be a good steward of what Jesus showed me. **Roger said that we usually think of stewardship as related to time and money. He encouraged me to be a good steward of what God revealed.** These cards were my attempt to preserve and revisit insights that might otherwise be forgotten. Although I now rarely add new material, I still sometimes grab a rubber-banded stack to feed off of on walks or when I suspect delays.

Yesterday I rotated through some cards while waiting for an appointment. One card in particular stirred me. In penmanship already portending disintegration, I had written verses and titled the card: JESUS MADE TO BE SIN FOR US. The verses stood alone, without comment, powerful.

II Corinthians 5:21 "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

I Peter 3:18. "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God"

Isaiah 53:5-6 "— But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Romans 4:25 "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

Heat rises from these verses. Grouped together like this, the roots burrow deep into redemption and sacrifice and judgment and victory and grace and unthinkable mercy. This is a card and a glory that I want to revisit again and again.

Live the mystery.

—Jean Fleming

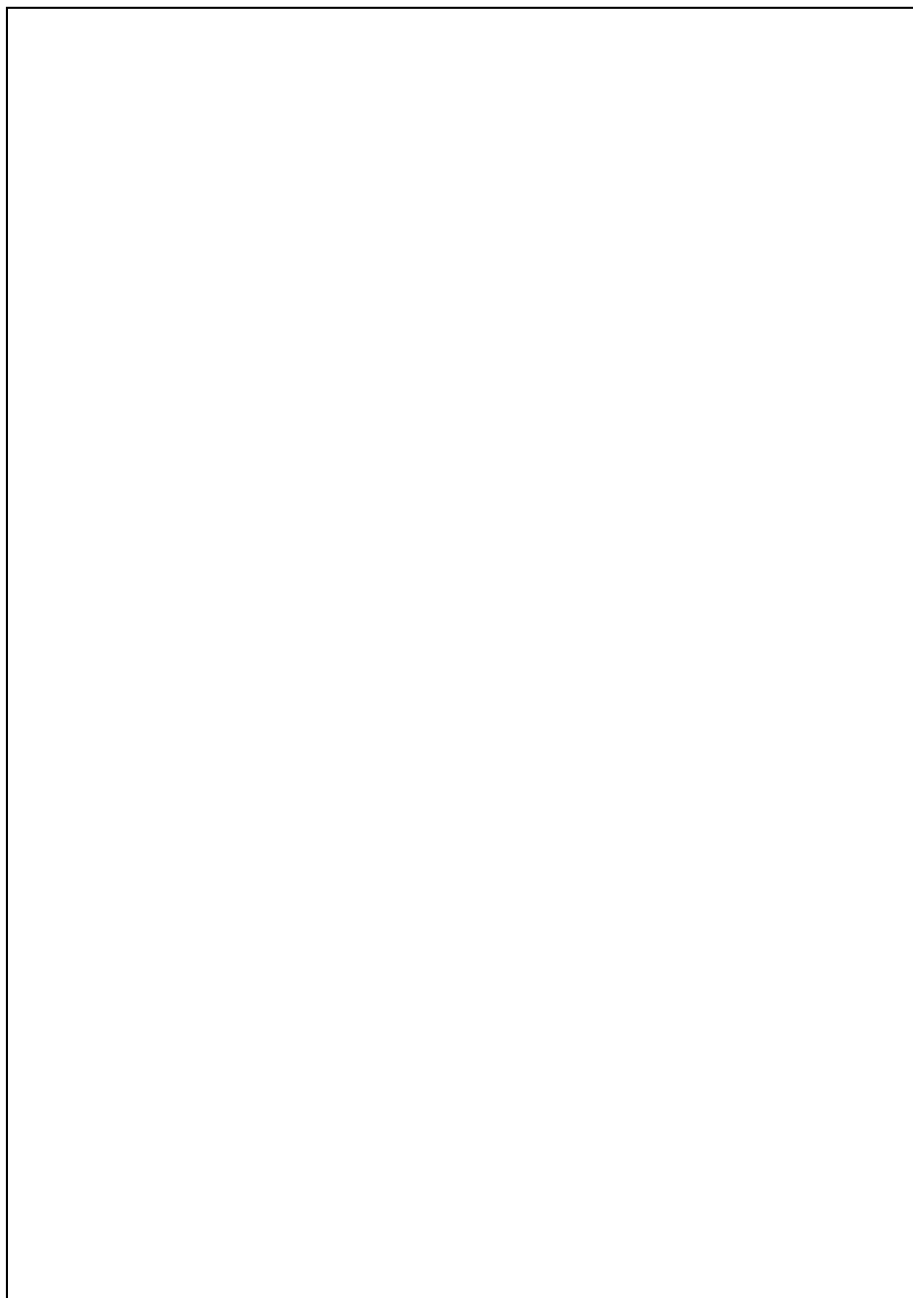
Day 15: Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Romans 12:9-21. Note especially verse 12. Write below the verse that stands out to you.

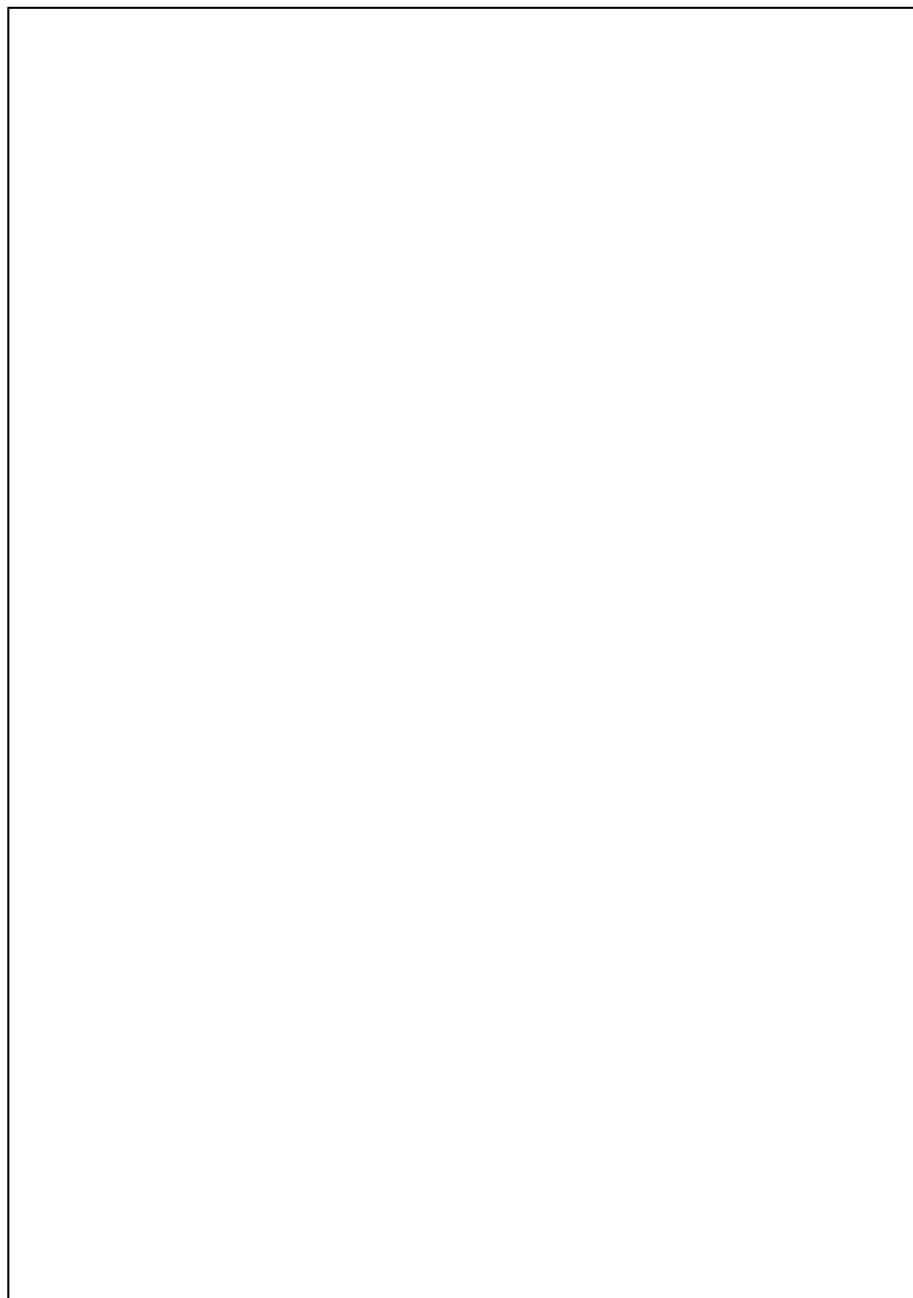
Chew: What thoughts come to mind as you consider this?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? What do you sense the Lord inviting you to do in response?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 33: *Growing In Being Teachable*

Feast: Read Psalm 25:8-9

Chew: Who does God teach? What is a key character quality necessary to be teachable? What difference can it make if this is lacking?

Exercise: Has pride ever robbed you by preventing you from being teachable? Have you ever missed out on learning something because of pride?

Extra Helping: 2 Kings 5:1-14

Day 15: Life Lessons

Do you remember the story of Daniel and the Lion's Den? When Daniel is promoted to the highest position in the Persian empire, the other leaders get jealous. He's a foreigner, and he's ruling over them? They decide to get rid of him.

But the Bible says, "They could find no corruption in him" because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally, these men said, "We will never find any basis for a charge against this man, Daniel, unless it has something to do with the law of his God." (Daniel 6:4b-5) So they get the King to pass a law that no one can pray to anyone but the King for thirty days or else be thrown into the lion's den.

As the highest ruler in the country, second only to the King, Daniel's schedule had to be full. With such responsibility, can you imagine all the work he had to do?

Think of your busiest day. How much time do you have for prayer? I'm not talking about praying on the run with a quick "Help, Lord!" but focused time on your knees. How much time do you think you'd have for this if you were running a country? And how would you respond if you heard the King's mandate?

The Bible tells us, "When Daniel learned that the decrees had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." (Daniel 6:10) Did you note those last six words, "just as he had done before?" Daniel, chief administrator of one of the largest empires in ancient history, took time to go home, get down on his knees, and pray three times a day!

It took much courage to go against the King's edict. But Daniel's faithfulness in prayer and his availability to pray, not once but three times a day, prepared him for what he needed to continue doing throughout the trial.

To be faithful in prayer, we must also be available.

How available are you? How available do you want to be? After a night with the lions (who were incredibly hungry - note how they tore his adversaries to pieces right after he was rescued) the Bible says, "no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." (Daniel 6:23).

To trust God when the heat is on, when our life is hanging in the balance, doesn't just "happen." Being available daily to pray does more than just impact us for the present moment. It prepares us to trust God when we desperately need to.

Day 16: *Growing In Being Available To God*

Feast: Read Psalm 46. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: What does God want you to be available to do? What does it mean to know that God is God? Why do we need to be still to do this? Why is this important?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in becoming more available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

Day 32: Life Lessons

My husband reads with a pen. Often when I pull a book off our shelves, I get engrossed in his tiny writing interacting with the text. His wide margin Bible is a treasure of comments, cross references and questions. I want to bequeath this Bible to our oldest son.

It is one thing to open a virginal book and quite another to turn pages that give off a human scent. Pages that have touched life. Pages that have a history. Pages with spot of coffee or a finger smudge. Pages spattered with a reader's mental sweat.

We own, not a few, books from a used bookstore in England. Their former owners' names are inscribed inside in dated penmanship. These books are gently marked in faint pencil. I read them knowing that more than one hundred years ago another ate from this page as I do now.

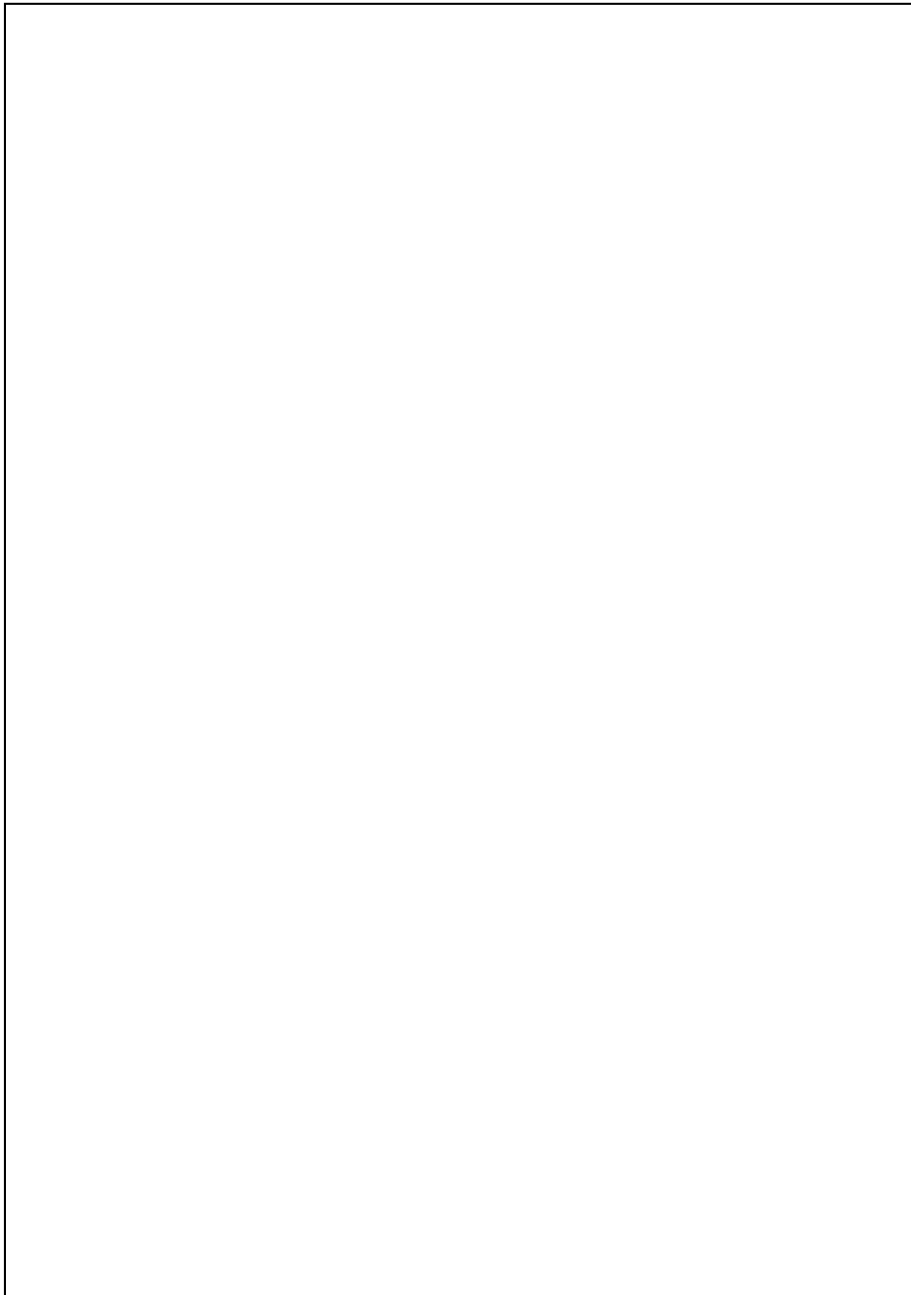
I met a woman who has journaled through my latest book, *Pursue the Intentional Life*, several times. Rereading. Taking notes. Putting the ideas into her own words. Writing with personal slant. Other women have told me that they have underlined large portions of the book. One said she wrote, "WOW! wow! Wow!" in the margin of one page. I love the beautiful personal defacement that points to an engaged reader.

Reading is an art and a skill to be cultivated. How often have we heard someone say, "I read in the Bible this morning, but I can't remember a thing I read?" Sometimes we read over the tops of the words, distracted. A few tips can make a huge difference.

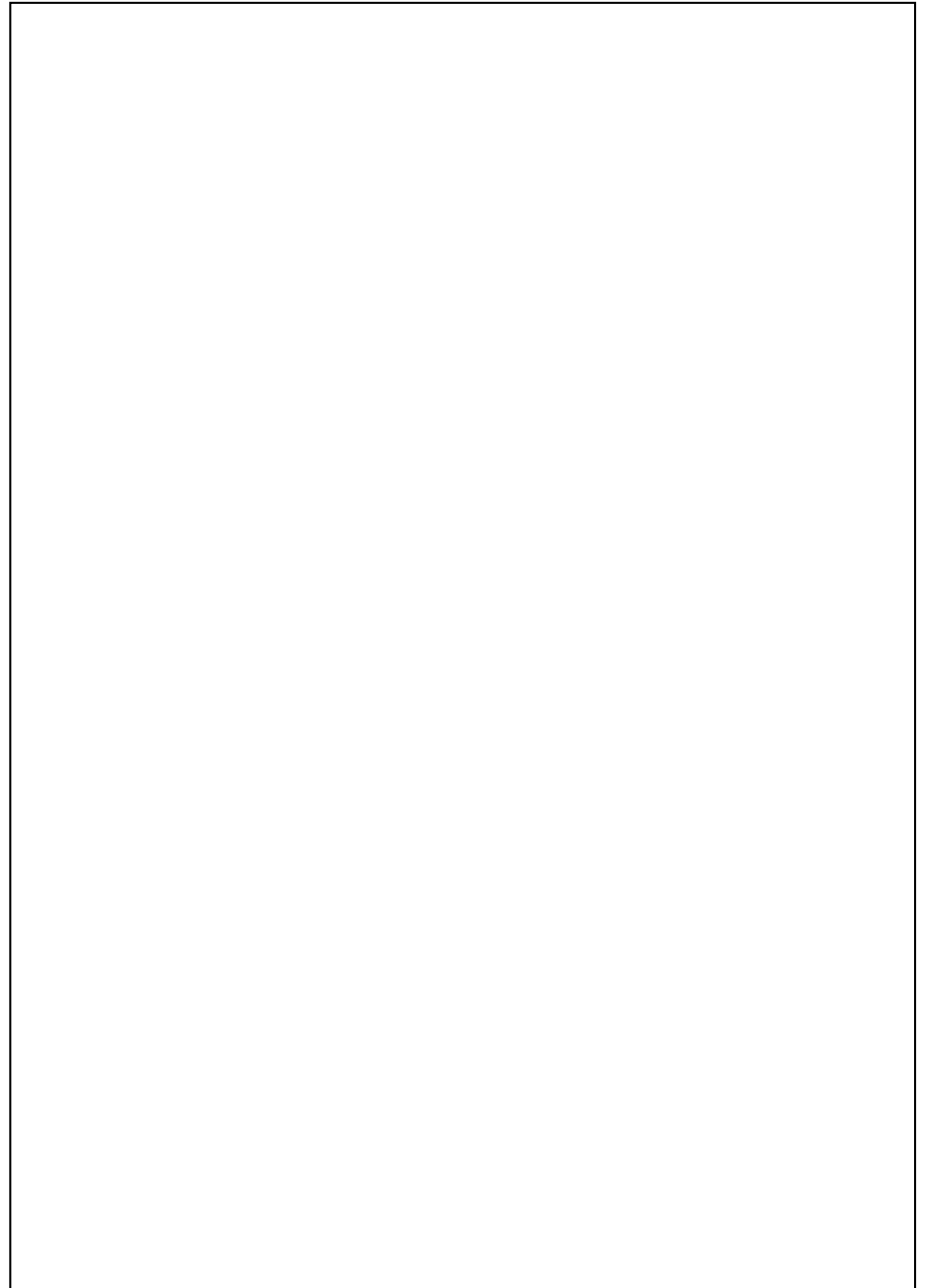
What ideas might move you towards a more reverent immersion in Bible reading? Less like water-skiing, bumping over the wake at break-neck speed, and more like scuba-diving? Something happens when you submerge to take in a shimmering school or an undulating ray. Submerge and pull out your pen. Leave a trace. It's a way to enter into the mystery.

—Jean Fleming

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 16: Life Lessons

Years ago one of my mentors, Martha Reapsome, shared with me.

“If Satan can’t get you to stop,
he’ll get you so busy
you don’t do anything well.”

And how does he get us so busy? By luring us to do things that God never intends for us to do - or to do more than He wants us to do on the things He does ask us to do.

That’s why the secret to doing things well doesn’t start with activity, but with being still and knowing God is God. Let Him call the shots. Only do what He wants you to do. And only do just what He wants you to do. You may see a huge need but He may want you to only do a tiny part in fulfilling it or even just join in by praying for it.

Remember:

He is Lord of all, He can coordinate numerous people to get the job done.

He is all-powerful. He can even do the job Himself miraculously or enable someone unqualified to do it.

He is All-Wise. He knows better than us what needs to be done and the best way to do it. We see the need, when He doesn’t want to only meet the need, but has numerous purposes He’s accomplishing. What we see may only be the tip of the iceberg... or a symptom of something far greater that needs tending to. When we try to take matters into our own hands, we run the risk of applying bandaids when He wants to do major surgery.

He is All-knowing. He sees the beginning from the end, when all we see is the present. Because of this, His timing is perfect. He can wait until the right moment to achieve what He wants. If we run ahead, we risk helping the enemy in his attempt to thwart God’s plans. Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me. He who does not gather with me scatters.” (Matthew 12:30). It is so critical to be with Him before you do anything!

Day 32: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read Proverbs 15:5, 10, 12, 32. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: How teachable is someone who hates correction?

Exercise: How open to correction are you? How does it make you feel when someone corrects you? How do you respond?

Extra Helping: Read Proverbs 9:1-18, 10:17 and 13:18

Day 31: Life Lessons

For several weeks I seemed to not be able to shake the intense inner struggle that enveloped me like a thick cloud. I would think to myself: “Why can't I pull myself out of this?” During our white-water rafting trip I spent some time with a friend. I just poured my heart out to her and told her everything that was going on. She said to me: “It sounds to me like you need to build some convictions in these areas of your life and not be so double-minded!” Ouch!

There were two ways I could respond. One would be to well up with pride as I say to myself: “Who does she think she is talking to me that way!” I'm not double-minded! I have a lot of convictions for my life!” Or I could humble myself before the Lord, take what she said, bring it to Jesus and let him confirm in my heart whether or not this was truth.

The day after we got back from the trip, I went to a local coffee shop to get some time to sip from the Lord's coffee mug. I figured he'd shoot straight with me. So, I began eating the scriptures. As I chewed on a few choice morsels about being double-minded, the Lord led me through an incredible journey that shined through my thick cloud like the sun shines after a long stormy day. I realized I was being double-minded. James 1:6-8 clearly links double-mindedness to doubt and likens it to being like a wave blown and tossed by the wind. My inner struggles were directly linked to who I believed God was and how much I doubted him. I would believe Him to be one way when things were going well (kind, good, loving, etc.) and believe him to be another (distant, uncaring, etc.) when the storms rolled into my life. David Needham from his book “Birthright” describes this well: “Every struggle with sin in our lives can always be traced back to ignoble thoughts about God.” I wish I had room to share the rest of what God showed me. He is so faithful to reveal his heart to us!

There were a few other things my friend shared with me that day too. Those stories are for another time. In hind sight, I realized that if I had let my pride get in the way of listening to what she had to say, I would have missed out on what God wanted to show me! So, next time you have a friend that's speaking into your life, you might want to ask the Lord if there's any truth in what they're saying.

“Wounds from a friend can be trusted...” Proverbs 27:6

-- **Jamie Clark**

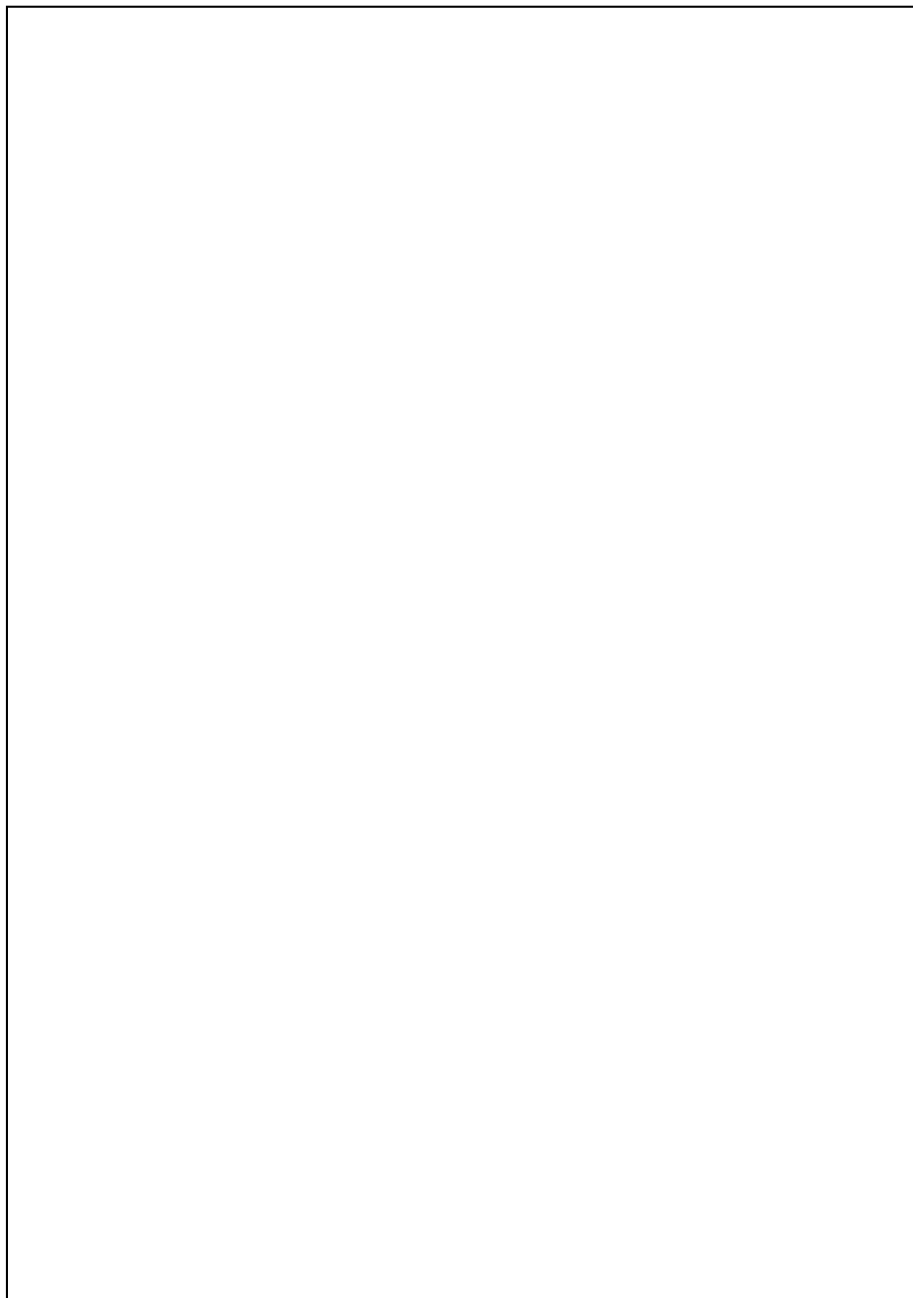
Day 17: Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Matthew 6:25-34. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

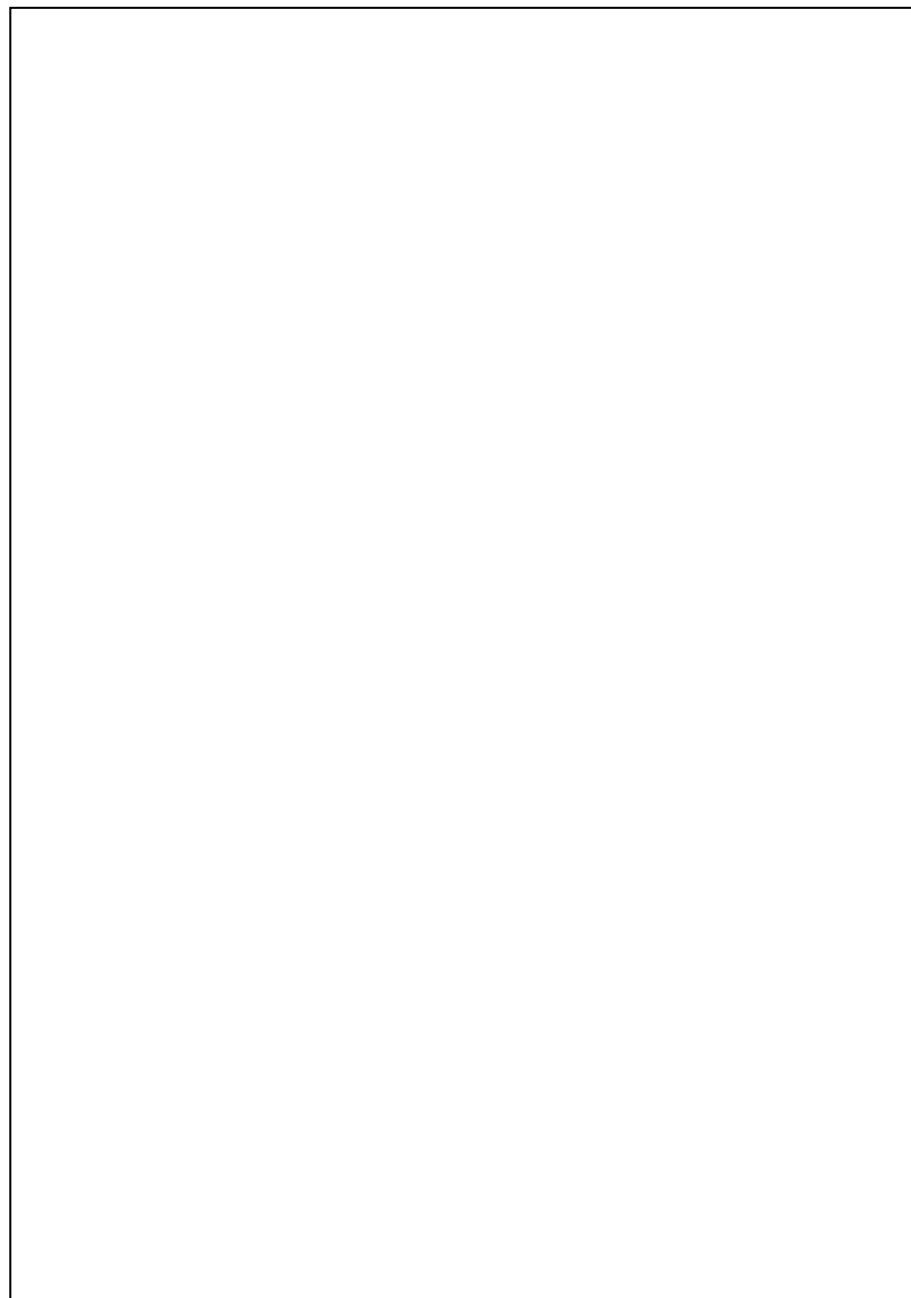
Chew: How can worrying keep us from being available to God? What does God want us to do instead?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in becoming available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind for you to do in response to this verse?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 31: *Growing In Being Teachable*

Feast: Read James 1:19-20. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: How important is listening to being teachable? What impact can anger have on our teachability?

Exercise: Do you listen? How much? How quickly do you get angry? Have you ever missed out on learning something because you reacted to what someone had to say rather than considering it?

Extra Helping: 2 Chronicles 26:1-21

Day 17: Life Lessons

On my first trip overseas with the Navigators, I went to what was then Yugoslavia (this was nearly 40 years ago). This was a closed country. The government didn't allow missionaries to be there, so the missionaries who lived there were at risk of being discovered and kicked out or worse. They never knew when someone they were sharing with might be faking it and really be an informer.

So the Navigators asked for a team of college students to come and run an English camp where we talked about spiritual things with the Yugoslavians who attended to find out who really was searching. If we were exposed, it was no big deal - we'd get thrown out of the country, whereas, for a missionary who has taken years to learn the language and has paid dearly to move his whole family, there were far more serious consequences if exposed. So we went to serve as a "front line."

You'd think I was being available by going. But once there, the leader of the English camp asked if anyone could play the guitar. They wanted someone to sing popular songs (we're talking the Beatles here!) because the Yugoslavians loved those songs and they provided great springboards for spiritual discussions.

I had played the guitar for years, but I was totally self-taught and not very good. I played for myself, for fun. But to get up in front of a room of people and sing and play pop songs? No way! So I sat there and didn't say a word. No one else knew I played and I certainly wasn't about to tell anyone.

The next morning, they asked again, "Are you sure no one plays guitar? We really need someone. You don't have to play well. The Yugoslavians won't care. They're just here to have fun and learn English." God started working in my heart, convicting me that my pride and fear of what others would think were keeping me silent and making me unavailable when He just wanted me to "make a joyful noise." So, I volunteered.

Yes, it was humiliating at first, but I survived. No one laughed or made fun. In fact, with everyone singing along, you couldn't hear me much at all. Was it ever beautiful to see how God worked through the discussions that followed.

Worrying about what others would think almost robbed me of taking part as God wanted me to.

Day 18: *Growing In Being Available To God*

Feast: Read John 15:1-8 (especially noting verse 2). Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: What does God do to increase our availability? When does He do this?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

Day 30: Life Lessons

I love to learn.
I love to read.
I love to go to conferences.
I love to hear new ideas.

But that doesn't mean I'm teachable.

I might look teachable, but put me in a situation where I'm not interested, and what do you think happens? That's really where the rubber meets the road. A teachable person is open to learning whatever the one in charge wants them to learn—especially when the one in charge is God! My problem is I love to learn what I want to learn.

When I select books that interest me, I'm eager to be taught. But I don't always want to learn what God wants me to learn. Nor do I always appreciate His teaching methods. When that happens, I'm not being teachable.

But He is the All-Wise God. When I'm selectively teachable, I'm really saying, "I know better what I need to know. So don't bother me with what I don't consider important." See the difference? See the pride?

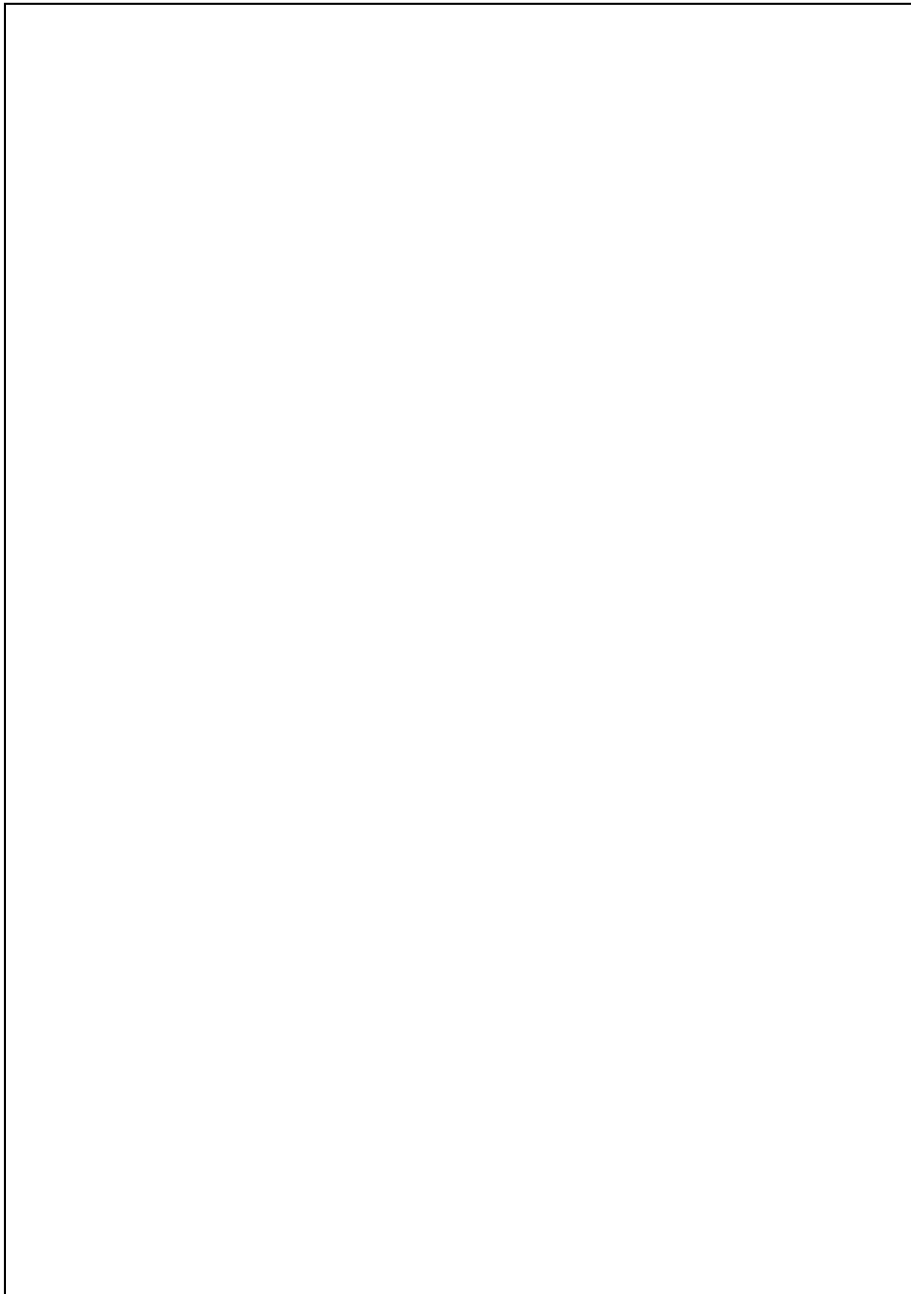
I often forget that God knows everything. I may not see a need to learn something, but I only know what I need to know today (or what I think I need to know today), whereas He knows what I'm going to need tomorrow (as well as what I really need to know today).

A love of learning does not necessarily mean a person is teachable.

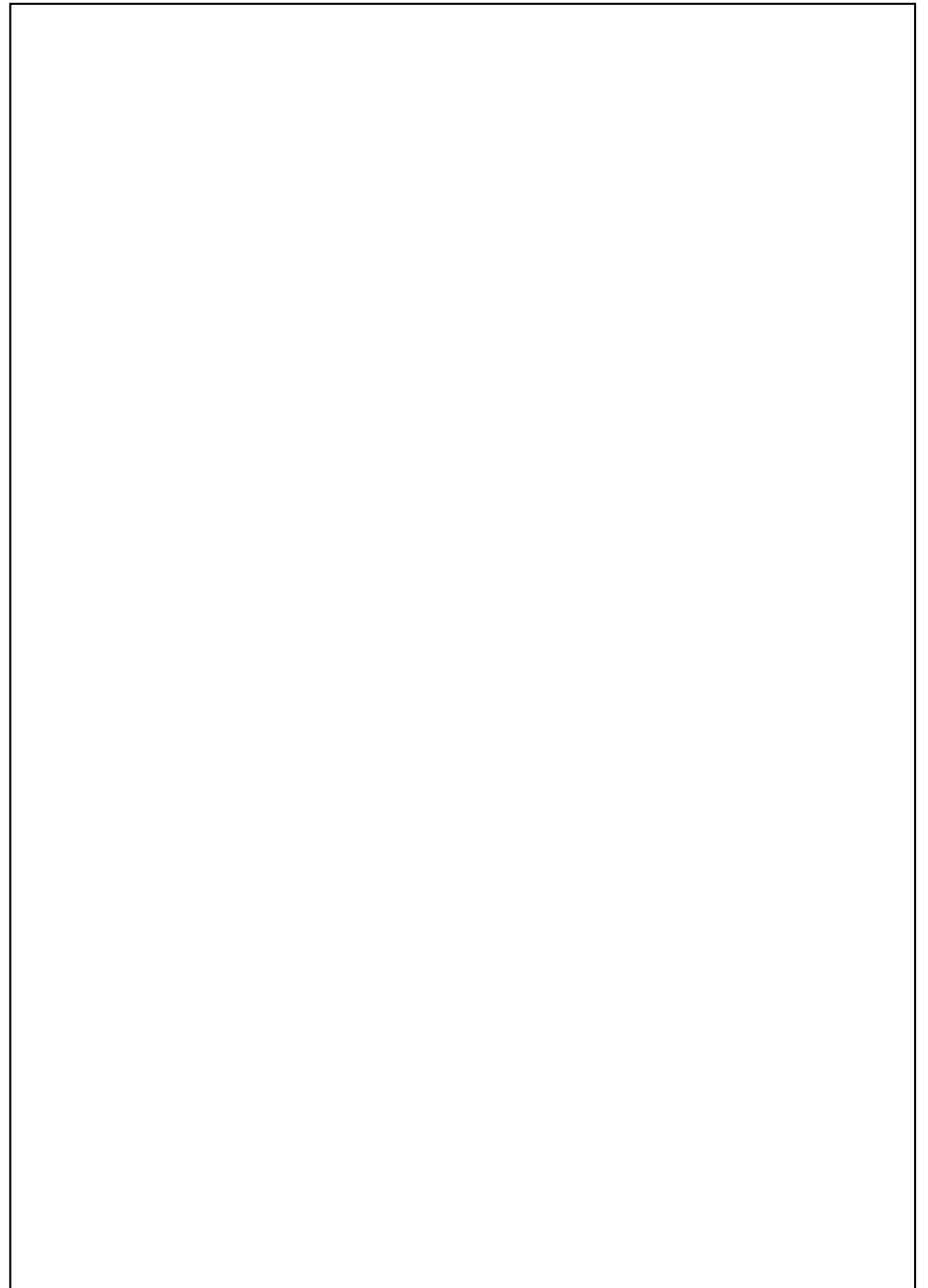
Winston Churchill once said,
"I like to learn, but I do not like to be taught."

He was, in many ways, a great man. But he was not very teachable.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 18: Life Lessons

“Who are you teaching aerobics for?” the Lord gently questioned me one day. “Are you doing it for my glory?”

I had been reading 1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” And that phrase “whatever you do” haunted me. I had taught aerobics for 20 years. It was a big part of my life.

I love to dance. I loved getting paid to exercise. But I had to admit it was one thing I wasn’t doing for God. I knew other people who did it for Him, but for myself I knew deep down I was doing it to stay in shape for me. It wasn’t something God asked me to do that I was doing in obedience to Him.

When I admitted that, He laid it on my heart to quit. I did - but it was tough. Fears of blimping out and the awful feeling of de-conditioning as my muscles adjusted to a less rigorous life were really tough. But am I ever thankful I did this.

Even though teaching aerobics only took a few hours a week, I’d teach in the early morning before my son was up, the Lord directed me to take that time and start walking and interacting with Him. After a few months, I realized I hadn’t given anything up. Instead I’d received a gift of time alone with Him that was radically transforming my life in ways I never could have imagined.

One hour spent in prayer each day enjoying Him became my favorite part of my day. Even more than getting in good prayer time, the intimacy I experienced with Him went to a deeper level than I imagined possible.

And oh the fun we had as the Lord pointed out flowers and revealed treasures of how He made them. It’s fascinating to walk the same route every day of the year and follow the flowers through all their stages. This made me appreciate even more the Lord as the great creator! And I learned so much from the lessons He’d teach as we dialogued about His Word.

When I let the Lord prune teaching aerobics from my life, I didn’t give up anything; instead, He made room to give me new treasures in abundance.

Day 30: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read 2 Timothy 4:3-4 and write the verse below.

Chew: Is it possible to love learning and not be teachable? How?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being teachable? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

Extra Helping: Read 2 Timothy 3:1-7

Day 29: Life Lessons

"I know that."

Those are three dangerous words because they are often used to close the door on a learning experience. People who aren't teachable say them a lot. I know this, because I used to say them a lot.

Then, one day, the Lord showed me when I say, "I know that," I can miss out on treasure He has for me.

Saying "I know that" is often synonymous with saying, "I don't need or want to hear anymore." I'm trying to eliminate those three words from my vocabulary. Besides, what do I really know?

I may have heard something similar, but perhaps I'll hear a new twist or idea associated with something I know. Or maybe hearing it again will help me to know it even better!

Let's say I know how to have a quiet time and someone starts sharing about this. If I jump in and say, "I know that," well, that ends that strand of conversation.

But in reality, what do I know? I know how I have a quiet time, but I don't know how that person does. If I hear them out, I might learn something new—either about how to have a quiet time or about them as a person.

Far better to not consider myself knowing anything and hear the same thing over again than to miss out.

My Sacrifice?

I thought that I was giving up
Something precious to myself
For I had sought true riches
in but dust

How it hurt to let go
Of the thing I treasured so
But I was obedient when God
Said I must

Still I counted it as cost
Thought how great my sacrifice
To do what would please
my precious Lord

Then He opened up my eyes
In His light I realized
Garbage, dung was all that I had
yearned to hoard

Day 19:

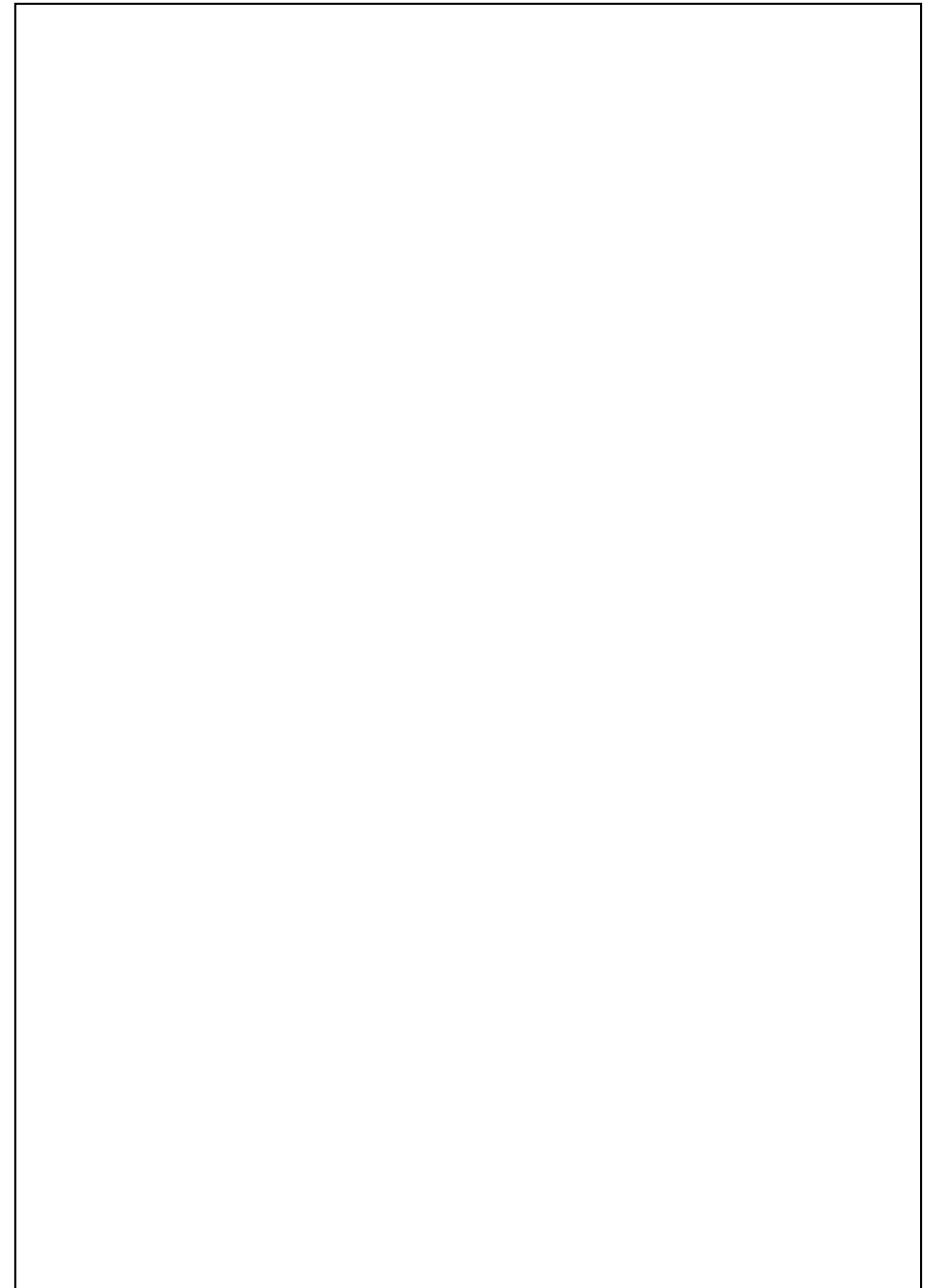
Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Luke 9: 57-62. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Are these people really available? What does Jesus' response reveal?

Exercise: How does this challenge you regarding your availability? What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 29: Growing In Being Teachable

Feast: Read 1 Corinthians 8:2.

Chew: Ponder each piece of the verse & record thoughts below.

If =

anyone =

imagines =

that he knows =

something =

he =

does not yet =

know =

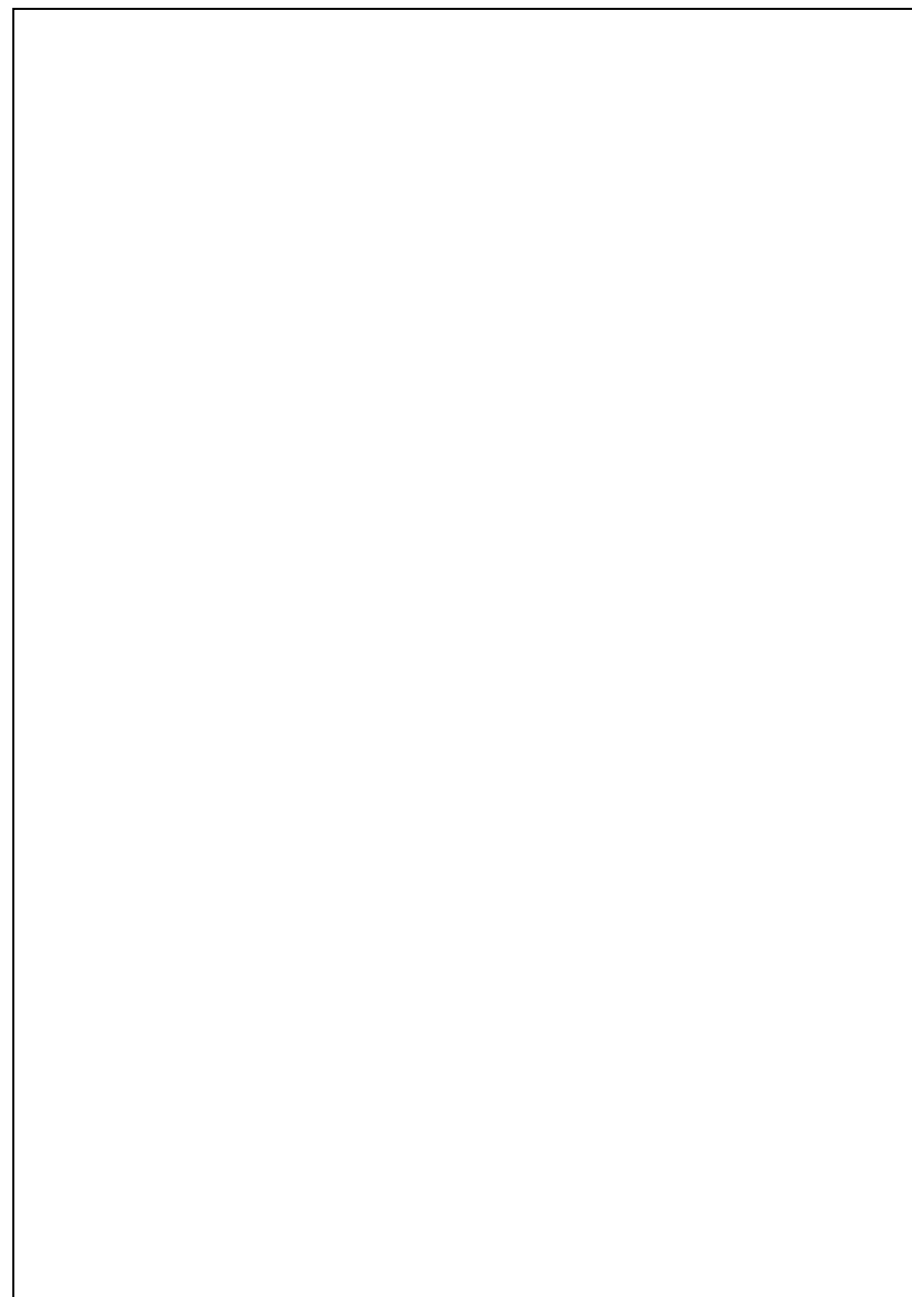
as he ought =to

know =

Exercise: According to this, what can make someone unteachable?

What is vital for someone to be teachable? How does this challenge you to grow in being teachable?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 19: Life Lessons

I was nine months pregnant. Only one more day until my due date. At any moment, my son could pop out, but in the meantime, I was big, uncomfortable, and waiting.

I dropped to my knees, “Oh, Poppa, just because I’m having a baby doesn’t mean I want to stop laboring in the harvest, helping others come to know you. Would you please continue to bring across my path women who are seeking?”

I was still on my knees when the phone rang. The new aerobics instructor recently hired to teach my class while I recovered after giving birth had heard me use an Amy Grant song in class and asked if I was a Christian. She’d been wanting to know more about God. I was so excited. Talk about answered prayer!

I asked if she’d like to meet to read and discuss the Bible, and she eagerly said yes. But my baby was due the next day, so I said, “I’ll call you after the baby’s born.”

Can you believe he was five days late?

We never did get to read the Bible together. Getting used to life with a newborn proved a considerable learning curve that consumed me in a way I never imagined. But I had a lot of time during those five days I was waiting.

Why didn’t I trust the Creator of the Universe would work out the timing if I made the most of the opportunity?

I thought I was available, but when the opportunity came, I wasn’t.

<p>And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11</p>	<p>9. Am I seeking to gain a better understanding of my family and others who are close to me?</p>
<p>But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. 2 Peter 3:18</p>	<p>Am I continually gaining a better understanding of God?</p>
<p>Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. Isaiah 55:3</p>	<p>11. How often do I “show up for class” (eg., open my Bible so the Lord can teach me?)</p>

What thoughts come to mind as you’ve worked your way through this assessment?

What do you sense the Lord is saying to you through this? How is He inviting you to respond?

(Adapted from the Navigator’s 2:7 series, course six)

<p>My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, James 1:19</p>	<p>4.How good of a listener am I?</p>
<p>Do not correct a scoffer [who foolishly ridicules and takes no responsibility for his error] or he will hate you; Correct a wise man [who learns from his error], and he will love you. Proverbs 9:8 (AMP)</p>	<p>5.How do I respond when someone corrects me? Do I try to justify myself or get defensive?</p>
<p>For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12</p>	<p>6.Is my time in God's Word exposing areas of sin or places where I need to grow? How do I respond when this happens?</p>
<p>If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 1 Corinthians 8:2</p>	<p>7.Do I have a questioning mind, rather than thinking I have all the answers I need?</p>
<p>Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. Lamentations 3:40</p>	<p>8.Do I actively seek to gain a better understanding of myself?</p>

Day 20:

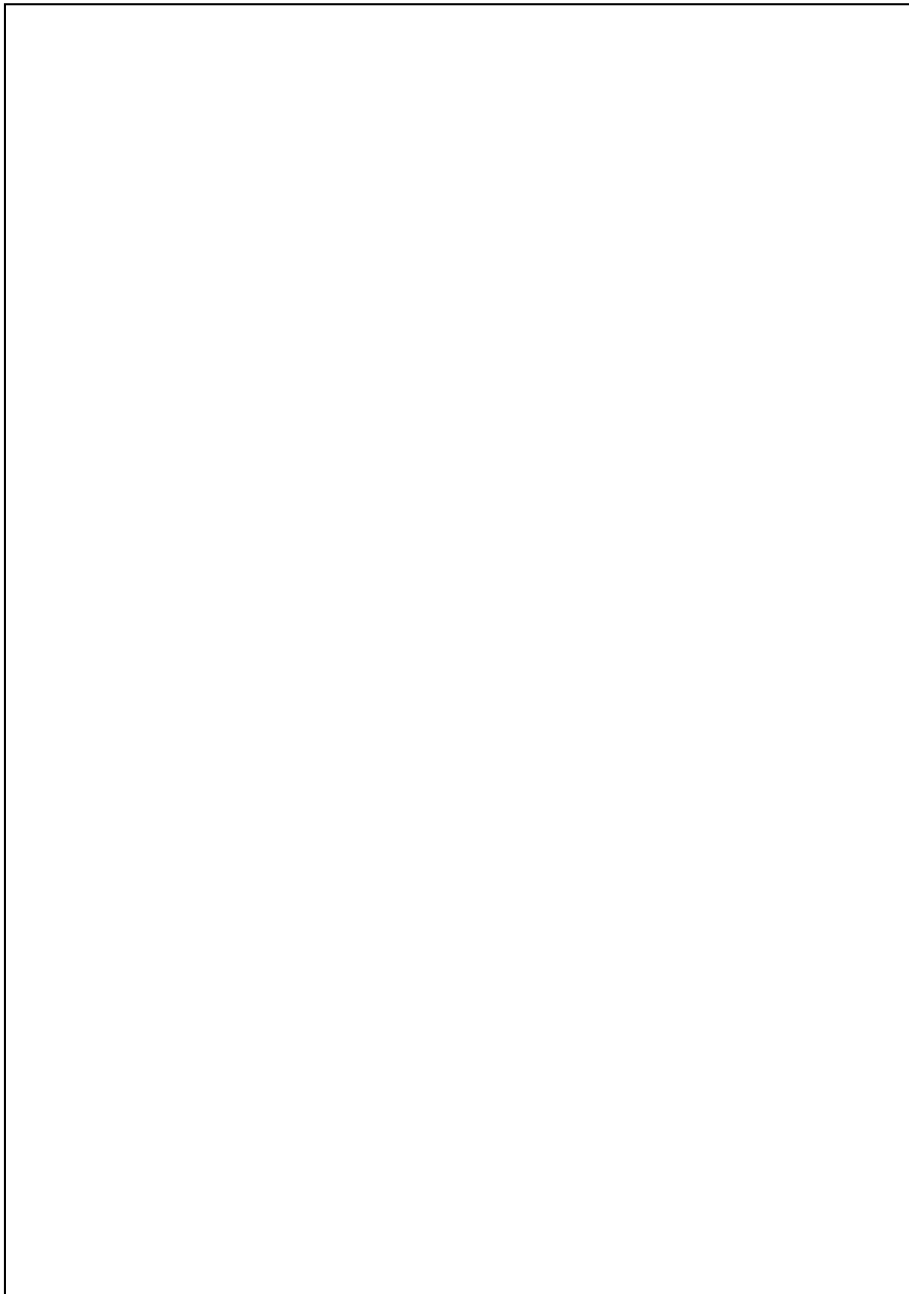
Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Psalm 16, especially noting verses 5&6. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: What boundaries has God laid for you? Are you fighting them? Or resting in them, having found them to be the pleasant places they are?

Exercise: How do these boundaries impact your availability? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Assess Your Teachability

Consider the following:

<p>If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 1 Corinthians 8:2</p>	<p>1. How open am I to the ideas of others or do I automatically think my ideas are best? How does 1 Corinthians 8:2 relate to this?</p>
<p>The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice. Proverbs 12:15</p>	<p>2. Do I seek out advice before making a decision? How do I respond when I haven't asked for the advice?</p>
<p>He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Proverbs 15:31</p>	<p>3. Can I think of a recent instance in which someone mentioned something I could improve on? How did I respond? Am I working on it?</p>

Week 5: Teachable

I will teach you and instruct you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.

Psalm 32:8

Read Psalm 32. When you consider verse 8 in context,
what do you notice about this verse?

Does God teach everyone? Why or why not?

What can get in the way of Him teaching us?

Day 20: My Commitment

I'll climb the highest mountain
I'll sail the roughest sea
I'll settle in any foreign land
And live life dangerously.
I'll endure the harshest winter
Pushing onward through sleet and snow
I'm ready, Lord, do with me as you will,
Just show me the way I should go.

But Lord, if mine's a more humble plight,
I'll serve you wherever I am,
Loving my family, scrubbing the floor
Or in a traffic jam.
Washing the dishes, cleaning the tub,
Baking cookies for neighborhood kids.
Lord help me never to rise so "high"
I won't do all that you bid.

Day 21:
Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. Record below the verse that stands out to you.

Chew: How did God call Jehoshaphat and his people to be available? What made this hard? Would you have wanted to be in their shoes? What did Jehoshaphat do to help them remain available?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

You just survived your fourth week of this diet!
We'd so appreciate your feedback:



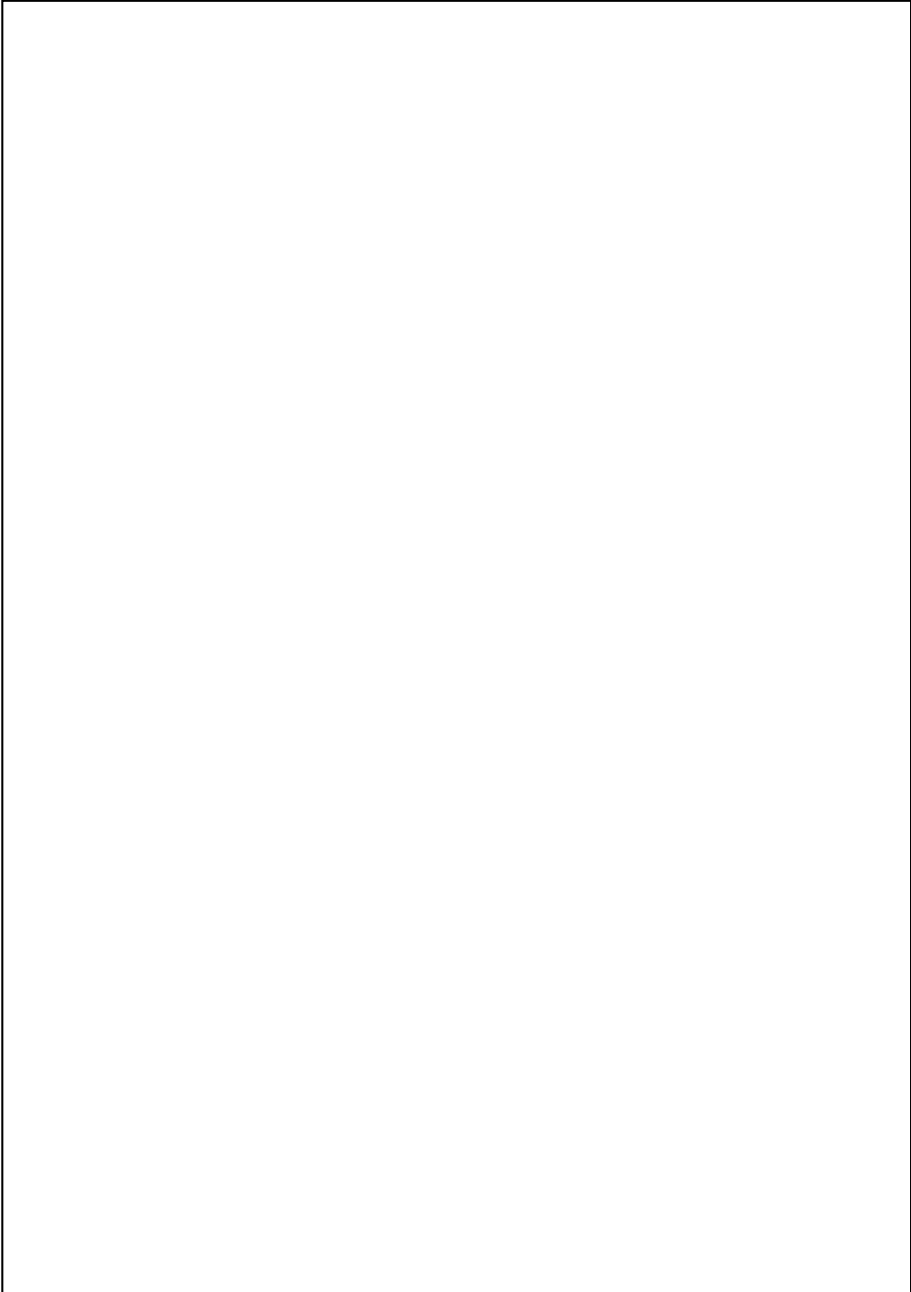
Weekly Meal Plan Review

Look back over the past 7 days and write down any themes or big lessons God blessed you with! Take time to consider, how did you respond? And what happened as a result?

NOURISHING TREASURE	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	

EXERCISE	
(what did you plan to do?)	(what happened as a result?)

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 21: Life Lessons

I always thought of the three: faithful, available, and teachable that available was the easiest. Now I'm not so sure. It's really not only a matter of showing up or having an open schedule. Sometimes, it can be scary to be available to do what God calls you to do.

One year, while getting ready to lead a Bible study at church, I learned one of the other leaders was planning on leading a "Bible study" based on a work of fiction. Curious, I picked up a copy of the book and started reading.

I hadn't read far when I fell to my knees in horror. The book contained heresy! And in the form of a story, lies penetrate straight into the heart! As I prayed, begging the Lord to erase the dangerous lies from my heart and mind, I sensed Him say, "You need to confront her." Seriously? I was 29! Who was I to confront another Bible study leader twice my age, especially regarding heresy?

Yet the Lord persisted, "You need to talk to her." My fingers shook as I dialed her number. We decided to meet the following Monday. Was I ever shaking in my shoes as I approached her front door. I had no idea what to say. Would she be offended? Or yell at me?

The moment she opened the door, she exclaimed, "Deb! It's not a good book, is it? I hadn't even read it. I just thought it'd be a creative way to explore the topic of suffering. But when you asked to come talk with me, I thought I better read it. I am so thankful you brought this to my attention before the study began!"

At the end of the movie [The Princess Diaries](#), Mia's father writes to her, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but the judgment that something is more important than fear." I learned that day courage (aka being willing when you are scared stiff to do what God calls you to do and doing it) is a key part of being available.

Day 28: Life Lessons

In college, I had a friend who memorized the entire book of Colossians. We were all amazed. Running with him was like having the audio Bible online—only this was forty years ago, long before the internet.

How spiritual do you have to be to memorize an entire book of the Bible? That's what another friend thought when she married him. But then she discovered all this spiritual activity was masking deep sin. She later learned when God convicted him about his use of pornography and gambling, his response was increased "spiritual" activity in other areas.

This is sloth. And he wasn't the only one who struggled with this.

It can be so easy to think, I work hard. I'm an active person. Sloth isn't an issue for me. But the early church fathers didn't define sloth merely as inactivity or laziness but also included being busy doing the wrong things.

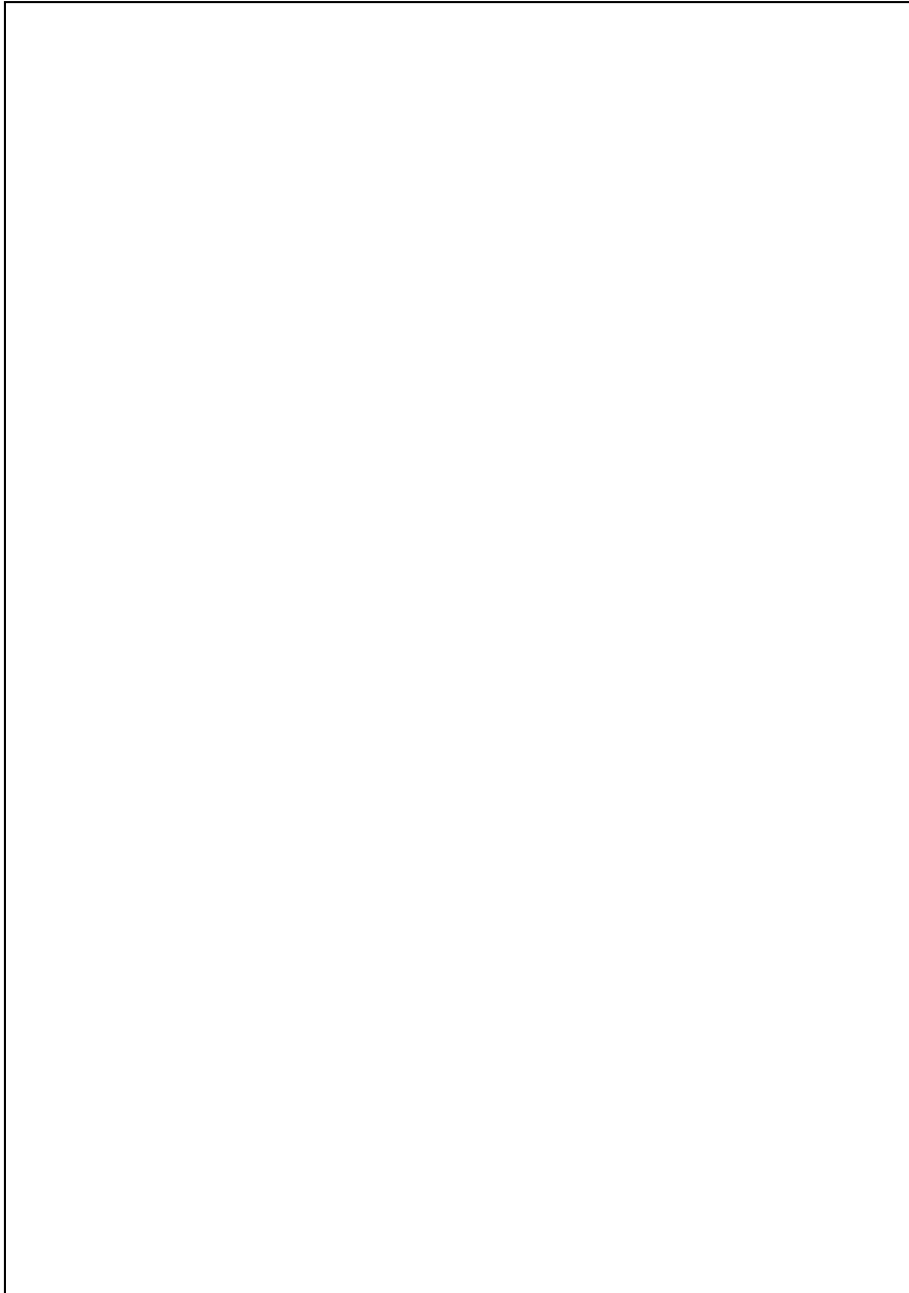
Sloth is one of the seven deadly sins, because when you are busy doing what God doesn't want you to do, you aren't available to do what the Lord is doing. God invites us to join Him in His work to experience Him. To do anything else is to miss out on pursuing Jesus as your first love.

Note these "slothful" activities aren't necessarily sin in themselves. They can be very good things, even spiritual things, but they aren't what God wants you to do.

Sloth is about being apathetic following Jesus. But it sure can be deceptive... being busy doing spiritual things we can look like we're following Jesus... and wither! Sloth sucks the life out of life, because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Sloth not only makes us unavailable to God but as my friend who memorized Colossians sadly discovered after he lost his marriage, his family and everything he had, it destroys us from the inside out.

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Weekly Meal Plan Review

Look back over the past 7 days and write down any themes or big lessons God blessed you with! Take time to consider, how did you respond? And what happened as a result?

NOURISHING TREASURE	
<i>1</i>	
<i>2</i>	
<i>3</i>	
<i>4</i>	
<i>5</i>	
<i>6</i>	
<i>7</i>	

EXERCISE	
(what did you plan to do?)	(what happened as a result?)
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Day 28: ***Growing In Being Available To God***

You just survived your third week of this diet!
We'd so appreciate your feedback:



Feast: Read Proverbs 6:6-11. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: What can you learn from ants? How can being diligent daily to do your work help you be available?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

Extra Helping: Check out Proverbs 13:4.

Day 27: Life Lessons

Our neighborhood is the last one before farm country starts. I love to walk and pray in the wide open spaces. One day I saw an eagle swoop down and steal hay from a nearby horse farm. There's also a peacock farm and I never know where I'm going to see those birds next! But I'm learning all is not peaceful and serene on these farms.

One day, while out walking and praying, I saw a woman in a golf cart pull off to the side of the road. As I passed she called out, "Hey! What are you doing?" After sharing I was walking and praying, I asked if she had anything she'd like me to pray for.

She shared that her mother had recently died, and the next thing I knew, I was not only getting to pray for her but also sharing the Bridge illustration with her. When I asked if she'd like to start reading the Bible together, she jumped at the opportunity!

She'd come from a rough background, was barely literate, and wasn't able to drive anything but a golf cart. The place she lived looked scary. Then I learned she never knew when her partner's brother, who lived in a trailer outside, might be tripping out. Huge "No Trespassing" signs were posted. Guard dogs roamed the property freely. I decided to invite her to my house to read the Bible.

At 10 am the next morning, I texted, "Would you like to come over?" She texted back, "Sure!" But she didn't arrive until 6:30 pm, right as my husband came home for dinner. He'd worked through lunch handling problems and was hungry.

I put food on the table so he could eat, and Nereeza and I went into another room to read and talk. We enjoyed a great time in the Word!

But this kept happening. I invited Nereeza to eat with us but she was never hungry, just slow to get out the door. My husband was frustrated and I felt caught. She was so eager to read and discuss the Bible, but seemed incapable of coming when invited and showed up at times that conflicted with me caring for my husband.

After a year of this, I was really struggling. Who was I supposed to be available to?

My friend Jean Fleming encouraged me I needed to set boundaries. Nereeza seemed incapable of honoring them and eventually disappeared.

I cried out to God, "I wish I could be available 24/7!" And I sensed him reply, "You mean you want to be me?"

Week 4: The Key Role of Confession & Repentance in Growing in Being Available To God

When You Start To Feel Discouraged
Because of Your Sin...

We are now half way through this study. If you are starting to feel down from being convicted how far you fall short in being Jesus' disciple, please know you are not alone.

Most men will proclaim each his own goodness,
But who can find a faithful man?

Proverbs 20:6

Faithfulness - it's not something that comes naturally to us. If you've been feeling a bit convicted as you've been working through these passages of Scripture, join the club!

How many people does the Bible say are naturally available? Isaiah 53:6 states:

"All of us have strayed away like sheep.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.
Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all."

Kind of hard to be available when you're going your own way, eh? Especially when you're not even on God's path.

If you've been feeling low because of this - take heart. That's why we need Jesus.

And know you're not the only one. I know I've had to go back a number of times and readjust where I circled on that first "F.A.T. Assessment." I may need to start writing in negative numbers.

Seriously, if you've coasted through and not been convicted at all, that's when you should be most concerned!

Consider the following stories Jesus told...

*“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven -
for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little”
Luke 7:47*

1. Read Luke 7:36-50. What is the context for this verse?

Why did the woman love much?

Did the Pharisee need forgiveness less than the woman?

Why did he love little?

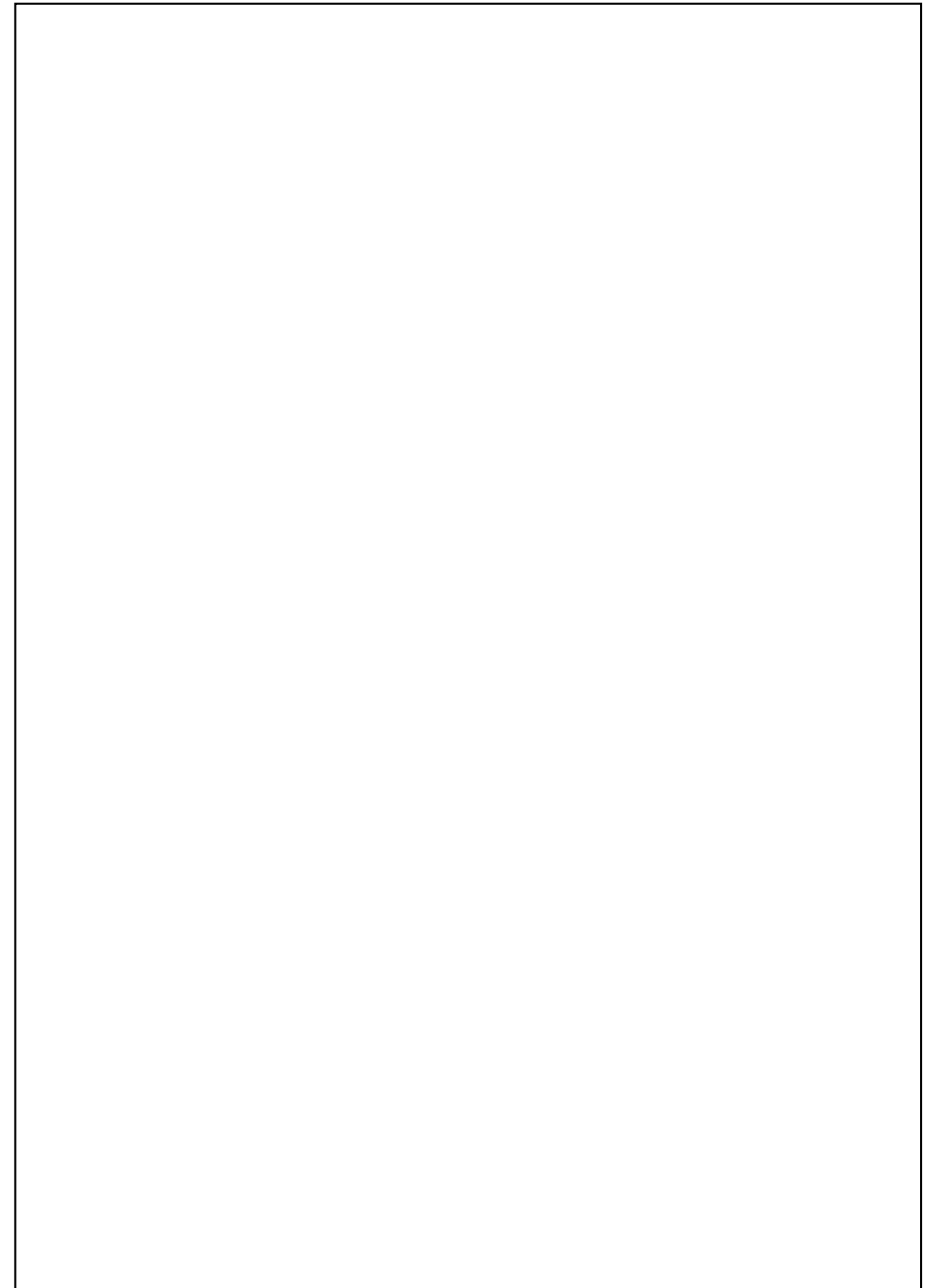
So why was he forgiven little?

Which do you think is worse: to be a prostitute who is aware of her sin or to be a pharisee who thinks he's righteous?

Why is it a blessing to be aware of sin in your life?

Whom do you most identify with? Why?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 27:
Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Luke 22:39-46. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Was it easy for Jesus to do what God wanted Him to do? What attitude helped Him be available?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

2. Read Luke 18:9=14. Whom do you most identify with?

Have you ever said...

“I thank you God I am not like...”

Have you ever felt like you couldn't even lift your eyes to God and beat yourself up mentally because you felt heavy from the weight of your sin?

According to what Jesus says here, is it bad to feel this way? Why or why not?

What can an intense awareness of our sin do for us?

Guilt says “I did something wrong” Shame says, “there’s something wrong with me.” Which do you struggle with most?

What does the gospel have to say about this?

Life Lessons

One morning after a rather sleepless night I woke and exclaimed, “God, this really stinks! I know I’m a mess. I know I blow it all over the place. But I’m so tired of always feeling horrible.”

Did the Lord ever meet me in a special way, gently reminding me...

“When I chose you before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in my sight, I already knew every way you were going to blow it—and I chose you anyway!

To be disappointed in someone, you must expect more from them. But I know you better than you know yourself. I know exactly what you’re capable of, and I know exactly when you’re going to drop the ball. You can’t disappoint me.

In Jesus, I have provided you with everything you need to be cleansed from your sin. It may take effort for you to confess each day but don’t forget it cost me dearly to make it possible for you to do this.

You need to know there’s much more sin in your life than you know. When you join me in heaven, you will be amazed at how much more my son had to pay for - more than you’ve ever dreamed.

In mercy, I don’t expose all of your sins to you; I know what you can handle. But when I do shine my light to expose sin in your life, it’s only because I love you and want you to confess it so you can be cleansed from it.

I also do this so you can appreciate increasingly more what I’ve done for you. With all the sin I’m forgiving you, there will never be a day where you don’t have something to be thankful for.

And it certainly should serve as a daily reminder of how much you need me.”

You’d think I would’ve been satisfied with all this, but I complained, “Lord, my sin is such aweight. You don’t know how awful it is to feel this way.”

“Oh, don’t I?” He replied, “I know exactly what you’re feeling and then some! Remember, the weight of your sin was on me too.” Then He gave the words to the song on the next page.

I can’t begin to describe the new perspective and peace this brought and continues to bring. Thank you, Jesus!

Day 26: Life Lessons

When Covid began, I sensed the Lord laying on my heart the most important thing He wanted me to do was to pray for my husband and son for an hour each day. They were each running companies, and overseeing operations and caring for employees in the middle of a pandemic is no small task.

But praying isn’t just telling God what I think he should do, but listening and enjoying the One who holds the Universe together. I’m an active prayer who loves to connect with the Lord outdoors in nature, so as I walk, we talk, and I never cease to be amazed at the things I often hear as I slow down and listen.

One day, as I was praying, I sensed the Lord say to me, “The next time your neighbor asks you to pray for her, ask if you could share the bridge illustration with her.” I was shocked. We’d only recently begun interacting.

But sure enough, as I headed back into our cul-de-sac, my neighbor came out to walk her dog and asked if I would pray for her. After I did, I asked, “Would you be interested in seeing an illustration that summarizes the main message of the Bible?” She replied, “Maybe. I’ll let you know.”

Two days later, I received a text, “My company just let 400 people go. I am out of a job. Can I come see that illustration?”

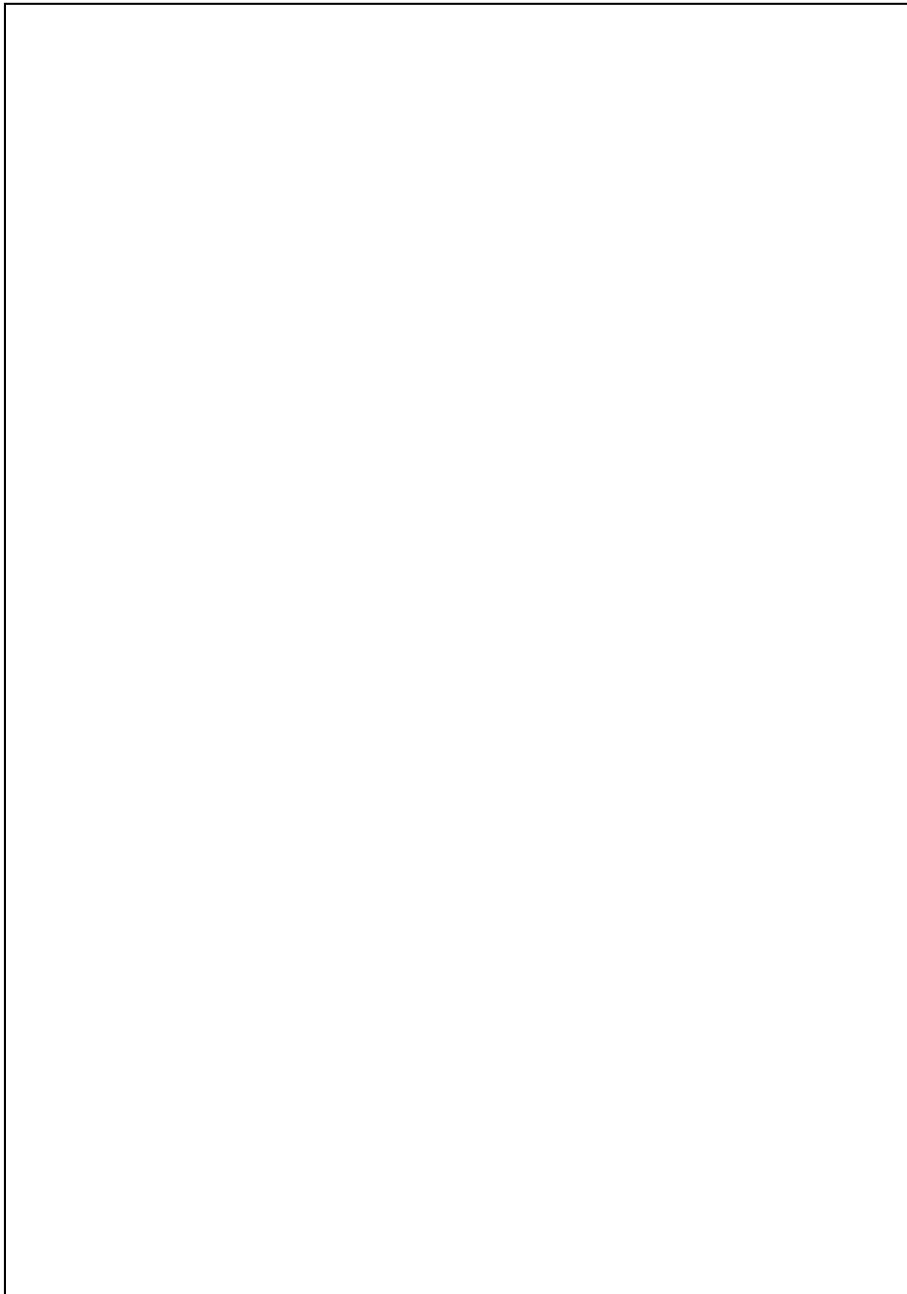
She had never read the Bible before. For two hours, I shared the bridge illustration and answered her questions as we discussed the gospel. When I asked, “Where would you place yourself on this illustration?” she picked it up, carefully folded it, and asked, “Can I keep this? I want to think about this.”

It has been so exciting to see how the Lord’s been at work in her heart. And honestly, if I hadn’t been out walking and praying and listening to hear what the Lord wanted to say, I wouldn’t have thought to ask about showing her the Bridge illustration!

From Henry Blackaby I learned to ask, “Where are you at work, God? How do you want me to join in?”

When I take time to listen, it’s amazing how eager He is to show me!

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Not A Day Goes By

Not a day goes by, but I have need of repenting
Jesus, hear my cry, again I come to you
With a heavy sigh, full aware that I have blown it
No matter how I try, I fall short of you

What a treasure to know you know all about me
My failings are no surprise to you
You knew me full well before you ever chose me
I'm no disappointment to you

Not a day goes by, but I have need of repenting
Jesus, hear my cry, again I come to you
With a heavy sigh, full aware that I have blown it
No matter how I try, I fall short of you

What a treasure to know you knew just what I needed
And you provided it too
Get my eyes off myself, may my heart praise you, Jesus
Reminded of my need for you

Not a day goes by, but I have need of repenting
Jesus, hear my cry, again I come to you
With a heavy sigh, full aware that I have blown it
No matter how I try, I fall and need you

What a treasure to know you know just what I'm feeling
The weight of my sin was on you, too
From the cross to the grave, you rose up triumphant
To make me blameless in you

Not a day goes by, but I have need of repenting
Jesus, hear my cry, again I come to you
With a heavy sigh, full aware that I have blown it
No matter how I try, I fall short of you

No matter how I try, I fall and need you

No matter how I try, I will always have reason to thank you!

Day 26:
Growing In Being Available To God

*Sin is choosing to be in control,
Replacing God at the Center of our Lives.*

“Sins” are the Natural Results

Of trying to live without God.

Feast: Read Acts 10:1-48. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Considering that Jews followed strict dietary guidelines the Lord had given them in the Old Testament and traditionally wouldn't even go into the house of a Gentile (a non-Jewish person), why was it a struggle for Peter to be available? What helped Peter be available? What do you learn about God from this?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind?

Day 25: Life Lessons

When we were regional leaders, the part of our region that needed the most help was four hours north of us. Since our son was now in college and no longer living at home, we decided to move to Tallahassee and have six staff live with us. But this meant leaving behind one key student I'd been discipling in Tampa.

As our regional women's conference drew near I was excited to spend time with her. I hadn't seen her since we moved and I was eager to catch up. There were so many things I still wanted to pass on to this precious sister in Christ so I decided to give a workshop on discipleship!. Not a big deal, except I was already the main speaker for the conference.

I forgot to factor in that many times when I speak, people want to talk afterwards. It was a joy getting to pray with a friend's daughter as she received Christ and come alongside other women, answering their questions and praying with them.

The weekend was a whirlwind. As soon as the conference ended, I raced to my friend. "I'm free! Let's go talk!" But she shook her head sadly and pointed. Her dad had arrived to pick her up. I hadn't realized she was leaving right away. I was so sad.

But she was devastated. She'd grown up a pastor's daughter, deeply wounded because her dad rarely had time for her. Once again, she'd watched as ministry to others resulted in her being neglected.

As I watched their car pull out of the parking lot, I realized I'd made what I thought was a strategic decision to bless her by doing an additional workshop, but my busyness made me miss what she most needed: one-on-one time together.

In retrospect, I realize I hadn't listened to the Lord or to my young friend. I never should've added in that workshop. It was the one time we could've connected during that weekend. What she most needed wasn't me telling her more, but drawing near to listen. Instead, I ended up so busy I wasn't available and missed what really was the need of that hour.

God's Gift To Us... *Confession!*

To better understand this priceless gift, look up the following verses:

1 John 1:9

Acts 3:19

Psalms 103:13

Hebrews 8:12

Romans 8:2

But have you ever wrestled with "feeling" forgiven?

God's Second Gift...

A Friend to Share it with

Check out James 5:16.

Why should you confess your sins to a friend? How is that different than just confessing to God?

What should you do when someone confesses sin to you? Why?

What kind of healing can take place?

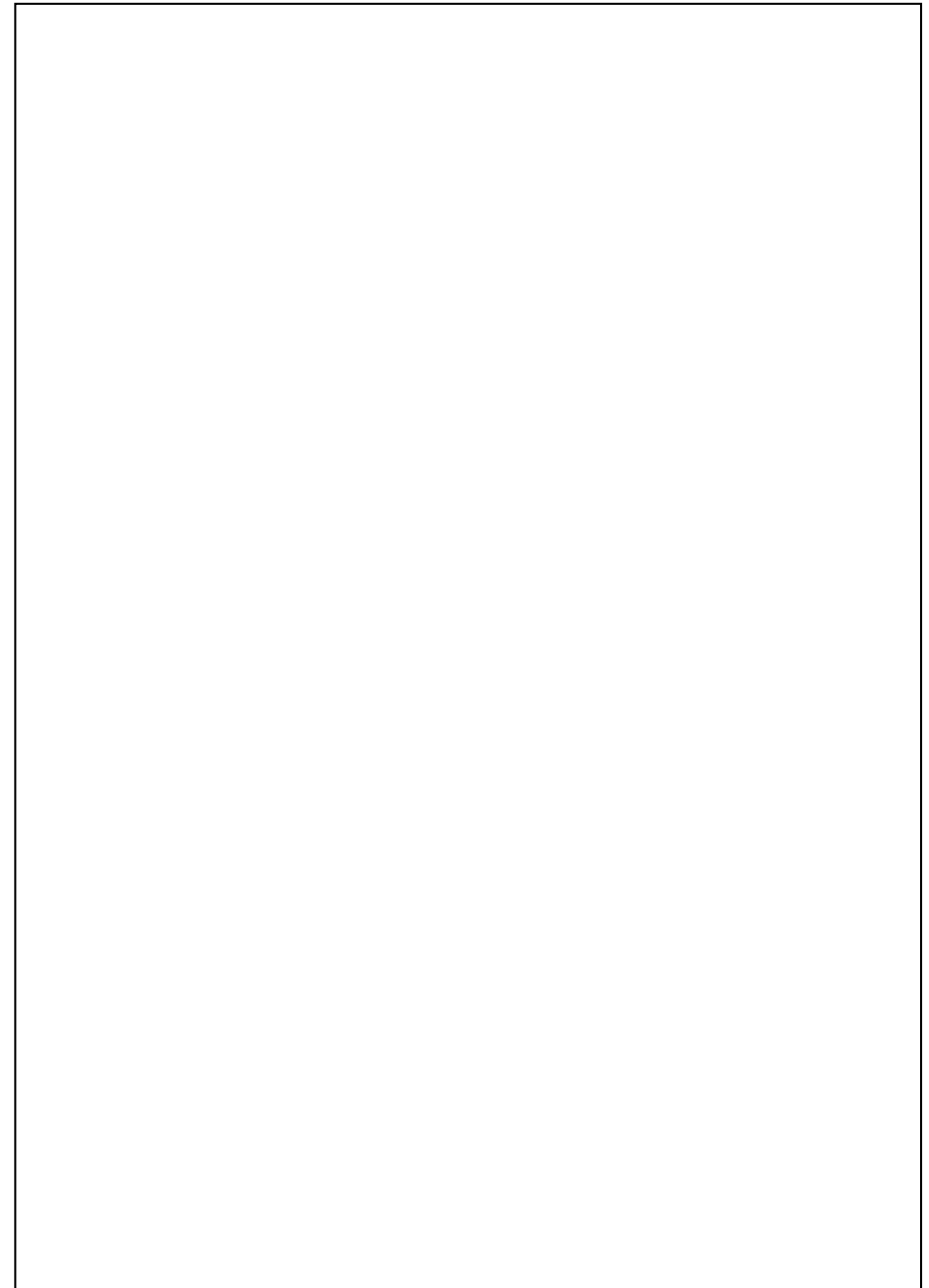
(That's why Satan loves to get us isolated,
afraid to be real, so we keep distant from each other!)

One Last Thing...

Remember Hebrews 11:1?

Why might faith be necessary? Can you see forgiveness? What happens if you pray to God confessing your sin (which is agreeing with Him it's wrong) and even share it with a friend, but don't have faith?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 25:
Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Luke 10:38-41. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Who was available? Who wasn't? Why wasn't she? What does Jesus' response reveal about what God values?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind regarding your availability to God? What do you sense He wants you to do about this?

So On Those Days You Most Feel A Mess...

Rejoice!

*Before you can grow
You've got to know*

*You don't have what it takes
For that's when God makes*

*You desperate enough
Because change is tough!*

Day 22:

Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Isaiah 53. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: How available was Jesus?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available?
What do you sense the Lord wants you to do in response?

Day 24: Life Lessons

After we decided to go on staff, I struggled. I'd died to that dream at twenty-two when I'd only lost 20% of my hearing. But by this point I'd lost 80% and God wanted us on campus? And not just any campus, but one that hadn't had staff on it for eight years so we'd be starting from scratch with no one waiting to meet with us. I would have to initiate every single encounter, never knowing whether I'd understand people or not. What was the Lord thinking?

My willingness to be available stretched to a new level when I was asked if I would lead a Bible study for ten students in a scholarship house. I struggled to read the lips of one! On the night that study began, I sat in the parking lot praying, "Lord, I am scared stiff! I have no idea how to make this work. There is only one reason I am going into that scholarship house... I believe you exist. But if you don't show up, it's not going to be pretty."

I walked into a dining room with terrible acoustics, bare walls, tile floors and ten women sitting around the table and I stated, "I honestly have no idea how this is going to work. I am deaf..." An upperclasswoman from Cuba threw her arm around me, "I'll tell you how it's going to work. I'm a speech pathology and audiology major and not one of you is going to open her mouth till after waving her hand and catching Deb's attention." I learned from Clara how to facilitate a group discussion when you're severely hearing impaired.

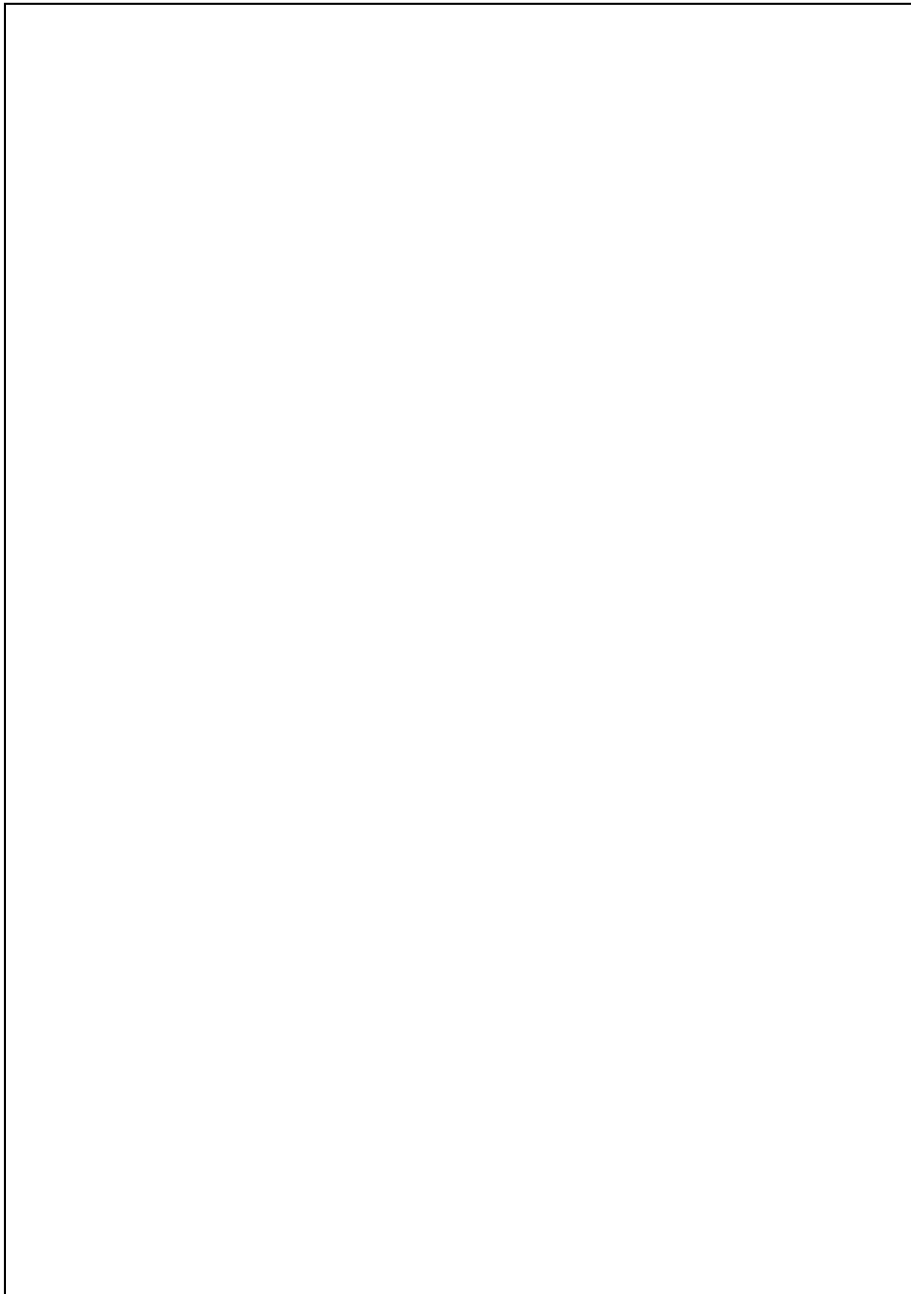
I asked each woman to share why she'd come. The first replied, "I'm a feminist. Since the study is Jesus Cares for Women I thought it'd be interesting to learn what the Bible says about women." She came to know Christ the third week!

We enjoyed an amazing discussion and our first community on that campus began.

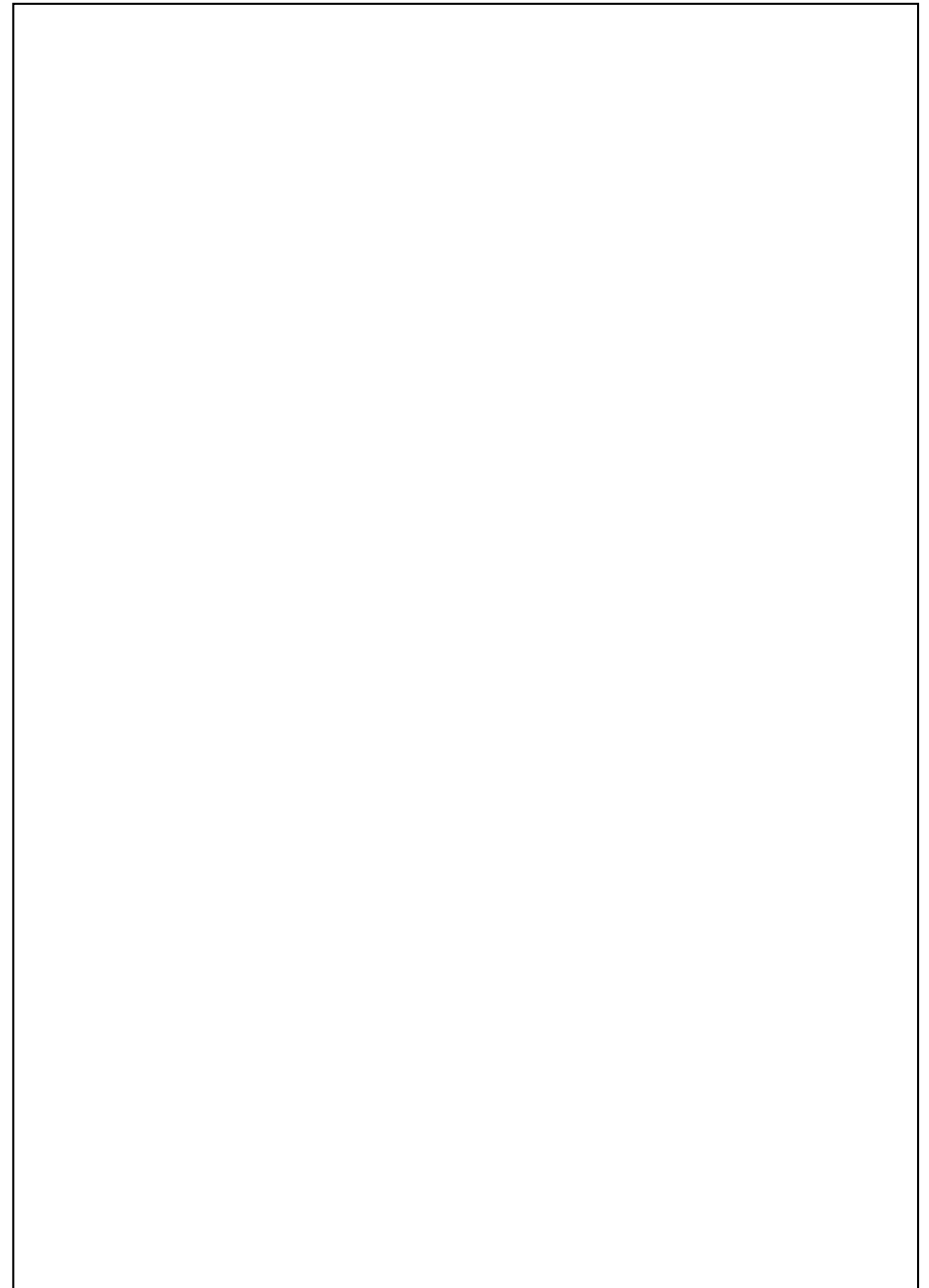
After it was over, I sensed the Lord say to me, "Deb, do you realize if you'd gone in there having it all together, most of them might never have returned. But because you went in weakness and were honest, it pulled them together. They were determined to make it work."

Truly God's strength is made evident in weakness!

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 22: Life Lessons

When I'm in pain or going through a hard time it can be hard to be nice to others around me, let alone think about serving and blessing them. There's nothing like personal difficulties to get us focused inward.

Here's another area where we see God's ways aren't our ways. Even when Jesus hung on that cross, do you remember who He was thinking about? Others! "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do."

But that kind of a response doesn't just "happen!" Note Jesus was available to do what the Father wanted Him to do, because He didn't react. When bad things happen to us or people hurt us we have a choice to make: Will we react or respond? To react is to do "what comes naturally." Someone hits you, you hit back. Mean words are spewed in your direction and you retort.

But note what Jesus consistently chooses. You never see him, not once, out of control. Even when he clears the temple, note how it's planned (read Mark 11:11, then verses 15-18). Jesus didn't fly off the handle; he made his observations the first day, then came back the next to make his point.

As James 1:20 tells us, "Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life God desires." Not in us or in anyone else. But instead, we're told in Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

When we react we are not available to join in with what God is doing at the moment. Many times the mean things people say, the hurtful things they do, come out of a deep ache and struggle within themselves.

Consider the man who is rude to the girl working the checkout at the grocery store. Often it's nothing she's done, but he's "having a bad day." If she retorts back, things may only escalate from bad to worse, but if she chooses to not take it personally, to follow Jesus and turn the other cheek, to respond with a gentle and genuine, "have a nice day." not only can his anger be defused, but it may actually be a turning point in his day... or life. Why? Because her response enables him to experience grace... getting what he doesn't deserve!

When someone is mean to me, I run to Jesus and beg, "Please help me see this person the way you see them. Please help me not react, so I can be available to love them and join in with what you're doing in their life." Have I ever been blessed when I do this.

But when I react, I usually make the situation worse and miss out on being a part of what God is doing.

Day 24: Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Luke 10:25-37. Write below the key verse that stands out to you.

Chew: Who was available? Who wasn't? What things kept people from being available in this story? How is being available important for loving your neighbor?

Exercise: How does this challenge you to grow in being available? Is there anything specific the Lord has brought to mind regarding your availability to God? What do you sense He wants you to do about this?

realized going on staff with The Navigators at that time was part of the good works God prepared in advance for us to do.

The question was, would we walk in them?

Day 23: Growing In Being Available To God

Feast: Read Ephesians 2:10.

Chew: This is a short Bible reading today - but is it ever a loaded one. Carefully, prayerfully consider each word, writing down what comes to mind.

We =

are =

God's =

workmanship =

created =

in Christ Jesus =

to do =

good =

works =

which God =

has =

prepared =

in advance =

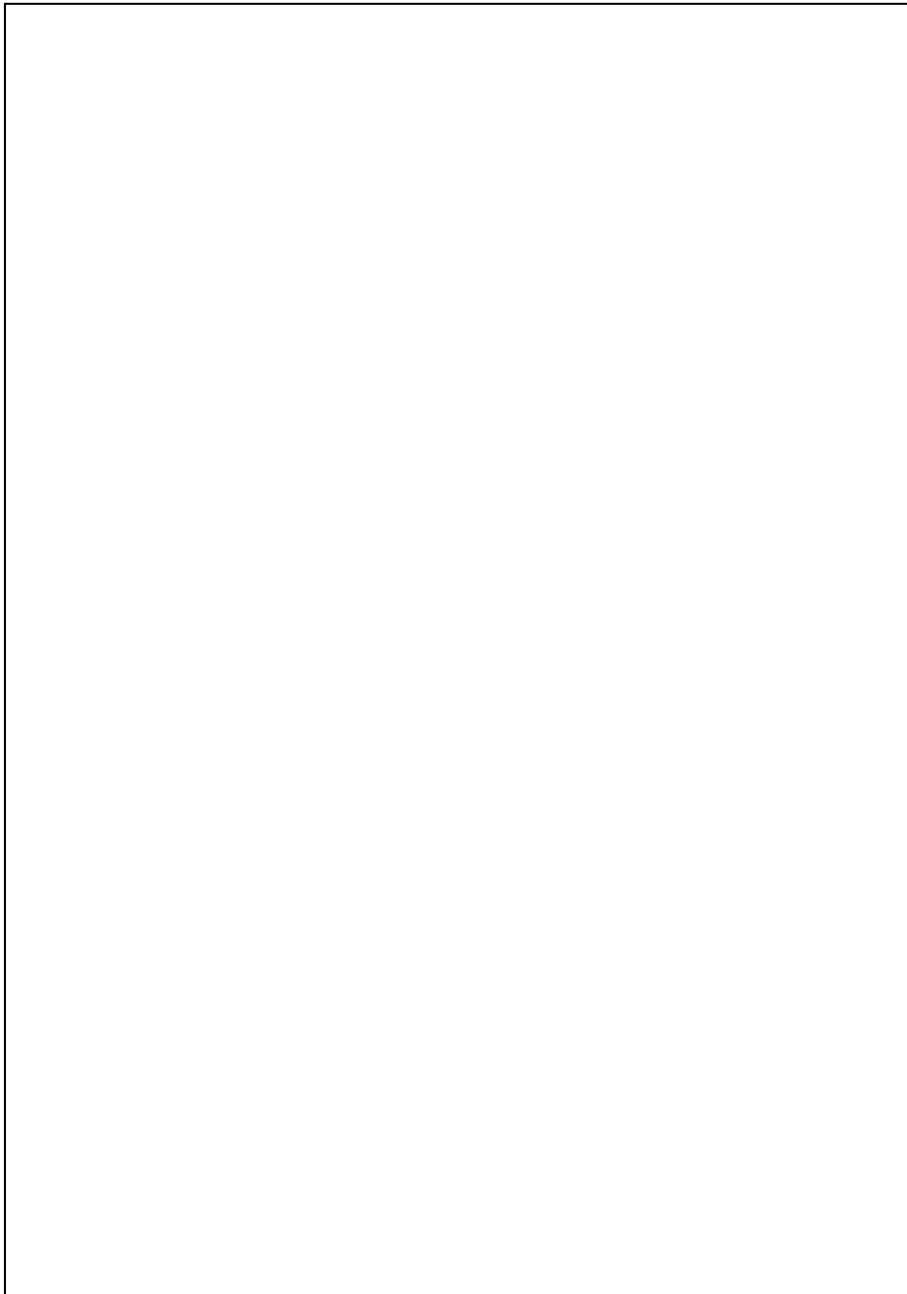
or us =

to do =

Exercise: What does this verse reveal about God's plans for you?

What can happen if you're busy doing other things? How do you sense God wants you to respond to this verse today?

Draw a quick picture illustrating the main idea that stood out to you today.



Day 23: Life Lessons

When I was in college I thought the Lord was leading me to take the gospel to a people who'd never heard it before. During my junior year, I had the bed removed from my dorm room, and I slept on a reed mat on the tiled floor in preparation for the hard living conditions I'd be facing. I began studying anthropological linguistics and Aymara, the language of the Indians living in the highlands of Peru.

It was pure joy studying with native speakers as teachers, especially when I learned the Bible was recently translated into their language. "Can you help me figure out this verse?" I'd ask, and lovely discussions would ensue.

"Diosajj acapachar wal munatap laycuw mä sapa Yokapar qhitani, take qhitinacatejj jupar iyawsapqui ucanacajj jan chhakañapataqui, jan ucasti wiñay jacañaniñapataqui. "

Juan 3:16

But then, in my Senior year of college, my hearing loss was diagnosed as being progressive, and a friend who is an otolaryngologist as well as a believer shared, "Deb, unless God does a miracle, you will never be fluent in another language. In fact, as you get older, you will have a difficult time with English." My world crashed down as my dream died.

On the bright side, that opened the door for me to marry Jim!

Fourteen years later, I was in my mid-thirties, actively involved in discipling women in the community and in our church while also homeschooling our son Andrew. I also wrote and directed musicals, to help children memorize Scripture to music and see the difference those verses could make when lived out. We saw our church grow from 200 to over 1000 as Jim oversaw the small group ministry. Half the church was involved. I was following up the butcher from our local grocery store who'd recently become a believer and soon we saw her best friend the bakery manager come to Christ, and women working in the deli and dairy also started seeking Jesus. It was such a fruitful season of ministry. I loved it!

But then Jim came home and shared, "I sense the Lord is leading us to go on staff with the Navigators and see a new generation of laborers raised up." When he shared this with his fellow church elders and the pastors they declared, "Wait! We want you guys to come on staff with the church! You can focus on discipleship here."

We love our church! We could keep doing what we loved and not have to raise support. Was that ever tempting. But as we read Ephesians 3:20 and prayed, we