

## 5 Day Devotional: "Cracking the Code - Live to Receive Others"

### Day 1: The Power of First Impressions

Have you ever walked into a room where you felt completely invisible? Maybe it was a new workplace, a social gathering, or even a church. That sinking feeling of being overlooked can shape our entire experience. Research shows that visitors decide within the first 10 minutes whether they'll return to a church. Ten minutes. That's barely enough time to find a seat and settle in, yet it's often all the time we have to make someone feel genuinely welcomed. Every smile, every greeting, every small gesture of acknowledgment carries incredible weight. When we recognize this reality, it transforms how we view our role in God's house. We're not just attendees; we're ambassadors of Christ's love. Your simple 'good morning' or offer to help someone find their way might be the difference between someone encountering God or walking away feeling unseen. The beautiful truth is that God uses ordinary people like us to create extraordinary moments of connection. When we intentionally look for opportunities to welcome others, we participate in something much bigger than ourselves—we become part of God's invitation for all people to experience His love.

#### Bible Verse

'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' - Hebrews 13:2 (English Standard Version (ESV))

#### Reflection Question

When you enter a room, do you naturally look for familiar faces or do you scan for someone who might need a welcoming smile?

#### Quote

The first 10 minutes of somebody's visit at church is typically. I think the stats are insane. It's like 95% of people decide within the first 10 minutes of any church they go to whether they're going to go back or not.

#### Prayer

God, help me see others through Your eyes and recognize the power of simple acts of welcome. Give me courage to step outside my comfort zone to make others feel valued and seen.

### Day 2: Breaking Out of Our Comfort Circles

It's human nature to gravitate toward familiar faces and comfortable spaces. When we walk into any room, we instinctively scan for the people we know, the spots where we feel safe, the conversations that come easily. There's nothing wrong with enjoying friendships and finding comfort in community. But what happens when our natural inclination to stay comfortable causes us to miss divine appointments? Every Sunday, people walk through church doors carrying burdens we can't see, hoping for connection they desperately need. While we're catching up with our usual group, someone might be standing just a few feet away, feeling completely alone in a crowded room. The challenge isn't to abandon our friendships but to expand our awareness. What if we made it a practice to intentionally step outside our comfort circles? What if we looked for the person standing alone, the family that seems uncertain, the individual who appears to be searching for something more than just a seat? Breaking out of our comfort zones doesn't require a complete personality overhaul. It simply requires intentional awareness and a willingness to make room for one more person in our circle of care.

## Reflection Question

How can you shift from viewing service as something you do to embracing it as part of who you are?

## Quote

Serving our community is who we are. It's our middle name. It's part of who we are. It's not just something that we do.

## Prayer

Father, help serving others become so natural to me that it flows from my identity as Your child. Make compassion and generosity defining characteristics of who I am.

## Day 3: Living an Interruptible Life

Jesus had the most important mission in human history, yet He consistently allowed Himself to be interrupted. A woman touched His robe in a crowd, children wanted His attention, a man called out from a tree—and Jesus stopped. He paid attention. He served in the moment. Our culture celebrates busyness and efficiency, but Jesus modeled something different: availability. Living an interruptible life means slowing down enough to notice the needs around us. It means being willing to adjust our plans when someone needs help. It means choosing people over productivity. This doesn't mean we abandon all structure or responsibility, but it does mean we hold our schedules loosely enough to respond when God places opportunities in our path. The person who needs encouragement at the grocery store, the neighbor struggling with yard work, the coworker having a difficult day—these aren't interruptions to our real purpose. They are our real purpose. When we live with open hearts and available hands, we discover that God uses these 'interruptions' to accomplish His greatest work through us.

## Bible Verse

'Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.' - Matthew 5:16 (English Standard Version)

## Reflection Question

What would need to change in your schedule and mindset to live a more interruptible life like Jesus did?

## Quote

Jesus lived a life that he allowed himself to be interrupted. He allowed himself to be interrupted.

## Prayer

Jesus, help me slow down and pay attention to the people and needs around me. Give me the wisdom to know when to set aside my plans to serve others.

## Day 4: Stepping In, Not Standing Out

There's a crucial question we must ask ourselves: Are we trying to stand out in this world, or are we trying to step in? The difference is profound. Standing out is about drawing attention to ourselves—our talents, our achievements, our importance. Stepping in is about drawing attention to the needs around us and meeting them with love. When we step in, we're not concerned with who gets the credit or whether anyone notices our contribution. We're simply responding to what we see with the heart of Christ.

### Bible Verse

'Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.' - Romans 15:7 (English Standard Version (ESV))

### Reflection Question

Who in your church community might be feeling overlooked while you're focused on your familiar circle of friends?

### Quote

Our natural inclination is to walk into any room. And we try naturally, by human nature to find that place and that space and the people that we feel most comfortable around.

### Prayer

Lord, expand my vision beyond my comfort zone. Help me notice those who might be feeling unseen and give me the courage to reach out with Your love.

## Day 3: Seeing the Overlooked

Jesus had a remarkable ability to see people others missed. Throughout the Gospels, we find Him noticing the tax collector in the tree, the woman at the well, the children others tried to shoo away. He consistently moved toward those who were overlooked, marginalized, or forgotten by society. This wasn't accidental—it was intentional. Today, the same opportunity exists in our churches and communities. Behind every face is a story we don't know, a struggle we can't see, a heart that longs to be noticed. The single mom juggling work and parenting, the teenager feeling awkward and out of place, the elderly person whose spouse recently passed away, the visitor who's never stepped foot in a church before—they're all around us, hoping someone will see them as more than just another face in the crowd. Seeing the overlooked begins with slowing down and paying attention. It means taking off what one pastor called 'the lens of exclusivity' and choosing to notice who others might miss. When we develop eyes to see like Jesus sees, we discover that welcoming others isn't just about being friendly—it's about participating in God's heart for every person He's created.

### Bible Verse

'And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" - Matthew 25:40 (English Standard Version (ESV))

### Reflection Question

What would change in your church experience if you intentionally looked for someone who might be feeling invisible or overlooked?

### Quote

I think it begins with us seeing someone. I think it begins with us taking our lens of exclusivity off to slow down, to look around, to notice who others might overlook.

### Prayer

Jesus, give me Your eyes to see those who are often overlooked. Help me slow down and notice the people You're placing in my path who need to experience Your love through me.

## Day 4: Creating Space for God's Encounters

There's something beautiful that happens when people feel genuinely welcomed—they become open to experiencing God in new ways. Before someone fully understands theology or doctrine, they often experience the love of Christ through His people. Your warm greeting, your willingness to sit with someone new, your invitation to grab coffee after service—these simple acts create space for divine encounters.

Think about your own faith journey. Chances are, someone along the way made you feel welcomed, valued, and seen. Maybe it was a Sunday school teacher who remembered your name, a small group leader who checked on you during a difficult time, or simply someone who smiled and made room for you in their pew. These moments of genuine welcome often become the foundation for deeper spiritual growth. When we intentionally create welcoming environments, we're not just being nice—we're participating in God's mission to draw all people to Himself. We become the hands and feet of Jesus, extending His invitation to come and belong. Every person who walks through our church doors is someone God loves deeply, and our welcome might be the very thing that helps them take their next step toward Him.

#### Bible Verse

'And the master said to the servant, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." - Luke 14:23 (English Standard Version (ESV))

#### Reflection Question

How might your intentional acts of welcome create opportunities for others to encounter God in meaningful ways?

#### Quote

When we intentionally welcome others, we create space for them to encounter God.

#### Prayer

Father, use me as an instrument of Your welcome. Help me create space for others to encounter You through simple acts of love and inclusion.

### **Day 5: Reflecting God's Heart**

At its core, welcoming others isn't just a nice thing to do—it's a reflection of who God is. Throughout Scripture, we see God consistently moving toward people, especially those who feel like they don't belong. He pursues the lost, embraces the broken, and invites the excluded to His table. When we choose to welcome others, we're mirroring the very heart of our heavenly Father. This means welcoming isn't dependent on our personality type or natural social abilities. Whether you're naturally outgoing or more reserved, you can find ways to make others feel valued and seen. It might be a quiet conversation with someone sitting alone, offering to help a family with young children find the nursery, or simply making eye contact and smiling at someone who looks uncertain. The goal isn't to become someone you're not, but to let God's welcoming heart flow through who you already are. Every time we make someone feel noticed, valued, and included, we're giving them a glimpse of how God sees them. We're showing them that they matter, that they belong, and that God's house truly has room for everyone. This is the beautiful privilege we have as followers of Christ—to be living reflections of His boundless love and radical welcome.

#### Bible Verse

'And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." - Matthew 25:40 (English Standard Version (ESV))

#### Reflection Question

In what specific ways can you reflect God's welcoming heart to others this week, both inside and outside of church?

Quote - Welcoming reflects the heart of Jesus.

Prayer - God, let Your welcoming heart flow through me. Help me be a reflection of Your love to everyone I encounter, showing them they are valued and belong in Your family.