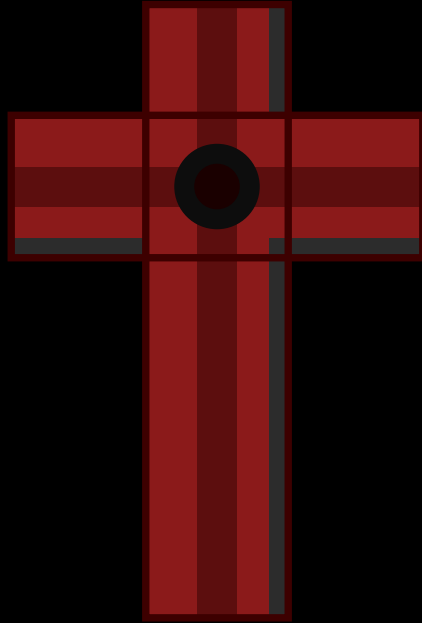




THE FIRST 30 DAYS

Love Like Him

A 365 Day Devotional for Men Called to Walk as Christ Walked

by Mason Davidson



Day One

Give Everything

*"We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also **ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.**"*

1 John 3:16 NLT

RReal love is selfless. It does not consider self first but others. As followers of Christ, we should always be ready to lay our lives down for those we call brother and sister, as well as those we don't even know or aren't saved, because Jesus has exemplified that for us. He died for people who will probably never even say His name. So where's our excuse? We have more than we should: hurt feelings, grudges, and hate.

Sacrifice to us today means setting our phone down for an hour, picking up our Bible for 15 minutes, or simply going out of our way to talk to somebody who makes us a little uncomfortable or that we don't particularly like. The nature of Christ and the love He put into action is such a wild reality that we all must step into. The nature of Christ is selflessness itself. Go the extra mile for Jesus, let go of that grudge, talk to that person you don't like, and stop giving birth to hate. This is what He is urging you to do. Live out this love and believe it is true, because He lives in you. And don't believe for a second that you aren't capable, because He is right there giving you every opportunity to live it out.

REFLECT

Who in your life are you finding it hardest to lay your life down for, and what's one small sacrifice you can make for them today?



Day Two

Love Made Flesh

*"Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment, to love one another, is the same message you heard before. Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For **the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.**"*

1 John 2:7-8 NLT

This old commandment is made new because no one could truly live it out in the flesh until it was put into flesh through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He came in the likeness of our flesh, stripped Himself of His own power, and became the perfect human, fully surrendered. Stripped of divine might, yet perfect in every way as a man and still fully God. And all of this was a choice made out of love, not obligation. Amazing. This passage reveals where Christ's heart was when He came to dwell among us:

"Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated Him to the place of highest honor and gave Him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:6-11)

Out of unconditional love, He surrendered His divine power and clothed Himself in flesh, making love visible. And because of this act of love, the commandment to love became new through Him who gave His life. He is our perfect model because of what He did and everything He does in our life. And because He now lives within us, we have been given everything we need to walk just as He walked.

REFLECT

In what area of your life are you still clinging to your own way instead of surrendering it to Christ like He surrendered for you?



Day Three

Lovely Commandments

*"Loving God means keeping his commandments, and **his commandments are not burdensome.**"*

1 John 5:3 NLT

The reason His commandments are not burdensome is because they flow from a place of love, and when you truly love Him, obedience doesn't feel like obligation. At the same time this verse can be a little confusing, because obeying God means you die to yourself, which is never an easy thing to do. Temptation is burdensome, but obedience is not.

Getting to the finish line of obedience means you have overcome temptation. The deep love you have for Christ, drawn out by His compelling nature, is what carries you there by His grace. And the only reason you desire to love Him in the first place is because He first loved you. He wants to restore you to a former glory, the way it was before the fall of Adam and Eve. Honor Him with your body, mind, and soul, because your soul is the thing at stake, and that means death and separation for all eternity.

REFLECT

Where in your walk with God does obedience feel like a burden, and what does that reveal about where your heart is?



Day Four

Secure Freedom

*"All wicked actions are sin, but not every sin leads to death. We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for **God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them.**"*

1 John 5:17-18 NLT

In Scripture, wickedness is often displayed as predetermined actions that go against the will of God, refusing to submit to His authority, or rejection of God. This is not what the life of a believer looks like. A believer does not go out of their way to sin, hurt others, or go against God's will, and a believer is also one who walks submitted. When you are a believer living under His sonship, sin is no longer something that imprisons you. Rather, you are held securely by Jesus, the One who made it possible for you to walk in freedom from sin and death.

But if you do slip up, because your heart already belongs to Him, the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit will rise up within you and you will find yourself becoming increasingly aware of sin. And guess what? You don't just mindlessly sin anymore. He has cleansed you! That is what the finished work of the cross does for those who choose Him, desire Him, and accept the reality of His sacrifice. This way you can really live a holy and righteous life. But you must remember that this comes with a cost. You must die every single day. Be dead to yourself and alive in Christ. Believe in His cleansing power every single day, desire His will, and love Him with all your heart.

REFLECT

Are you living like someone who is truly held and free, or are you still acting like sin has power over you?



Day Five

True Fellowship

*"And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. **He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.**"*

1 John 5:20 NLT

The reason we are able to have understanding of this new nature is because Jesus came to die a death that nobody else was capable of dying, and through that action He showed a love so profound and everlasting, making it the standard that everyone is to live by if they want eternal life.

When Christ accomplished this, it opened up the heavens so the Father could see Christ in you. Now we had Someone worthy to plead our case of sin to the Father, and after forgiveness and reconciliation, we can have true fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord. And we also know that fellowship with Christ means freedom from sin. Let us be grateful that Christ is our Lord.

REFLECT

What does your daily life actually reveal about the depth of your fellowship with Christ?



Day Six

Be the Light

"Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble."

1 John 2:10 NLT

Love is always the evidence that the light of God is within a believer, especially when that love is in action. Whether it's serving others, being self-sacrificing with your time, money, or possessions, or praising God without shame, it's actually doing something and not just saying you're a Christian, but living it out by loving others who are also in fellowship with Christ.

We forget to love because of the way our culture runs and just the way modern-day society is. Everything is about protecting your opinion, protecting your feelings, and protecting your things. All this junk that just doesn't matter in the end. Show each other real love so that, in the end, we have true fellowship with Jesus Christ and are loving like Him and not like the world.

Loving a fellow believer doesn't mean you're just a good buddy or a nice pal. No. Loving a fellow believer means you would die for them. When Christ says we are to love like Him, He describes what His love actually looks like, and that is laying your life down unto the point of death. Not worrying about yourself constantly. In Scripture, Jesus never worried about Himself. The King of the universe did not care about how He was treated. He just knew that the will of the Father was greater than what He could say or how He could react.

REFLECT

Is there someone in your life you've been treating like a stranger instead of a brother, and what would it look like to love them the way Christ loves you?



Day Seven

Lovely Obedience

*"And this is love: that **we walk in obedience to his commands**. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."*

2 John 1:6 NIV

To walk in love is to walk in obedience, and obedience is the ultimate picture of love, because you're saying to God, "Your will be done." But it's not enough to only obey. We have to check our hearts and ask where that obedience is coming from. The source matters more than we think. Real obedience has to come from a place of genuine, wholehearted desire to please Him. Because if we're not careful, we can find ourselves doing good works in our own strength thinking we're pleasing God, when really the only one being pleased is us. That is selfishness, not love.

Real obedience is the picture of sacrificial love, and we are called to live this out just as Christ did. He was obedient even unto death, but 100% innocent. He pleaded with the Father if there was another way, but there wasn't. And yet He still rose, walked that road, and went to the cross for every one of us, because of love. Lay your life down and live holy and righteous, just as He has called you to do.

REFLECT

When you obey God, is it coming from a genuine love for Him or from obligation, and how can you tell the difference?



Day Eight

Fullness

*"No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, **God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.**"*

1 John 4:12 NLT

No one has ever seen God with their eyes, but love does what sight can't do. It brings God Himself to dwell in us. Not partially, not occasionally, but fully. His love reaches its complete expression in us because He is the life living in you and I, and He is constantly drawing us near to His presence, compelling us and giving us hope.

On the flipside, if you're serving the world and practicing its deeds, evil will be brought to full expression. Serving the world is really just serving yourself, because the world satisfies physical desires and produces things like idolatry, wickedness, and false worship of yourself, thinking you are the most important person in the world.

And now you have the believer, full of the Holy Spirit, completely submitted to God, living in a place of total freedom and love, serving God and not yourself. That believer is not striving or performing; they are resting in the finished work of Christ and moving from a place of overflowing, unwavering worship, not obligation. Let the full expression of the Spirit of God rise up within you, because that is His will for you.

REFLECT

Are you living in the full expression of God's love, or are you allowing the world to bring something else to full expression in you?



Day Nine

Proven Love

*"Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; **let us show the truth by our actions.**"*

1 John 3:18 NLT

To say that you love someone without actually loving them is a dangerous thing, and the reason it's dangerous is that it reduces love to an emotion. Emotions change and love does not.

The danger is found in the deception. You can convince yourself that you truly love someone, while the actions you commit in secret would make you a liar. Words mean nothing without truth behind them. They only mean something when you are actively living them out. If you are not living out the truth, then you are lying, and when you say "I love you" without living it, it becomes nothing more than an illusion. An illusion to yourself, and to the ones you claim to love.

So what does love look like? It is an action fueled by grace, desire, and strength. It defeats the enemy when no one is looking, and it gives glory to God in all situations. It has integrity, honesty, and honor. It turns from temptation, runs to the feet of Jesus, and defeats all evil. One of the best things you can do to ensure you live out this love and this truth is obtaining the ability to obey when it is easy to sin.

REFLECT

Does the way you live back up the love you claim, or are your words building an illusion that your actions tear down?



Day Ten

Secure Union

"So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father."

1 John 2:24 NLT

In order to be in perfect union with God the Father and His Son Jesus, you must remain obedient to the calling which is set before you. The calling is this: the death of yourself and living for Christ, remaining in a state of faithfulness, so that you have perfect fellowship with Him. And we know that fellowship with Christ means freedom from sin. He holds you in a secure union with Him and His Father, and the only thing you have to do is believe in this union, believe in the power that it holds, believe that the Spirit of Truth has really set you free, and has now secured you in His union.

When you allow the Holy Spirit to enter into your heart, Christ is the only thing that matters. He becomes your identity and when the Father sees you, He sees His Son. Be like His Son in this secure union and live out your purpose.

REFLECT

Do you actually believe you are securely held in union with God, or are you still living like someone who has to earn their way back to Him?



Day Eleven

Christ Within

*"Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that **all who do what is right are God's children.**"*

1 John 2:29 NLT

Christ's character can be exemplified in and through His children because of knowing Him through personal relationship. He is the standard set before us, perfection put into human flesh, placed on the cross for the whole world, so that we could live set apart and holy. And because of what He did, it is now possible to stand in the sight of the Father as a holy child of God and hear those words: "Well done, good and faithful servant." All because of the Son, Jesus Christ.

Having spiritual knowledge that Christ is righteousness gives you the ability to see Christ within others, because we are all one family under the Sonship of Christ. And if we do what is good and righteous because of the relationship we have with Christ, then others will recognize the finished work that has been done within you. Live righteously.

REFLECT

Are you allowing Christ within you to be so evident that other believers don't have to guess if you're a Christian, they just know?



Day Twelve

Love Expels Fear

*"Such love has no fear, because **perfect love expels all fear**. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love."*

1 John 4:18 NLT

Fear cannot exist in the presence of love. But not just any love. This love mentioned in Scripture is describing a personal, perfect, and beautiful love that shines light into every dark corner of fear, guilt, and shame. And if we let this love shine upon us (Numbers 6:25) and allow it to light up every element of doubt, then what will we have to fear? Nothing!

So don't let shame from the enemy tell you that you're not cleansed or that you can't be free, because it is by His blood that you are made worthy, having no fear. If you have been truly cleansed by the blood and you have fully experienced His perfect love, then you have nothing to fear. But if you still in some way have fear, then you need to open your eyes in order to see the love that's so freeing. If you keep your eyes shut, then fear will keep you pessimistic and in a constant state of anxiety, and shame will cover itself with more shame to keep itself a secret. These will slowly but surely destroy you, crushing you underneath the weight of them. Keeping you condemned. But we know that for those who are in Christ, there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1).

REFLECT

Am I condemning myself to hell or am I trusting in the finished work of the cross? Do I really believe that what Jesus did for me is sufficient enough to give me life and freedom from sin, death, and condemnation?



Day Thirteen

The Prodigal

*"If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and **God will give that person life**. But there is a sin that leads to death, and I am not saying you should pray for those who commit it."*

1 John 5:16 NLT

What's interesting about this verse is that it doesn't specify whether or not you should confront a struggling believer or call them out. We are often taught in Scripture to handle situations like this by pointing out their wrongdoing. But here it is different. Why is that? The Scripture here is clear in this instance: "if their sin is not leading to death, pray." This passage is not trying to say "don't confront wrong," instead it's saying that some things don't need to always be confronted, but instead faithfully prayed for, and this creates a balance. And this matters because prayer like this is an act of faith that says, "I believe Christ is at work in this person's life and I am not capable of saving them from anything." That will always ultimately be up to Him. It is Christ's work to deal with believers when we miss the mark, not ours.

Then there are those we aren't exactly commanded to pray for: those who have experienced the deep love of Christ and His nature, yet chose to walk away and return to sin. So how should we treat such a "believer?" Galatians 6:1 tells us that "you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path." Even though we don't necessarily need to pray for them, we are still expected to treat them the way Christ would. Jesus already showed us how to handle a person like this, and it looks like the prodigal son. Once the prodigal returns, welcome them back. They were once lost, but now are found. So receive them with open arms, not discontent, not shame, not dissatisfaction, not even sadness, but with overwhelming joy and gladness, because the Lord Jesus was always working to bring them back!

The key factor when Scripture mentions sin that leads to death is not even that the nature of sin is so dangerous, but the fact that when you walk away, you are cutting yourself off from the only source of eternal life. And that leads to death.

REFLECT

Are you treating the people in your life who have walked away from Christ with the overwhelming joy and open arms of the prodigal son's father, or with discontent and disappointment?



Day Fourteen

Idols

"Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts."

1 John 5:21 NLT

A clear and direct command, and one that we should always obey. What do idols do? For one, they can lie in secret, tricking you into thinking that your relationship with God won't become damaged because of them. Idols will trick you into thinking your addiction is okay, that it's just a "frequent activity" or "it's what works for me." The very problem with those statements is that we often don't realize how selfish they really are, keeping you far from His love. Idols keep you attached to yourself, to what you want and what you desire, and that will slowly suck the life out of you.

Being drawn by Jesus is more than just giving up an addiction, saying no to drugs, or stopping what you look at in secret. It's about being transformed and actually wanting to live differently, not simply escaping what's trying to tear you down. Because when you get to the end of the line, you need Jesus more than you need to try and fix yourself. And guess what? You will fail on your own. You will never save yourself. If you want to do practical things to help yourself, go ahead, but if you believe with your whole heart that He can change you, then everything you try to do in your own discipline will mean nothing compared to the glory that is in Christ.

If you want a change, and you must genuinely want to change, your heart has to look like Christ's. Being drawn by His Spirit, overwhelmed by His strength and integrity every single day, devoted to Him and wanting what He wants. Removing an idol doesn't happen overnight. It takes death to self, a lot of submission, and running from sin so that Jesus can fight the battle He has already won.

REFLECT

If you truly love the Father, what are you still holding onto that you know is keeping you from Him, and are you really willing to let it go?



Day Fifteen

Declare Him

*"All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God **have God living in them, and they live in God.**"*

1 John 4:15 NLT

To make a declaration means you believe whatever it is that you are declaring, you are aligned with it, and you agree with it. You could also say that it is a decision. A decision that will give you life. Declaring that Jesus is the Son of God means you truly believe it and you aren't ashamed of it, you love that He is your Savior! Every man who opens his mouth and declares Jesus is Lord is proof of His life in them. Shout His name with no hesitation. God lives in you and you in Him! He gives you love, wisdom, knowledge, and kindness, everything you need to be like Christ.

Just believing in His name and declaring it means He is there. Right inside. Not far off somewhere else. Not waiting for you to clean yourself up first, because you can't fix you, only He can fix you. He is right there, dwelling in you, because His Son dwelt among us. He is moving in you, working through you every single day. So wake up every day filled with His Holy Spirit and declare that He is Lord, and He will give you all that you need.

REFLECT

Are you declaring Jesus as Lord with your mouth and your life, or are you keeping your faith quiet when it matters most?



Day Sixteen

Lovely Confidence

*"And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but **we can face him with confidence** because we live like Jesus here in this world."*

1 John 4:17 NLT

Love, which is given by God, is already perfect, yet somehow it can become more perfect. How is that? Well, we are finite beings in a finite world, and there is no end to His love. His love will continue to grow in us as we continue to walk like Jesus. We will experience moments of tremendous glory and spiritual gifts, and we will have conversations with the Lord. And in the end, we should be able to look back on our life and have full confidence that we lived like Christ told us to live. That should be the goal of every single believer, and the reward is heaven. This is the lifestyle we should be reflecting, which on the day of judgment will give us confidence.

Thank God that there is no end to His love, and thank God that we get to experience the growth of this infinite love. We get to experience this love because Jesus modeled it for us. Live like Jesus and face God with confidence, because He is the One who gives life eternally.

REFLECT

When you meet the end of your life will it be met with peace, and will you have peace knowing that you lived like Jesus?



Day Seventeen

Defeat This World

*"And **who can win this battle against the world?** Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God."*

1 John 5:5 NLT

The battle that is against the world is the battle against flesh, and it is a battle that cannot be fought with flesh (Ephesians 6:12). Flesh will always fail. That's why those who are under the rule and reign of Christ will always emerge victorious in this battle that we fight. We have the Spirit of the living God, and we live different, we live transformed, and we live free indeed!

The most wonderful thing about this battle is that it's not us who fight on our behalf, but Jesus on ours. Our flesh cannot handle the evil desires of the world. We've already won the battle if we walk with He who has already won. He loves us so much.

Walk with Him if you want freedom. Walk with Him if you want life after physical death. Walk with Him if you want to defeat your flesh. Walk with Him if you want to trample on the enemy and the world which is full of wickedness. Walk with Him if you want strength. Walk with Him if you want love. And walk with Him if you want to be a victor over everything.

REFLECT

Are you fighting a battle against the world that you cannot win, or are you walking with the One who's already defeated the world?



Day Eighteen

The Perfect Standard

*"Those who say they live in God **should live their lives as Jesus did.**"*

1 John 2:6 NLT

When John says those who live in God should live their lives as Jesus did, he is setting the standard. Not a suggestion, not something to admire from a distance, but the standard. Jesus is the line in the sand for what a surrendered life actually looks like. He walked it out perfectly in human form so that we would have something real to follow, not just a concept of living, but a Person. The Perfect One.

This can feel heavy. Because if Jesus is the standard, then who could ever measure up? On your own, you never will, and that's the whole point. This verse was never a call to try harder in your own strength to measure up to His perfection. If it were, it would crush you every single day and you'd only condemn yourself. Thank God that is not the case! Here is the beauty of it: the same power that is in Christ now lives in you. The same power that carried that 200 pound cross 600 meters uphill lives in you! The power to become free from sin's pull lives in you! Given as a gift! So when John says walk as Jesus walked, he is not just handing you a demand, he is handing you a promise.

And it is possible. Not because you are strong enough, but because He is in you. The standard and the power to meet the standard come from the same place, Him, and you have to believe it. So stop just striving and start actually walking in His Spirit. Let Him live through you. That is what it means to live in God, to let the life of Jesus become your life. He is our life. (Colossians 3:4)

REFLECT

Do your actions say you live like Christ, or are they just words?



Day Nineteen

Sin Fades, He Remains

*"And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But **anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.**"*

1 John 2:17 NLT

This verse serves as an important reminder that the world we live in will not last, and we who believe will not fade away with it. The world is fading away, but there is One who will never fade. His name is Jesus, and if you do what He wills, obey His commands, pursue His love, and walk like He calls you to walk, then you can be sure you will live a life with full assurance of your eternity.

Think of it this way: if the world is fading away and everything with it, and you are living in the ways of the world, then you will fade away with it as well. Forgotten, cast into hell, all because you gave in to your flesh and feelings and wants and desires. The only thing that should fade away within you is sin. And as you consume the Word and walk like Jesus, you will begin to see things differently, act differently, and suddenly what used to be a part of you has faded away. Praise the Lord!

We have to look at sin this way: it is something that will fade away and cannot touch you if you have full assurance in the Lord Jesus. But if you fear it, identify with it, think that you are too weak, hence forgetting where your strength comes from, then it will catch up to you and you will be in bondage.

REFLECT

Are you fading away with the world and its sin, or are you letting your sin fade away as you become more like Christ?



Day Twenty

The Reward, Christ

*"I have written to you who are God's children because you know the Father. I have written to you who are mature in the faith because you know Christ, who existed from the beginning. I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong. God's word lives in your hearts, and **you have won your battle with the evil one.**"*

1 John 2:14 NLT

No matter how mature you are in the faith, whether you are just starting out your walk or you've known Christ your whole life, the reward is the same: eternity with Him. Although you are at different points in your walks, you have both won the battle with the evil one.

So you don't have to wait until you are "mature enough" to walk in victory, because you have won the battle, and Jesus is the One who has won it all. Christ is your life, Christ is your identity, Christ is your God. The assurance of victory and eternal life is the same at every stage, whether you're on your deathbed accepting Jesus for the first time or you've gotten thousands of people to come to Christ. The reward is Jesus, and there is none greater. So no matter where you are in your walk with Christ, walk in His victory. He paid a great price for it, and He wants you to put on Christ. "Put on your new nature, created to be like God, truly righteous and holy." (Ephesians 4:24)

REFLECT

Do you believe that you are in an inadequate position to live in victory, or are you already living it out?



Day Twenty-One

Born to Save

"God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him."

1 John 4:9 NLT

The humility that this verse holds is beyond comprehension. The fact that Jesus was born is even an amazing thing. He took such a humble position while also being God. He was in diapers, potty trained, taught how to talk and eat, learned how to walk. He went through all the normal things you go through when you grow up. God showed us how to live godly, like Him, by sending Himself in the form of flesh to proclaim the Good News to the whole world in such a humble way.

While looking at this beautiful picture of humility that is displayed through Jesus, there is also a proclamation that is made, which makes it irrefutably true with no question about who Christ is. He is God. And because we have eternal life through Him, that could only mean one thing: we wouldn't be able to receive eternal life through only a man. That man, that perfect man, had to have authority from God the Father. Jesus is the Word in flesh, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and God. Three in one.

REFLECT

If God was willing to humble Himself to that degree for you, what pride are you still holding onto?



Day Twenty-Two

Grace Prevails

*"We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. **God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.**"*

1 John 4:16 NLT

We know that God loves us because of the choice He made: to take up residence within us. Only a loving God would legitimately, from a place of incomprehensible love, want to take up residence in our hearts. The very reason He has decided to live in us hinges on the perfect love that has been displayed through His Son Jesus. And because Christ displayed this love for us, we have the ability to just ask Him to enter in. No steps or special words to get Him to come into your heart. All it takes is confession from your mouth, a desire for Him over your flesh, and a heart humble enough to ask for His forgiveness. His love will flood your entire being, making you more like Him.

Once this happens, the evidence of the Holy Spirit will rise up within you. You become different. You don't conform to your old habits anymore, and they actually start to gross you out more than they tempt you. You begin to have more grace, grace on the person who won't speed up on the freeway, the rude service employee who just needs life spoken into them, not talked about behind their back because you can't believe how they treated you. When you start to see things from a gracious perspective, you begin to understand what true love really is. You start to look at every situation like Jesus and now you're always curious about what He would do over what your flesh is urging you to do. Love is dying to your flesh and your desires no matter what and being alive in Christ, because He is our life. Love is Christ, and Christ's love lives in you because He chose to become like us and live out what being godly is all about.

REFLECT

Is Christ's love actually flooding your life, or are you still trying to earn your way into His presence?



Day Twenty-Three

All About Freedom

"Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is."

1 John 3:6 NLT

This is what it means to be truly free from sin: all who abide in Him will not commit it, it is no longer a pattern. His grace was sufficient to forgive you of your sins, and now it gives you the same power that raised Christ from the dead to keep away from unrighteousness. Your identity is now secure in this promise with Christ. Christ is your identity, not sin.

But if you continue to commit sin and live in a way that will disqualify you from entering into relationship with Christ, then you will not have eternal life. But the worst thing of all is you will not know Him. And if you do not know Him, then how can you be free from sinning? You can't. So seek Him with all of your heart and all of your strength, and remember that His grace isn't a get out of jail free card (Romans 6:1-2), but rather, be exactly who He calls you to be. A light bearer, a child of God, in perfect fellowship with Him!

He wants you to walk in the light, not walk in fear of what wrongs you might do in the future, because then you're doomed to fail and constantly ask yourself, "Why can't I just change?" Just ask Him for His eyesight, His ears, and His lips. He will change you completely from the inside, just as long as you are wanting Him every day.

REFLECT

Is your freedom in Christ producing a changed life, or just a more comfortable version of your old one?



Day Twenty-Four

The Table of Jesus

"See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him."

1 John 3:1 NLT

The Father's love is shown just by Him calling us His children, and this truth is where our identity is found. His love gives us the assurance that we need to know that we are His sons and daughters. The Creator of the universe recognizes each individual being that calls on Him as Lord as His child. Think of that. The Creator of everything loves you so much as to call you His child. There is no greater love than the One who created you and calls you His image-bearing child.

The people who belong to the world don't recognize us because they have no knowledge of Him, and the world doesn't know the Father, so it won't understand or see your identity as His child. You may feel like an outsider to people who don't know Christ, but that's actually confirmation you belong to Him, not the world. Being free from sin means you are part of a different family, the family of God. Once you were apart from Christ, and we must be careful not to distance ourselves too far from the world, because then we will lose our witness. We don't want to be closed off Christians. Jesus sat with sinners, so you should too. Be the light of the world.

REFLECT

Do people around you see a closed off Christian, or do they see Jesus sitting at the table with them through you?



Day Twenty-Five

Lovely Restoration

*"Dear friends, **let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.**"*

1 John 4:7 NLT

We know that when the love of God is evident in our lives, or another person's life, it looks like this: self-sacrifice, acknowledging others before yourself, being kind even in the face of persecution, telling the truth in love, and acting like Jesus.

This is what the power of grace is all about. Grace is the ability, by His power, to live free as Christ has called you to live. Grace comes from His love. His love is planted within you because you were made in His image from the beginning. Jesus came to restore this love so that we could return to a former state of glory, like in the Garden of Eden. In the beginning we were made to share in the likeness of our Creator (Genesis 1:27 and Colossians 3:10). Christ came to restore this and show us what true Christian living looks like.

The love of God is shown in us because we are His children, and this is the gift He gives us: His love. So you must make the most of every opportunity to faithfully express your love to a world that does not understand it. Don't let fear be your master. Don't let the pressure of the world and what it says about you affect the way Christ sees you, because you could be the greatest witness to somebody who does not know Christ. Let the world see Christ in you.

REFLECT

Could someone look at your life today and see Christ in you, or would they just see you?



Day Twenty-Six

Compelled to be Complete

*"But those who obey God's word **truly show how completely they love him**. That is how we know we are living in him."*

1 John 2:5 NLT

Obedience in a believer's heart is the proof of complete love. The best part is that it's His love that compels us to obey Him in the first place, drawing us into complete love for Him. Not partial love. Not somewhat, kinda, sorta love. No. Complete. Every believer should know what this love feels like in their heart. Picture the Father's face as He looks down on you. He should see you walking in a worthy manner because you love Him so deeply. He is an awesome force, worthy of love, obedience, and praise.

True obedience should never be out of obligation, because His love is so completely perfect. Obedience to Him means having freedom, not being bound by a set of rules and burdens with no genuine heart change, with God shaking His finger down on you. To be free means you desire Him more than what your body wills and wants because of His great and awesome love! You should know that you are Christ's if you see that your life produces obedience and true love for the Father. Obedience proves this love, and Jesus is the standard for what a surrendered life looks like.

REFLECT

Do you limit how much you love Him because you don't believe obedience is possible for you?



Day Twenty-Seven

Hate the Hate

*"If someone says, 'I love God,' but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And **he** has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers."*

1 John 4:20-21 NLT

If you claim to be a child of God yet you hate a fellow believer, the love of God is not in you. This is because we are made in the image of God. If we cannot see each other the way we ought to, the way that the Lord commands, when we say we "hate" someone, whether they be a believer or not, we are really saying that we hate God. There is no hatred in our Lord, and there is nothing about His creation that is to be hated, but rather that we praise Him through it. Remember, Jesus came in the form of human flesh to dwell among us, to be the perfect example for all of us. So if we hate someone in the flesh, we hate what God has created.

This commandment is so much heavier than it appears on paper. Here's why: just generally being hateful is not a reflection of His character, and you are not walking in His light. Sometimes we like to justify our hatred as righteous anger, and before you say that your anger is righteous, remember Jesus got angry only a couple of times in His entire life. So before you think your anger is righteous, think again. Don't create a false representation of what a Christ follower is. We must be careful with what we say we "hate." In the end, the only thing we should hate is sin. Sin is death. And remember, hating something doesn't only mean you say that you hate it, it's the actual action of hatred, which there is no love in. Search your heart and be of a humble mind so that you don't hold resentment, bitterness, or hatred toward anybody. Be the example that Christ wants you to be. Just love.

REFLECT

Is there someone in your life, or even something about yourself, that you are not seeing with God's eyes, causing you to hate?



Day Twenty-Eight

Darkness Consumed

*"This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: **God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.**"*

1 John 1:5 NLT

Darkness does not exist in Him because He is so completely and utterly pure. It is not as simple as saying "there is no darkness in Him." No. He shines so infinitely bright throughout all time, across all generations, and all of eternity, that darkness just becomes light when He arrives. Darkness in all forms fears our Lord.

Darkness simply cannot survive when He is in the room. It's an impossibility for it to have power, life, or purpose in the midst of His greatness. What does this mean for you and me? It means we get to cast out demons, every form of evil, and sin, all of which are born of darkness. As the believer, you are able to shine His light into every dark corner (Matthew 5:14-16, 1 Corinthians 6:19).

This is the God who pulled us out of darkness. Every spiritual rut you've ever been in, every time you've been tempted and fled from sin, every time you had self-control, every time you showed the love of Jesus to someone, He was there, shining His light through you. Without Him there would only be darkness in every one of those scenarios. Let His light shine!

REFLECT

Are you going to light up the world?



Day Twenty-Nine

No Mercy for Sin

*"My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But **if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father.** He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous."*

1 John 2:1 NLT

Our goal in life should always be to not sin. And we're not talking about perfection, we're talking about holiness, walking by the power of the Spirit. So if you do sin, not when, Jesus won't back out. Instead He will be right there to push you back onto course, to tell you He loves you, to remind you of who you are, and love you no matter what. This can be confusing at times, because if this is written for us to not sin, then why does there seem to be the possibility that it might happen again? Here's the difference: willful sin is a decision made with full awareness of what you're doing, because you don't have the Spirit guiding and directing your thoughts, emotions, desires, or actions. There's no wrestling with it, no resistance against it, just getting annihilated by it and choosing your way over what you already know is right. It's not a stumble or a slip up, it's something you stepped into all on your own. A habit that needs to be broken is different.

This is the sin you hate, that you want to kill, the one you turn from to pick up your cross with the power that raised Christ from the dead, the one you're actively fighting, the one that hurts you the moment you fall into it. That hurt, that resistance, is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in you, and that your heart is softened, because a hardened heart doesn't fight against its own wants, it befriends them. When temptation comes knocking, you run or you fight to the death. Either way, it should end in the death of your flesh.

REFLECT

If you sin, does it keep you up at night, or do you sleep soundly?



Day Thirty

He Is

*"We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. **We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands.** He is the Word of life."*

1 John 1:1 NLT

Before creation, time, and nature were created, Jesus was there. Jesus was also flesh and bone, walking, breathing, bleeding, existing before the beginning. If this doesn't prove to you that He is God, then you must study John 1. Think on it, reflect on it, and most importantly, ask God to open your heart and bring you to a place of such humility that you are able to put aside your own opinion. Because at the end of the day, it just comes to a point where you are flat out rejecting that He is God, and that's a choice, not something you don't have enough evidence for. It's your own pride getting in the way.

We wouldn't be able to exist in a holy manner and live out a whole life if Jesus was only a man. He is the man with all authority, He is the man with all life, He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, and nothing can stand in His way. So when you begin to walk like Christ, you're not walking like some man who had good morals and taught what was right, you are literally walking in the light of God (1 John 1:7).

He came in the flesh to give us a representation of holy and righteous living, not to just exist as a man. Every step you take in your life as a believer under His authority is also under His will, and you get to express the essence of Him. You get to live out a Christlike life because He chose to strip Himself and humble Himself into human form. So have the same humility, strip everything that is not of God, and put on this new flesh, which is Christ's body.

REFLECT

Have you stripped off everything that isn't of God, or are you still wearing your old self alongside Christ?