

# 21 DAY DEVOTIONAL

## THE ART OF SURRENDER

We cannot fill a glass with water that is already filled with lemonade! If we try, the result is obvious. Likewise, the art of surrender in our spiritual lives is much the same principle. Our cups are full of our sin nature in many specific areas that we may not even be aware of, yet God wants to fill every area of our lives with His power and Spirit. How can He do this if these areas in our lives are full of sin, toxic thinking, doubts, misaligned priorities, doubts about our faith, unforgiveness and more? We must first surrender these areas to Him, and we will see Him unleash His Holy Spirit.

As you go through each day of this 21-day devotional, allow the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears to what God may be asking you to surrender to Him. There is a song that coincides with each day, so please take a moment to listen, pray, and read every Scripture on the pages. There is space in the back of this workbook for you to journal what God might be speaking to you over the next 21 days.

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# LET'S TALK ABOUT THE BODY

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**Song:**

*"Living Sacrifice"*  
by Brandon Lake

**Scriptures:**

1 Corinthians 6:19–20;  
Romans 12:1, 13:12-14;  
Colossians 3:4-6



*"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*  
(Hebrews 12:11 NLT)

Our bodies are extremely complex. Last summer I was diagnosed with a rare blood disorder, essential thrombocythemia (pretty fancy, huh?), where my bone marrow makes too many platelets. For years I had struggled with headaches, shortness of breath, and pressure in my head but thought I was just out of shape. Fortunately, this is treatable and I'm able to keep the condition under control!

God desires for us to be diligent and care for our bodies. They are a temple of His Holy Spirit when we come into a relationship with Him. Paul instructs the Romans, *"to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship"* (Romans 12:1 NIV). For personal application and accountability of this verse, I broke down the parts of the body as a checklist for myself. Perhaps you, too, can use this as a guideline as you consider what this verse means for you personally.

- **My Thoughts:** What is going through my mind and how is it affecting me?
- **My Eyes:** Am I looking at shows, video games or books that God would say are ok for me?
- **My Ears:** Am I listening to music or shows that are beneficial to my spiritual growth?
- **My Mouth (Verbal):** Am I taking God's name in vain, swearing, slandering others, or using language not edifying to others?
- **My Mouth (Consumption):** What am I putting into my mouth? Drugs, alcohol, chemical substances, smoking or too much food?
- **My Heart:** Do impure motives, greed, lust, idolatry, unforgiveness and selfishness dwell in my heart?
- **My Arms/Hands:** Am I serving others as God's hands and feet?
- **My Sexuality:** Do I accept the gender assigned to me at birth? Do I accept that God designed sex to be between one man and one woman in the context of marriage only?
- **My Legs/Feet:** Am I going to places that are pleasing to the Lord?

**What are specific parts of your body you would like to surrender to Jesus right now? What kind of change will that involve for you?**

# THE FIRST STEP TO SELF-CONTROL

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**Song:**

"Heaven Help Me"  
by Zach Williams



**Scriptures:**

2 Peter 3:1-11



I freely confess that I am a recovering shopaholic. After many years in my twenties and thirties of excessive shopping for clothes, shoes, and things for the house, one word finally sunk in, self-control!

On a deeper level than shopping, however, God began teaching me self-control as early as ninth grade. I remember vividly when my church youth group studied a series on self-control as it pertained to sexual purity and our tongues. As a ninth grader who was also a Christ-follower, I hadn't yet bought in to the idea of abstinence until marriage or refraining from occasional dirty language. My headstrong personality needed practical reasons on the whys before I could make a difficult decision like that.

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. (2 Peter 5-7 NLT)*

The attributes in this passage may seem impossible to achieve in our own strength. However, they are not impossible with the Holy Spirit, as He produces this fruit

in us. The fruit of goodness leads to purity and moral excellence. Perseverance is a gift from God that gives us patience to practice discipline. Finally, godliness, and love for the Lord spur us on to pray for wisdom, strength, and discernment to make good decisions.

Once I began to dig into Scripture and accept that my new life in Christ was to reflect Him in all I do and say, I made the decision to grow in self-control. I made a promise with God to wait until marriage for sex. I then committed to clean up my language, including swearing and taking God's name in vain. Why? Because I made Jesus the Lord of my life and I was forever committed to Him.

My friends at school thought I turned prudish, but I didn't care. I knew that as a Christian, I had a responsibility to please God first, to be sanctified holy, and to strive for self-control through the Holy Spirit.

**Lifestyle choices set the course for our whole lives. What is a lifestyle choice you have already made that is a godly choice? What is a lifestyle choice that you need to surrender to Jesus today and make a change?**

# RUN FROM EVIL

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**Song:**

*“Run to the Father”*  
by Cody Carnes



**Scriptures:**

1 Peter 5:8;  
2 Timothy 2:19–22



Two years ago, our family visited the Columbus Zoo and witnessed a Cheetah Run, an exhibit that shows how fast the cheetah can move when he is either hunting for food or running from a predator. As the fastest land animal, the cheetah has been known to run between sixty-eight to seventy-five miles per hour! This image is implanted in my mind when I read the following verse:

*Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. (1 Timothy 2:22 NLT)*

If we are going to run from evil, we need to be ready for action. Satan will attack us when we are most vulnerable. We need to remain alert with prepared hearts so we can have the ability to hear Satan’s footsteps as he prowls around stealthily. By being prepared, we can run the other way and not allow him to trap us in his snare. Our running shoes need to be tied and ready. *“Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8 NLT)*

When I envision how I want to run from evil, the cheetah is what I think of, not hesitating and not jogging, but

running at full speed in the other direction! This can be difficult for us because we are often resisting something that is fun. But God tells us to run because if we ponder and consider the temptations we're facing for too long, we may not get away in time.

Satan may be looking for someone to devour, but God has equipped us with the shoes we need to run from evil! Lean into that! Trust your spiritual legs, and God will set you straight on His path!

**Temptations do not own us. What is a temptation that, if you are faced with it, you know you will need to run like a cheetah to get away from it?**

# JESUS IS TRUTH

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**Song:**

*"Lay it All Down"*

by Will Reagan and  
United Pursuit



**Scriptures:**

John 14:1–6;  
Hebrews 10



Have you ever doubted your faith? I know I have. In my early years of being a believer in Jesus, I was a skeptic to the core. I questioned parts of the Bible, and I wondered why there was such a narrow path to salvation. Wrestling with this brought me to a crisis point in my faith. I knew I loved the Lord, but I just couldn't wrap my head around the whys of certain biblical events, plaguing me with unbelief. Christians aren't supposed to question these things, are we? I had to be honest with God if I were going to grow in my walk with God.

This crisis in my faith caused me to search for answers. I did this by reading Scripture with friends, attending Bible study discussion groups, and crying out to God for wisdom and understanding. During this time, I was drawn to the whole chapter of Hebrews 10 and John 14. Please take the time to read these for yourself. There are some key points that I gleaned:

1. I needed faith to accept what I couldn't see or understand.
2. Jesus came as the final blood sacrifice, the sacrifice that takes away our sin.

3. When Jesus came, many Old Testament laws (polygamy, sacrificing animals for our sin, etc.) were done away with.
4. In the Old Testament, even though God was everywhere, God was experienced by people through the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant, where his spirit dwelt at that time. It was so powerful that you couldn't touch the ark, or one would die.
5. When Jesus came, however, he left the Holy Spirit with us, allowing every person to be the new temple of the Holy Spirit, having a personal relationship with Jesus.

If you are struggling with a little disbelief or have questions, I encourage you to delve into Scripture. The above points were things I personally wondered about, but for you, there might be totally different things. The main point is that there is one truth. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life!"* (John 14:6 NLT) I celebrate today that Jesus is Truth, and I wouldn't doubt that anymore for anything.

**God gave us minds to think, but we will never know all the answers. This is where faith comes into play. What is one area you need to surrender to God that is causing you to doubt instead of having faith?**

# JUST SAY NO

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**Song:**

*"Your Will be Done"*  
by City Alight



**Scriptures:**

Titus 2



*"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:12 NIV)*

In 1982, then-First Lady Nancy Reagan launched an anti-drug campaign famously known as "Just Say No." Mrs. Reagan poured out every effort into this campaign, speaking in schools, writing and producing newspaper articles and editorials, and seeking support from the movie theaters to support her cause in her public announcements.

Since that time, some people have criticized this slogan, saying it was out of touch with reality and that it was too simple-minded for teens to accept, consequently turning it into a pop-culture joke in years to come.

But was this slogan really out of touch? Biblically, Paul gives us the same instructions, "to just say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions" (Titus 2:12 NIV). If you think about it, every decision we make is a yes or a no. There is no gray area when it comes to following God. We can't pick and choose what we follow and what we don't, for God calls us to say no so we can live

self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. Godliness and worldly passions cannot coexist.

There will always be criticism from those who don't understand God and His Word. We can't expect them to understand, as we did not understand before we knew God either. If we are going to do good in this world and set a godly example for others, less is more. "No" is a straightforward answer to the temptations that come our way, luring us into potential sin areas. The more we use it, the easier it gets.

Nancy Reagan's slogan about saying no to drugs may not have been very popular; however, saying "no" to the world is not popular. We might as well accept that when we choose to follow Jesus. How do we represent Jesus in our actions and set a godly example to those around us? By acting in a simple way, to just say "no" to the temptations in life and follow His leading.

**Make a list of things that you KNOW God wants us all to say, "no" to?**

# ACCOUNTABILITY IN CONFLICT

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**Song:**

*"God is in This Story"*

by Big Daddy Weave

and Katy Nichole

**Scriptures:**

1 Peter 3:8–12;

Galatians 2:11–16;

Philippians 4:2–3



Relationships are messy. Whether we like it or not, people will disappoint us, betray us, and do and say things that hurt us. Conflict is very difficult unless we are intentional about making amends with those individuals who have hurt us. I have learned over the years that I desperately need godly, objective people in my life to hold me accountable to nudge me toward unity and peace when I am faced with opposition or personal misunderstandings.

One biblical example we see of accountability is in Philippians 4:2–3. Two women, Euodia and Syntyche, had an unnamed conflict that they could not resolve. Paul challenged them in these verses to settle their disagreement so they could put the conflict behind them for the sake of the kingdom. I love the boldness of Paul to speak truth in love and provide an outside voice to a situation that wasn't getting resolved.

Another example of accountability is in Galatians 2:11–16 when Paul writes to the Galatian church, telling them about the time he had to confront Peter face-to-face. Paul explains that Peter had been taught by

Jesus that faith in God and love for others outweighed legalistic laws that had for so many years governed the Jewish people. Yet Peter succumbed to the swaying a few of James' friends to not eat with the Gentiles after finding out they were not circumcised (Jewish law). Peter knew this was wrong and hypocritical, but in his humanity, he was afraid of criticism by James' friends. This unintentionally influenced Barnabas to the same hypocrisy, and Paul was bold in reminding them of their offense to God.

The Christian life was never intended to be lived alone. We need each other! We were never meant to live a holy life without the Holy Spirit or godly influences connected with us. And as always, the holy Word of God is our best accountability ever as we continue to run this race until our final reward in heaven (1 Peter 3:8–9).

**Name a difficult relationship you might have or have had in the past. How can surrendering that relationship to God change your perspective?**

# WHO'S IN THE "GOD SEAT"?

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**Song:**

"First" by  
Lauren Daigle



**Scriptures:**

Deuteronomy 5:6–8



*"You must not have any other god but me"*  
(Deuteronomy 5:7 NLT)

In the Old Testament, Israel had a pattern of rejecting God, disobeying God's commands, and being unfaithful to Him by worshiping other gods. Even though God forgave them for all their complaining and sinfulness, He still brought consequences upon them. God wasn't out to destroy the Israelites, but He wanted them to know that He would not tolerate other things coming before Him.

We are not much different than the Israelites. Even if we do not worship statues of gold, we sometimes allow other things or people in our lives to creep into the "God seat," sneakily taking the place of God. This could be our phones, gaming, sports events, musical theater, social media, friends, studies, material possessions, or simply ourselves. How do we identify whether something or someone has made their way to the "God seat" in our lives?

There are five key indicators that can take our temperature on what could be a potential god in our life if we don't keep our life in check. Take a moment to answer the following questions:

1. What is at the top of my priority list each day?
2. What do I think about first when I wake up?
3. What motivates me, sometimes to the exclusion of other important things?
4. What do I talk about mostly with friends and family?
5. What am I addicted to and can't live without?

Remember, Satan is subtle. Prioritizing things before God in our lives can be a slow fade to where we aren't even aware it is happening. We do not need to be scared, but we do need to be alert and recognize potential land mines!

Today, take some time to identify any potential gods in your life. Name them, confess them, and put God in the "God seat" where He belongs!

**We hate to admit that we may have things that can creep into that "God" seat. What are those things that you need to surrender to Jesus to ensure that they don't?**

# HEALTHY CHOICES

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**Song:**

*"The More I Seek You"*  
by Kari Jobe



**Scriptures:**

Romans 12:2–3



*"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think ... Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves..."*  
(Romans 12:2–3 NLT)

We all have a need to feel important, to leave the world a little better than how we found it, leaving some bit of impression on others that can be handed down to future generations. When social media became a thing, I did not feel the need to open an account at first. But then I began to feel left out of the news in everyone's lives, feeling like I was the last one to know when someone had a baby or had passed away. Eventually, peer pressure won, and I soon found myself opening a social media account that I kept for over fifteen years.

During that time, I would share with Mark the things I learned and saw on the newsfeed, some of which were concerning or negative. Like a fly in the ointment, my thinking became contaminated, causing me to view others in a negative way, instilling a judging attitude, and becoming more aware of my own self-importance. Although I was a confident adult, I began to compare myself with others, which was not healthy. After a while, Mark asked me why I was spending time on something

that was stealing my joy, robbing me of precious time I could be spending otherwise? He was right. I knew I needed to make a change.

There are pros and cons to just about every option we consider in life to fill our time with. For me, this passage in Romans convicted me that my choice of social media at that time was not a healthy one for me. That's not to say it isn't a healthy choice for you or someone else.

As Christ-followers, we constantly need to reevaluate the things that fill our time daily. Do they draw us more toward Christ or more toward the world? Only we can make that change and make healthy choices for ourselves. It is only then that we will be able to allow God to truly transform our thinking into having the mind of Christ.

**Are there any healthy choices about how you are using your time that God might be nudging you to make today? Surrender them and write a prayer below.**

# MOTIVES OF THE HEART

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**Song:**

*"My Heart is Yours"*  
by Kristian Stanfill



**Scriptures:**

Proverbs 16:1–3;  
Jeremiah 17:9;  
Luke 16:9–11



*"All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD" (Proverbs 16:2 NLT)*

Humans are intelligent creatures. Over the course of many generations, we have devoted countless hours to bettering our minds and strengthening our educational development so we can be the very best humans we can possibly be. We've even developed a measurement for intelligence with tests, more readily known as IQ (intelligence quotient). In our history, we have celebrated those with high IQs, whose minds have led to innovative inventions, engineering feats, computer systems, and the discovery of cures and vaccines for diseases.

But how do we measure the motives of one's heart? Proverbs tells us that our motives, or reasons behind what we do, are measured by the Lord. Although accomplishments are to be celebrated, the reasons behind what we do are more important to the Lord. Why do you think motives are so important to God?

Jeremiah 17:9 answers that for us by telling us that our hearts are very deceitful, and we can easily fool even ourselves about the reasons behind our actions. We can pretend that we are choosing good actions for

God, perhaps fooling everyone around us, when we actually have ulterior motives. God is not fooled by our deceitfulness and is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 NLT).

Sin nature leads to negative motivations like revenge, pride, the need for approval, self-righteousness, or a sense of entitlement. Any motivation that derives from the flesh is not pleasing to God (Romans 8:8). There is no real test to take to determine what lies deep in our hearts; however, God has a way of revealing to us our impure motives by speaking to us through His Word. Accountability by other Christians can help detect sinful motives in us as well.

Questions to ask ourselves: Why do I give? Why am I making this decision? Why am I befriending this person? Why am I serving? Let us ask God today to search our hearts and reveal to us any deceitful way in us. Let Him purify our motives so that His will becomes our own.

**At this time, allow God to search your heart. What impure motives come to mind that God wants you to surrender to Him today?**

# TOO MUCH THINKING

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**Song:**

"Make Room" by  
Community Music



**Scriptures:**

Isaiah 55:6–12; 2  
Corinthians 10:4–6



*"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts'"*  
(Isaiah 55:8–9 NLT)

I am an overthinker. Sometimes I exhaust myself with the amount of thinking I do in a day. My friends laugh with me at times because I'm not only thinking creatively, but I rehash conversations and events that already happened. By the time I am done thinking, I've gotten myself worked up to assume the worst, often leading me to worry. This overthinking is damaging to me emotionally and spiritually, leading to the sin of worry and negative thinking.

Isaiah reminds us that our thoughts are not like God's thoughts and that His ways are so much higher than our ways. God wants to get a hold of our thought life and has a plan to help us with that. Just like the "stop, drop, and roll" training we are taught to do in a fire, it would be good if we could recognize the warning signs of overthinking with a similar reminder to focus on God. Perhaps something like, "stop, drop it, and roll forward" " ... and we take captive every thought to make it

obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV).

Since I'm visual, I have this image in my head of taking my thoughts that are not of God and putting them in a metal box with a huge lock on it. Then I ask God to fill those empty spaces in my head with His thoughts that include love for others, forgiveness, grace, peace, hope, trust, and purity. If I find myself thinking thoughts that are contrary to these things, I repeat the process again, "stop, drop it, and roll forward."

God's thoughts are nothing like your thoughts, and His ways are more than you possibly can imagine! If you find yourself on the downward cycle of overthinking, God wants you to come to Him. He promises to give you His peace.

**Whether you are a person who thinks too much on the negative or not, what kind of thoughts does God want to guard you against? (i.e. self-destructive thoughts, jealousy, etc.). Write them here.**

# LEAD ME TO THE ROCK

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**Song:**

"Same God" by  
Elevation Worship



**Scriptures:**

Psalm 61, 121



*"From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Psalm 61:2 NIV)*

I was Googling pictures of scary fish that live in the deepest, darkest places of the oceans. Many of them look like they were created for a horror movie with no eyes, exhibiting huge mouths, unusually long fangs, and other features that could give you nightmares if you stared at them too long! These fish never see sunlight. They are bottom-dwellers, living in the dark, cold waters, and for the most part, they are unseen by the rest of the world.

Sometimes I feel like one of these fish. I'm alone, trying to function in the dark while surviving the icy waters that surround me, and my perspective is bleak and small. I can barely see what is in front of my face, much less see what is ahead. Hope is difficult to cling to in times like these. Unlike the bottom-dweller fish at the bottom of the ocean, I was not created to live in the dark, especially days, weeks, and months on end. As human beings, we need light, warmth, fellowship with others, and a closeness to our Savior. Many times, we need to have a new perspective through the eyes of Christ so we can take our eyes off ourselves.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. (Psalm 121:1–3 NIV)*

We can't see the mountains when we are in the ocean depths, but God knows we cannot live at the cold bottom for long. Psalm 61 takes us on a spiritual flight to soar above our problems and our situations. It is a heartfelt prayer for God to lead us to a supernatural place! He wants to take us there on wings like eagles, to gain fresh eyes on our situations, and to recognize that the God who created all of creation has the power to help us in times of trouble. May He lead us to the Rock so we can rest in the shadow of His wings and soak in every part of who He is.

**Depression is a lonely feeling. If you are suffering with depression, please write a prayer of surrender to God here, but also reach out to someone for help NOW. If you are not suffering with depression, use this space to pray for someone who is and reach out to them.**

# TOXIC THINKING

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**Song:**

*"Be Thou My Vision"*  
by Shane & Shane



**Scriptures:**

Romans 8:5–8,  
12:2



Social media and the need to find our place in this world is rampant. We want to leave a legacy. We want to make a difference. Though these are wonderful aspirations, we can quickly fill our minds with toxic thoughts that turn our eyes to the things of this world instead of having the mindset of our heavenly Father. Some of those toxic thoughts are:

1. Allowing others' opinions of us define who we think we are.
2. Putting value on things that are temporary and not eternal.
3. Not accepting that some things in life are just what they are and that we cannot change others' actions and words.
4. Worrying about the future.
5. Living our lives as a victim instead of an overcomer.
6. Believing that the past defines our future.
7. Replaying negative thoughts over and over in our mind, consuming our thoughts with bad feelings about ourselves.

*Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.*

*So, letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. (Romans 8:5–6 NLT)*

Letting the Holy Spirit control our mind is key to allowing the Spirit to change and renew our thinking in general. I have struggled with toxic thinking, causing me to feel defeated before I even begin to move forward. Negative thoughts are not from God, yet we allow them to play out in our minds. The key is to nip them in the bud.

*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:2 NLT)*

**Our mindsets can be so easily swayed by our circumstances. What kind of mindset (i.e. negative, angry, self-absorbed, critical, etc.) do you need to surrender to Jesus today?**

# DO YOU STINK?

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**Song:**

"Gratitude" by  
Brandon Lake



**Scriptures:**

Numbers 11:1–10;  
Ecclesiastes 10:1–2



Growing up, my family had a full house of animals! Besides my parents and sister, we had a dog, cat, bird, a guinea pig, rabbit, turtle, hamster, and fish. Let's just say I was used to a variety of smells simply because of the number of living creatures that inhabited our house.

Years later when I was married with two middle school-age boys under our roof, I realized the word *smells* took on brand-new meaning, from the stinky shoes in the hallway to the week-old uneaten turkey sandwich found in their hall cubby and the lost hamster found dead in a closet. (No, that didn't really happen!)

The sense of smell is a powerful tool God gave us to identify what is around us, some of which is beautiful and some of which is simply not so good. Smells can also indicate warning signs, such as a plugged toilet, spoiled food, or a gas leak in the home. Some odors indicate potential behaviors that need to change, such as poor cleanliness and hygiene.

We are all smelly people. Some of our stink can be smelled with our noses, yet other odors are given off through our behaviors. In the Old Testament, God was very frustrated with the Israelites because of all their

complaining. The stink of their ungratefulness of all God had done for them led them to worship other gods and to complain about their circumstances.

Do you give off any smells that indicate something needs to change? Perhaps it's the smell of gossip or negativity? Or maybe pride or stubbornness have taken root and give off an odor that other people are beginning to smell. We can't hide odors for long. We may mask the odor with a smile (or a little too much cologne) or by simply saying the right things. But if the human heart is contaminated with a stench that is not pleasing to God, there is a need to repent.

My prayer is that if I begin to stink in my behavior or attitude, someone I trust will bring it to my attention. After all, I don't want to stink! There are enough bad odors in this world. "As dead flies cause even a bottle of perfume to stink, so a little foolishness spoils great wisdom and honor" (Ecclesiastes 10:1–2 NLT).

**We all have moments of bad attitudes. In the last few weeks, when have you noticed having a bad attitude? Take the time to write a prayer of surrender as you commit your attitude to Jesus.**

# WORRY AND ANXIETY AT ITS FINEST

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**Song:**

*"Surrounded"*  
by Upperoom



**Scriptures:**

Psalms 9:10;  
Matthew 6:25–34



When I was in first grade, our family was involved in a car accident coming home to Syracuse, New York, from Disney World in Florida. The snow blizzard swept across New York and Pennsylvania, and before we knew it, we had spun around several times, colliding with a guardrail, towing a twenty-foot camper on the back. We were stuck in a huge snowbank, but we were safe. When my parents got out of the car to evaluate the situation, the guardrail we collided with overlooked a deep, rocky ravine that if we had gone over, we would not have survived. After rescue workers came to help, they informed us that we were spared because a mile up the road was a twenty-two-car pileup with several fatalities.

There is so much in life we have absolutely no control over. The sooner we come to grips with that, the better we will be able to experience God's peace. We worry and are anxious because of things we have no control over, such as weather, disease, death, the economy, and decisions that other people make. We make plans but then worry whether they will come to pass because of life's unpredictability.

If we know all of this, why do we worry? Why do we stress ourselves, battling for control over what we know

we don't have any? The Bible says that in this world, we will have hardship, but Jesus has overcome the world as we know it. This means we will suffer. There will be times of grief and challenge. However, God can give us the ability to handle anything we may go through when we seek Him with all our heart. "Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you" (Psalm 9:10 NIV).

God may not spare us from disease, death, or accidents, but He will prepare us for those times as we seek Him daily. Amid our anxiety and stress, may we learn to empty ourselves out and place our trust in Jesus. He will replace every worry with His peace, hope, and strength, and we will see His faithfulness unfold before our very eyes. Keep your eyes on Jesus! "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34 NIV).

**What are 3 things you worry about in life? Write a prayer of surrender, laying these worries at the feet of Jesus.**

# SO RIGHT, WE'RE WRONG

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**Song:**

*"Lay Down My Pride"*  
by Jeremy Camp



**Scriptures:**

1 Kings 8:46–51;  
Proverbs 3:7



Have you ever had someone give you an insincere apology? Perhaps the apology was wrapped with a condescending tone or with the implication that you were the one with the problem for being so easily hurt.

False apologies don't do anything for anyone. They are insincere and disingenuous. However, if I am honest with myself, I have probably done this very thing to be in control of a situation. Perhaps you have as well? The words "I'm sorry" didn't come from humility; rather they're from a place of pride that shamed the other person by implicating they were too sensitive or misinterpreting the situation.

Sadly there have been many times when I have unintentionally hurt someone with my words or actions and have had to go back and apologize. I've learned that, despite what my motives were, I had hurt the other person, period. The lesson here for me was that intentional or not, I needed to own responsibility for what came out of my mouth. I needed to humble myself, own my words and actions, and be open to discussion if there were ever going to be reconciliation of any kind.

When my son Matt was in fifth grade, I had a discussion

with him about his difficulty to say “I’m sorry” for anything. (Yes, the apple didn’t fall far!) From an insightful ten-year-old, he said that if he apologized, he was letting his brother or someone else have victory over him. He didn’t want to lose or look wrong! Out of the mouths of babes.

I often say, “People can be so right that they are wrong!” If we are not careful, we can be “wise in our own eyes” (Proverbs 3:7 NIV), deeply in need of a little more humility. The Lord has instructed us to consider others better than ourselves, being people who can sincerely apologize and be above reproach in the eyes of Christ. Let us humble ourselves before God so we can prevent ourselves from being so right we’re wrong.

**When have you been so right you’ve been wrong? Pride can creep in when we least expect it. Dig deep into your soul and write a prayer of surrender of your pride. Ask God to instill a spirit of humility in its place.**

# THE COMPARISON TRAP

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**Song:**

*"Perfectly Loved"*  
by Rachel Lampa



**Scriptures:**

Psalms 139:13–18



I've always been told by my mom that I was unique. To be honest, I didn't interpret the term unique as being a good thing. I misconstrued my mother's words to take them in a bad sort of way, thinking that I was weird and not normal. However, as I grew older, I accepted that being unique was not a bad thing at all! Yes, I was different. Yes, I was creative, and yes, I was strong-willed. But God created me the way I am for a purpose, crafted in His fingers, and uniquely inspired to reflect His glory! I am a person with a blueprint designed by God Himself, and I am not to compare my blueprint with anyone else's.

This leads to an epidemic of humanity, the comparison trap. Many people struggle with low self-esteem, falling into the trap of comparing themselves to others, everything from physical appearances to handicaps, intelligence, possessions, talents, and popularity. Value in a person does not come from other people. It only comes from God.

Why do humans compare? Most often the need to feel accepted by others trumps the fact that God did not shortchange us. We perhaps value the worldly view of what is normal, good, and acceptable in the eyes of man. But He didn't create us for other people's

approval. He created us to reflect Himself.

When my boys were young, they would often make and bring home crafts they made with specifically Mark or me in mind. When we opened their projects, our faces beamed, and we displayed their gifts of creativity for all to see, remembering the boys with fondness every time we saw their projects. We never once compared their projects to each other's. After all, their works were reflections of their hearts and love for us. They were proud of them and were made for very specific purposes.

That is how God is. He is the master craftsman. He never intended for any person to be like someone else. He delights in His creation, and so should we! When we do so, God will be seen in and through us, which is our greatest purpose of all.

**Who do you compare yourself to? Why, do you think? God wants you to surrender this. Write a prayer below doing just that.**

# SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

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**Song:**

"Free Amen" by  
We the Kingdom



**Scriptures:**

Galatians 5:13



As a teenager, I couldn't wait to graduate and go to college where I could spread my wings and make my own decisions. Independence and freedom were calling to me, and I counted down the days.

Freedom, however, can come at a cost for many who walked the same shoes as mine. Soon into my freshman year of college, I received news that an individual I knew in high school was killed after being thrown from the back of a pickup truck on a joy ride while drinking with friends. In an instant, his much-desired freedom cost him his life.

Years later another individual I knew was feeling trapped by trying to be a good girl under her parents' roof. Consequently, she decided to go to a party to experience the thrill of her coveted freedom. A just-once experience led her to an unwanted pregnancy, giving up a child she loved, and a disease she would carry with her for the rest of her life.

I tell you these situations only to explain that although we often want freedom to experience life on our terms, even for a just-once experience, our freedom can lead us down a destructive path. Sometimes we make wrong choices in response to feeling that God's terms are

limiting, restricting us from having fun. As a Christian, we might feel like we are missing out, longing to feel a part of what the world has to offer. But the longer I have been on my Christian journey, the more I have learned that God's spiritual boundaries protect us by giving us joy, freedom, and happiness that the world cannot offer. He isn't trying to squelch our fun. He is saving us from a lifetime of heartache and consequences.

*For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13 NLT)*

When I read this verse, I am reminded again that my sin also affects other people, not just me. The best way I can love and serve God is by staying on course, using my spiritual freedom to glorify Him!

**Biblical principles can, at times, seem confining. However, it is in these boundaries where true freedom is found. Are there any biblical guidelines that you find confining to your freedom? Be honest. Then, if you are willing, take time to write a prayer of surrender and you will experience God's freedom is like nothing else!**

# WHO GOD SAYS I AM

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**Song:**

*"Who Am I"* by  
Casting Crowns



**Scriptures:**

Romans 3:24;  
2 Corinthians 3:12;  
1 John 3:1



"And then there were three ..." Ever heard that phrase before? It's usually a quip after someone leaves the room and then someone states the obvious of how many are left. What if we took the humor out of it for a moment and turn the phrase onto myself?

"Three" describes how many "Scotts" there were in middle school and even partly into high school. Yes, that's right. I was trying to be three different people, someone at home who was different than the one at school, who was also different than the one at church. I lived an exhausting lifestyle, always trying to remember who knew what about me and in what context. I carefully maintained this web of who-knew-which-me and wouldn't hang out with certain people when other certain people were around in case something accidentally got said in front of someone who shouldn't know what they shouldn't know.

Whew! Confused yet? Eventually I was too. I got to college, and life smacked me in the face. Just in the first semester, I missed more Sunday services than I had in my whole life and then landed a C- in Old Testament of all things! I literally passed the class with the lowest possible point accumulation allowed. I had

horrible study habits, meaning I didn't study ever. But there was a deeper issue. I knew I was called to be a pastor, and yet suddenly it became clear in just a couple short months that I knew far less about Scripture than I thought I did. Pride and arrogance had grown rampant in my heart, and I wasn't even aware.

I had gotten so used to trying to be someone else that I had never really found myself. I didn't understand what an identity in Christ looked like because I never asked God, "Who do You say I am?" If you're like the younger me, you question yourself constantly, you doubt your abilities, and you seek approval from others. I know that feeling. You're not alone.

But there is hope! Scripture speaks. May these verses speak to you like they have spoken to me in the past. You are *Wonderfully made* (Psalm 139:14), *Child of God* (1 John 3:1), *Redeemed* (Romans 3:24), and *Hope* (2 Corinthians 3:12). Who does God say you are?

**We all need to find our identity in Jesus Christ. At this time, surrender your identity to Jesus. Ask Him for His help to find comfort and strength in that.is like nothing else!**

# PHYSICAL SELF-CONTROL

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**Song:**

"Fresh Wind" by  
Hillsong Worship



**Scriptures:**

1 Corinthians 3:16-17,  
6:15-20



As a sophomore in high school, I attended a church retreat with my youth group. Each morning and evening, we gathered in the large living space of the retreat center to hear messages from our youth pastor and then broke out into smaller discussion groups. One of the messages changed my life. The youth pastor spoke boldly on the physical self-control of our bodies, both in the care for our bodies and in our sexuality.

The first part of his message focused on how low self-esteem can lead to injuring our bodies, like drugs, alcohol, and cutting. He used the verses in 1 Corinthians, "Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17 NLT).

The second part pertained to our sexuality through the will of God. He not only stressed that sexual relations were between a man and woman in the context of marriage, but he also reiterated that God assigned our sex at birth and He does not make mistakes.

*Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a*

*sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body.*  
(1 Corinthians 6:18–20 NLT)

At the end of one of the retreat, the youth pastor gave an invitation for anyone who wanted to commit their physical bodies to the Lord. While the words to the closing song were sung, I stood up, went forward, and committed my whole physical being at the feet of Jesus. I wanted to let the Holy Spirit guide my mouth, mind, eyes, ears, sexuality, and hands and feet. I accepted that His regulations were for my protection. I never want to hold anything back from God again. He deserves all of me.

**Just like a horse cannot choose to be a rabbit, we cannot choose our gender. God's creation was made whole when He created you. In addition, biblical sexual guidelines are clear in His Word to save sex for marriage. What would you like to surrender to Jesus today in the area of your sexuality?**

# VICTORY OVER BAD HABITS

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**Song:**

*"May the Words  
of My Mouth"*

by Tim Hughes



**Scriptures:**

Romans 12:2;  
James 4:7



Habits are hard to break. As a teenager, I had a rather foul mouth until I made the decision to follow Jesus, allowing Him to search my heart and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness. I remember a Wednesday evening youth service in ninth grade when I felt the strong tug of the Holy Spirit convict me of my swearing and taking God's name in vain. The conviction was strong, yet I had sworn for so long, foul words were a normality for me in school or at home, especially when I was angry. Yes, I was a follower of Jesus at that point. However, the habits I had developed began way before my relationship with Christ did, so there was a lot to tackle. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think" (Romans 12:2 NLT).

Bad habits can be minor or very noticeable, imposing a life-changing effect on our lives. All in all, just like Romans 12:2 teaches us, God has the power and authority to renew our thinking and develop new habits that are pleasing and glorifying to Him. I knew I needed to get rid of this ugly habit, for it contradicted my faith in Christ. I hoped God would lead me to victory in this area.

I prayed, found other words to substitute the bad ones, and put an accountability partner in place. I consciously and diligently prayed for purity in my mouth. When I did mess up and swear, I challenged myself to apologize to whomever I swore to or with at the time. I'll admit, this felt a little vulnerable, especially with my school friends who also swore, but I disciplined myself to confess, even if the other person didn't care.

I write this today to let you know that in time I found victory over this bad habit because God transformed my thinking. He answered my prayer for purity and self-control. What seemed difficult or impossible at the time is now a testimony to God's faithfulness that He does give victory over bad habits!

**We all have bad habits. What are some of yours?  
Write a prayer of surrender of those bad habits and  
ask God to replace them with good ones!**

# A SOMETHING NEW

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**Song:**

*"Firm Foundation"*  
by Cody Carnes



**Scriptures:**

Isaiah 43:18-20



Let's talk about dirt, the dirty kind outside! Did you know that there are seventy thousand different types of dirt in the United States and that one tablespoon of soil has more organisms in it than there are people on the earth? Dirt is essential to our existence. If it weren't for dirt, we wouldn't have wood, vegetables or fruit. Farmers are skilled at knowing the importance of soil preparation, when to till, plant, and water their crops. Nursery farmers can determine when a plant should be transplanted for furthering its growth.

Likewise, God is always doing something new in our lives, sometimes even transplanting us to a new thing. We need to be ready for it, making sure that we have prepared and watered our soil. "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19 NIV)

I can't say I have always perceived when God has done a new thing. In fact, there are seasons in my life when I have dug in my heels for change, choosing not to embrace God's leading. Hindsight is 20/20, and when I look back at those seasons, I now am aware of what God was doing. He was shaping me, leading me, and transplanting me into a larger pot. I didn't always appreciate His moving and challenging me at the time,

having to find new schools, new church, new job, and new friends. But I wouldn't change those seasons of transition and change for anything. I have learned to pay attention to God's gentle voice, anticipating the new thing He is about to do.

*But forget all that—it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. Isaiah 43:18–19 NLT*

**We can all worry about our future. But what is God's promise in these verses? You can trust Him. He is faithful. Write a prayer to Him now, surrendering your future to His hands. He will never let you down.**