



Goodness & Mercy

Weekly Devotional 2016



What Follows You?
Psalm 23:6

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Mobile:

E-mail address:

Targets for 2016:

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THE TEAM

Proof Readers: Kiven Mupetura, Rejoice Moyo, Gloria Ndlovu, Matie Beja, Grace Dube

Online Admin: Florentyne Garande, Sineke Sibanda, Rejoice Moyo, Gracious Ntebang

Design & Layout: Sineke Sibanda

With Thanks to: Partners, Affiliates and Prayer Team

NIV Bible used unless stated otherwise. References were made to Mathew Henry’s Concise Commentary, Gill’s Exposition, Pulpit Commentary and NIV Study Bible

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INTRODUCTION

How to use the devotional:

- It is a weekly devotional, 52 sharings for the 52 weeks in the year, divided into 12 major topics by month and further divided into weekly subtopics.
- Study, meditate, confess, declare, decree, be challenged, be inspired, be encouraged, action points and in-turn make a difference in your sphere of influence.
- May be used in Home Groups, Bible Study, Preaching etc.
- Send an e-mail with a subject 'weekly devotionals' to devotionals@goodnessandmercy.org to receive weekly messages on-line.
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JANUARY- YEAR 2016 IS HERE**Week 1:1-7****Run The Race****Week 2: 8-14****Run With Perseverance****Week 3: 15-21****Look Unto Jesus****Week 4: 22-31****Hold To The Promise**

Week 1: 1-7 January - Year 2016 Is Here

• **Run The Race: Hebrews 12:1b (KJB)**

“...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”

We are encouraged to lay aside every weight. The Greek word is “ogkon” meaning weight, mass or burden and at the time of the contests, Greek contestants were required to be stripped naked. As we start the New Year, get rid of anything and everything that may hinder your running the race. What are the things in your life that impede running the race?

• So the main point is RUN! Run the race set before you!

Challenge:

John Piper, Founder and Teacher of desiringGod.org and Pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church says “Don’t ask about your music, your movies, your parties, your habits: What’s wrong with it? Ask: Does it help me RUN the race? Does it help me RUN - for Jesus?”

Week 2:8-14 January

Run With Perseverance: Hebrews 12:1b (NIV)

“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,”

Devotional Thought:

- The path will not always be smooth, things will not always be easy.
- The journey is characterised by different seasons and different terrains, valleys, mountains, pot-holes, detours, meanders, sand dunes etc. but we have examples of those who walked before us in Hebrews 11 who persevered through it all up to the end.
- Perseverance is maintaining purpose in spite of difficulty but the scripture implies more. The original Greek meaning includes the idea of patience and a determined endurance. We are encouraged to run the race in spite of difficulty with patience and a determined endurance.
- Let us run with the end goal in mind to one day say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

Challenge:

Let us persevere through it all and fight the good fight of faith!

Week 3: 15-21 January

Look Unto Jesus: Hebrews 12:2 (KJB)

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”

Devotional Thought:

- We will not go wrong in the race if we keep our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.
- What happens when we are distracted from Jesus? Like Peter walking on the water, we sink when we lose focus (Matthew 14:29-30).
- Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), Author and Pastor said, “Therefore, look not so much to thy hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to thy hope, but to Jesus, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith. Keep thine eye simply on Him. Oh! Let not thy hopes or fears come between thee and Jesus.”

Exhortation:

Focus on Jesus, keep your eyes on Him, depend on and rely on Him alone. Don't build and focus on anything less.

Week 4: 22-31 January

Hold To The Promise: Hebrews 10:23 (NIV)

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.”

Devotional Thought:

- This is the New Year and we are all looking forward to it. We have goals and plans, some carried over from last year that we are expecting to accomplish.
- So many things that distract us come as we run the race. It could be difficulties or temptations. Sometimes circumstances seem to be contradicting the promise, and we can easily become discouraged and throw in the towel.
- Whatever may come our way this year, let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we profess for He who promised is faithful.
- In one Worship Service I was invited to in Year 2015, the preacher shared that we should never build a theology around our situations but hold on to the promise. Be like Paul and Silas, in prison they were praying and singing hymns to God and the prison doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed. Be like Job who exclaimed, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” What of Abednego, Shadrack and Meshach about to be thrown into the furnace heated seven times more yet they stood and proclaimed that, “God is able to deliver us but even if He does not, we will not bow down.”

Exhortation:

Hold on for He who promised is faithful!

FEBRUARY- UPWARD WAY**Week 1:1-7****Week 2: 8-14****Week 3: 15-21****Week 4: 22-28****Be Diligent****Continue Digging****Comfort Destroyers****Expect To Win**

Week 1:1-7 February

Be Diligent: Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

Devotional Thought:

- As we get into the second month of 2016 and engage activities, let us remember that it is not about what we do but rather who we do it for - it is the Lord we are serving.
- This particular word was to servants to show Christian principles as they serve their earthly masters because ultimately it is God they are serving since their reward is from Him.
- So be encouraged that whatever you do, no matter how menial it may seem, work with all diligence and excellence.
- No one may seem to notice it or even talk about it but the God you are ultimately serving is seeing and not just that, but will reward you.
- Let us give our best.

Prayer:

• Lord I thank you for your Word this day that reminds me once again that in everything I do it is actually You that I am serving. We give you all the honour and glory for it is a privilege to have a Master like You. Here are my hands, feet, mouth, brains, eyes, ears, use me for your glory; In Jesus Name, Amen!

Week 2: 8-14 February

Continue Digging: Genesis 26:22 (NIV)

“He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarrelled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, “Now the LORD has given us room **and we will flourish in the land.**”

Devotional Thought:

- There is a common saying that says, “You’ve only got three choices in life: Give up, give in or give it all you’ve got.”
- So Isaac’s servants dig and discover a well of fresh water and the herdsmen of Gerar quarrel with them. They go on to dig the second one and they quarrel over it again. How easily they could have given up? But No, they did not. They **MOVED ON** to dig another one. This time around no one quarrelled over it. Oh Praise the Name of the Lord!
- I don’t know where this word finds you, but be encouraged saint to keep on digging. When all opportunities seem to be eluding you, continue digging. When the sweet seem to have been taken away from your mouth, continue digging. Something is happening, before you know it, a room will be created for you, an open space and you shall flourish, you shall spread to the left and to the right, you shall extend to the north and to the south. Somebody shout, “It is done!”

Exhortation:

- Don’t give up, don’t give in, but give it all you’ve got!

Week 3: 15-21 February

Comfort Destroyers: 2 Kings 6:17 (NIV)

“And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha”

Devotional Thought:

- The City where Elisha and his servant are in is surrounded by Arameans to capture Elisha. The servant was so afraid but Elisha knew there was greater strength in the unseen reality of the hosts of heaven.
- It has been said that your circle contributes to a great extent the level of your climb. Jim Rohn (American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker) says, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.”
- So many articles have been written around, “Who is in your circle?” “Who is in your scene?” “Who do you associate with?” It is more beneficial to spend more time with those who will inspire you see the unseen and not to be trapped in comfort zones. Mark Ford calls such ‘comfort destroyers’.

Exhortation:

- May the Lord connect you with such who will help you see and elevate you in your journey; so that you will go higher, grow deeper and go further.

Week 4: 22-28 February

Expect To Win: 1 Corinthians 9:24 (NIV)

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.”

Devotional Thought:

- The Corinthians were familiar with foot races in their own Isthmian games, which occurred every other year, the prize was a wreath.
- The apostle accommodates or applies the above account to the Christian's course of life, and exhorts to run it in a manner as racers do in a race. There is no time for stopping, or turning to the left or right or looking back. Remember Lot's wife (Genesis 19:26).
- As we continue on, let us not just run aimlessly but let us run in such a way as to get the prize. The crown that will last forever. Let us never lose focus of the ultimate thing. Expect to win!

Exhortation:

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

MARCH: HAPPY EASTER**Week 1: 1-7****Week 2: 8-14****Week 3: 15-21****Week 4: 22-31****Do You Believe This?****The Cross****Because He Lives****Tell Someone**

Week 1:1-7 March

Do You Believe This? John 11:25 (NIV)

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;”

Devotional Thought:

- Lazarus had died and on arrival Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days (verse 17). Jesus went on to raise him from the dead and there he was, alive again.

- Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this? Harvard Law Professor Dr. Simon Greenleaf says, “According to the laws of legal evidence used in courts of law, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history.”

- The power of resurrection is still at work even today. It does not matter how dead the situation is or hopeless all is.

- Jesus is life and gives it all in abundance.

Challenge:

- Do you believe that Jesus is the resurrection and the life? Do you have the abundant life that Jesus offers?

Week 2: 8-14 March

The Cross: 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

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Devotional Thought:

- In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul begins the letter with a reminder to them about the limits of human wisdom. Check out how much more we know today than they did then! What of the advances in our technology and understanding! While this is good the shortcomings are that sometimes people feel like we are so smart and do not need God.
- The core of Paul's preaching is the word of the cross (1:18) and the proclamation of Christ crucified (1:23). The message of the cross seemed to be a lousy marketing tool then (as it most likely remains in this era).
- The message of the cross is power, it is victory, and there is power in the blood of Jesus. Without Jesus we are nothing. There is no other name by which we can be saved except Jesus, only Jesus can save.

Challenge:

- Paul's preaching never distort, dilute or dismiss the power and wisdom of God manifested in the cross of Jesus Christ. What does ours do?

Week 3: 15-21 March

Because He Lives: Luke 24:6 (NIV)

“He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you, while He was still with you in Galilee.”

Devotional Thought:

- Jesus had predicted His death and resurrection on a number of occasions but the disciples failed to comprehend or accept what He was saying.
- It is true, Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. The grave is empty. Sam Morris (Liberian prince who converted to Christianity around the age of 14; 1873 – 1893) says, “The tomb of Christ is famous because of what it DOES NOT CONTAIN.” It’s empty because Jesus rose.
- Lest we forget- Jesus is alive! And because He lives, we can face the future without fear. We are victorious.

Sing With Me

- God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus; He came to love, heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon, An empty grave is there to prove my Saviour lives!

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, Because He lives, all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living, Just because He lives!

Week 4: 22-31 March

Tell Someone: Acts 4:33 (NIV)

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all.”

Devotional Thought:

- In Verse 32, the scripture says, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.” I cannot imagine a better scenario than this. What a great lesson from the early Church!

- They never kept quiet, they testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. As significant as the death of Christ was, the most compelling event was the resurrection - an event about which the disciples could not keep silent.

- Sometimes we get scared to testify/ witness but grace is always sufficient for all this.

Action Point:

- Tell someone about Jesus, testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.



APRIL: MY LIFE IS NOT MY OWN

Week 1: 1-7

Week 2: 8-14

Week 3: 15-21

Week 4: 22-30

Take Up Your Cross

Christ Lives In Me

Show Me Your Way

One Thing I Ask



Week 1:1-7 April

Take Up Your Cross: Luke 9:23 (KJB)

“Then He said to them all, “If anyone would come after me, He must deny himself and take up His cross daily and follow me.”

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Devotional Thought:

- Brooklyn Choir sang a beautiful song which is a refrain of this scripture. The song goes; “What are you doing for the King? Have you really given everything to the one who gave His all for you? Take up your cross and follow Jesus, Take up your cross every day. Don't be ashamed to say that you know Him. Count the cost and take up your cross and follow Him.”

- What does it mean to deny yourself and take one's cross and follow Jesus?

- To follow Jesus requires disowning - losing sight of your interests yourself, complete dedication, willing obedience and conforming to the example of Jesus in living. Luke emphasizes continued action by the word 'daily' which is not mentioned in Matthew and Mark.

Challenge:

- What are you doing for the King? Have you really given everything to the one who gave His all for you?

Week 2: 8-14 April

Christ Lives In Me: Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

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

Devotional Thought:

• I remember reciting this scripture when I didn't even understand it, not to mention that before receiving Jesus Christ, when I was at Primary School, still in AWANA. I was assisting my mother to memorise for their Baptist Women's Session to be uniformed. Talk of training a child in the way she should go...

• This became a reality when I got born again that I am a new creation, old things have passed and behold all is new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

• This brings the memories of a song we used to sing at High School; “I'm a new creation, I'm a brand new man, old things are passed away, I'm born again, more than a conqueror, that's what I am...”

• My old self is dead, though I live in the flesh, I do not live after the flesh, and Christ lives in me. (Romans 6:6).

Reflection:

• Does your life show that it is no longer you that lives but Christ?

Week 3: 15-21 April

Show Me Your Way: Psalm 25:4-5a (NIV)

“Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me...”

Devotional Thought:

- Show me, teach me, lead me - how striking can it be? What a great attitude from a man that we could think knew God and had many experiences and encounters with Him?
- God’s ways are higher than our ways and His understanding we cannot fathom.
- We therefore need Him every step of the way lest we get lost.
- Depend and rely on God as your guide, seek Him more and desire to know Him better.
- Moses asked for the same (Exodus 33:3), so did Paul desire to know Christ after all he had encountered (Philippians 3:10).

Prayer:

- Using this song by Hillsong: “Show me Your ways, That I may walk with You; Show me Your ways I put my hope in You. The cry of my heart, Is to love You more; To live with the Touch of Your hand Stronger each day, Show me Your ways.”

Week 4: 22-30 April

One Thing I Ask: Psalm 27:4 (NIV)

“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.”

Devotionals Thought:

- What is the one thing you ask of the Lord?
- What a request from King David! Nothing beats being in God's presence and surrounded by His power throughout one's days.
- He understood the order of things, what is first, that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy and all other things are added.
- He was fully aware of the benefits to follow but at the same time he had his priorities right. He could have just asked for one thing - deliverance from His enemies that were rising against him but No, He desired to be in His presence.
- Be sure to seek first things first, ensure you have the right priorities.

Action Point:

- Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33).

MAY- TRUST IN THE LORD

Week 1:1-7

Week 2: 8-14

Week 3: 15-21

Week 4: 22-31

Taste And See

My Light And Salvation

My Soul Rests in God

Through It All

Week 1:1-7 May

Taste And See: Psalm 34:8 (King James Bible 2000)

“O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.”

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Devotional Thought:

- Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is indeed the man that trusts in Him.
- Great men and women from the past tried Him and were never disappointed. I have tried Him too and can put a seal to His goodness.
- Elijah was a man just like us who dared to try God, he prayed that there be no rains for three and half years and there was no rain; he again prayed that there be rains and behold there was rain. (James 5:14). The same man called on the Lord then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil and also licked up the water in the trench. (1 Kings 18:38).
- The boy at one gathering tried Him with five loaves of bread and three fish to apparently feed five thousand men (excluding women and children). They all ate and were satisfied and they were leftovers (Matthew 14:28).
- The widow tried Him with the last flour and oil she had and yes it never ran out (1 Kings 17:15-16).
- King Asa tried Him when He was surrounded by a vast army and God delivered him and all the people. (1 Chronicles 14:11).
- The list is endless, I can go on and on...

Action Point:

- I dare you to try Him today with your seemingly insurmountable situation. Say, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God...”

Week 2: 8-14 May

My light and salvation. Psalm 27:1 (NIV)

“The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid?”

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Devotional Thought:

- It is better to have confidence in the Lord than to put your trust in men. You will never go wrong with such trust as David had.
- The Lord is indeed our light; normally symbolising well-being (Psalm 97:11, Proverbs 13:9)
- He goes on in Verse 3 to say “Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident...”
- The confidence is unquestioned by the way he personalises it- “My Light”, “My Salvation”
- Can you also confidently stand and say the same? That the Lord is your light and our salvation without any shadow of doubt.
- There is nothing to be afraid of, even when armies or troops or storms surround you, God will save you. He has done it before and He will indeed do it again.

Confession:

- The LORD is my light and my salvation

Week 3: 15-21 May

My Soul Rests in God: Psalm 62:2

“Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”

24

Devotional Thought:

- The psalmist commits himself to God when threatened by conspirators who wish to “topple him from his lofty place” (v. 4)
- The word “truly” shows the undisputable conviction he has in God.
- The hymn chorus “On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand,” is a refrain of this truth.
- We are assured of this one thing that we will never be shaken.
- It is so sweet to trust in the Lord, we can find rest and security knowing He is our salvation.

Sing:

- My hope is built on nothing less; Than Jesus Christ, my righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand.

Week 4: 22-31 May

Through It All: Isaiah 43:2 (NIV)

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

Devotional Thought:

- Circumstances can be too excruciating, darkness hovering and pain unbearable. Have you ever been in that place in your life where what you are experiencing cannot even be shared with your closest friend or family?
- That place where you say I am finished, that is the end of me, God where are you? I do not feel you, I do not see you, all that is before me is the mist and fog, like the sun will never rise again. I do not see the silver lining on this cloud and you feel like shouting with the last of your strength; Lord, where are you?
- I have been there too but no matter how excruciating and unhelpful and depressing it is, through it all, believe and take God at His word. He says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

Exhortation:

- Somebody rejoice because the Lord is with you, you will not be swept, neither will you drown nor be burned, the fire will not set you ablaze. You are coming out refined as gold. Somebody shout, ‘Hallelujah to the King of Kings.’

JUNE- YOU ALONE ARE GOD

Week 1:1-7

Abba Father

Week 2: 8-14

Adonai

Week 3: 15-21

Jehovah Jireh

Week 4: 22-30

Jehovah Sabaoth

Week 1:1-7 June

Abba Father: Romans 8:15b (NIV)

“And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

Devotional Thought:

- The word Abba is an Aramaic word that would most closely be translated as “Daddy.” It is a word which the Jews did not allow servants, only free-men to make use of, and to be called by.
- God is our Father, He loves us unconditionally and does not show favouritism.
- What He has done for me, He will do for you, and what He has done for others, He will do for you and vice versa. He makes all things beautiful in its time.
- He is never late, He does not withhold any good thing from us, and He watches His Word to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12).
- He is always there, never leaves us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). His ears are ever attentive to our prayers. He protects us.
- He is loving, gracious, forgiving, slow to anger, His mercies endure forever. He does not treat us the way our sins deserve, neither does He repay us according to our iniquities. (Psalm 103:8-12)
- What a Father we have! He is love, He is good all the times.

Action Point:

- What other attributes of God as a Father can you think of?

Week 2: 8-14 June

Adonai: Genesis 15:2 (NIV)

“But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”

24

Devotional Thought:

- Abram addressed God as Adonai or Master in our main scripture - the Master has the right of possession and the one possessed is charged with submission to God, his Master.
- Adonai speaks of a relationship meaning God is in total possession of me and I gladly submit to Him as my Lord and my Master.
- We are not our own but God's, our every step is directed by Him alone.
- It gives great confidence to have a Master like our God.
- He is in control, He has the final say about any aspect of our lives.

Reflection:

- Are all aspects of your life in submission to the Lord?

Week 3: 15-21 June

Jehovah Jireh: Genesis 22:14 (KJB)

“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah- Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.”

Devotional Thought:

- God told Abraham to offer Isaac, his only son, as a sacrifice. He had offered sacrifices before but this was different. When it was clear that Abraham was ready to slay Isaac, an angel stopped him and provided a ram instead. Abraham surrendered his all thus his son Isaac was returned. Abraham called this place Jehovah-Jireh, “The-Lord-Will-Provide”
- He meets us at our points of needs (Philippians 4:19), He is always on time.
- He provides in the most unlike ways from most unlike sources. (Psalm 105:41).
- It is none of our business HOW He will provide, our role is to trust without wavering.
- He is the Creator, the earth and its fullness is His, His resources are unlimited.

Action Point:

- What are you in need of? Call Jehovah-Jireh today!

Week 4: 22-30 June

Jehovah Sabaoth: 1 Samuel 1:3 (KJB)

“And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh...”

30

Devotional Thought:

- Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts) is mentioned over 270 times making it the most frequently used compound name of God in Scripture. It is first used in 1 Samuel 1:3. Throughout the scripture we find Jehovah Sabaoth as our present defender, fighting our battles and winning our wars.
- In the later verses we see the barren Hannah crying to the Lord of Hosts for a baby, above that she wanted to silence her enemy Peninnah. She was helpless and against wall so she called the Lord of Hosts to fight this war that she had no strength to fight on her own.
- In 1 Samuel 17:45 David uses the name when he is going against Goliath. He says, “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”
- There is no mountain insurmountable, no situation impossible, and no battle too fierce with Jehovah Sabaoth. Where we are powerless, He takes over and brings us victory.

Action Point:

- What battles are you struggling with on your own? Why not like Hannah and David bring them to the Lord of Hosts and victory will be guaranteed result?

JULY- THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Week 1:1-7

Be Different

Week 2: 8-14

No Need To Defend

Week 3: 15-21

Never Trade Your Rights

Week 4: 22-31

Serve the Lord

Week 1:1-7 July

Be Different: Esther 3:8 (NIV)

“Then Haman said to King Xerxes, “There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws.”

Devotional Thought:

- The Jews that Haman is referring to had been carried into exile from Jerusalem. Though Haman’s report was not exactly true, the Jews did have their own customs and laws but were not disobedient to the king.
- There are some things I observed, the Jews were among the Amalekites, dispersed in all the provinces but were different; they kept themselves separate and their customs different.
- We are in this world but not of this world. Let us not conform to the standards and laws and customs that are contrary to what God says.
- Make it your ambition to make the Word of God to be the standard of your life wherever you are. Be different, keep yourself separate!

Challenge:

- Be Different! Keep Yourself Separate!

Week 2: 8-14 July

No Need To Defend: Daniel 3:16 (NIV)

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.”

Devotional Thought:

- King Nebuchadnezzar made an image and commanded all peoples to fall down and worship it and whoever did not fall down and worship would immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. All peoples bowed except Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

- There was no confusion whatsoever on what to do, to them it was by default and there was no need to defend themselves on whether to bow or not to bow. One preacher said when they said they will not bow, in essence they were saying, “we have already bowed to the Most High God so no need to bow to a gold image.” What a great conviction, what confidence and how great is the commitment to the only One God. And the faithful God delivered them right in the furnace which was heated seven times.

- There are somethings where we need not even debate or defend ourselves, if it's contrary to the Word of God, what's there to discuss? We go the Word route by default.

Challenge:

- How have you handled such ‘to bow or not to bow’ situations in the past? Did you make God smile or you compromised because of fear of the furnace? How will you do things differently from now on?

Week 3: 15-21 July

Never Trade Your Rights: Genesis 25:30-32 (NLT)

“Esau said to Jacob, “I’m starved! Give me some of that red stew!” “All right,” Jacob replied, “but trade me your rights as the firstborn son.” “Look, I’m dying of starvation!” said Esau. “What good is my birth right to me now?”

Devotional Thought:

- What a great tragedy just because of starvation! In ancient times the birth right included the inheritance rights of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:16).
- What befell Esau happens every other day as we make choices some seemingly innocent ones. They say desperate times call for desperate measures but at what expense?
- The choices we make when desperate are sometimes deadly in the long run, some are unfortunately irreversible like spilt water.
- Never make permanent decisions based on temporary situations. It is too expensive, you cannot afford it.
- It is wisdom not to make haste decisions especially when desperate. Endurance pays off in the long run.

Challenge:

- Never make permanent decisions based on temporary situations.

Week 4: 22-31 July

Serve The Lord: Joshua 24:15 (NIV)

“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

35

Devotional Thought:

- Joshua assembled the tribes at Shechem to call Israel to a renewal of the covenant following the example of Moses.
- He publicly made a commitment that him and his family will serve the Lord. After having led the Israelites, the battles the Lord fought for them and gave them victory, he was convinced and could boldly make a choice to serve no other God but the Lord.
- The other gods have ears, but they cannot hear; they have noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but they cannot feel; they have feet, but they cannot walk; they are dead so why serve them?
- Let us continue serving the one and only God without swerving.

Confession:

- As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

AUGUST- STAND THEREFORE

Week 1:1-7	Expected End
Week 2: 8-14	Be Strong
Week 3: 15-21	Hold Fast
Week 4: 22-31	Yes You Can

Week 1:1-7 August

Expected End: Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Devotional Thought:

- Our main scripture above is an extract from the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

- In exile, God had not forgotten them. He had plans for them, plans to prosper them and not harm them, plans to give them hope and a future.

- I do not know where this Word finds you, I do not know what seemingly disadvantaging circumstance you find yourself

- You are not forgotten. God has something better in mind for you. The plan He has is beyond what you can ever think or imagine.

- You will not die but live, you will not be humiliated any longer, you will not be destroyed, you will not be crushed. He is bringing an expected end, bringing you into a place of abundance.

Confession:

- There is surely a future hope for me, and my hope will not be cut off. (Proverbs 23:18)

Week 2: 8-14 August

Be Strong: Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Devotional Thought:

- The Israelites are about to cross Jordan. Moses is dead, his aide Joshua has just taken over.
- Our main scripture is the third time in the chapter he is commanded to be strong and courageous.
- I can only imagine what was going on in his mind at the time thinking of the multitude of people he was now in charge of, the Jordan to be crossed over, the wars ahead etc.
- God reassures him once more to be strong and courageous.
- The task may seem to be too large for his experience or expertise but the Lord God will be with him wherever he goes. What a great promise!
- There can never be a greater competitive advantage than God being with you wherever you go.
- Take heart, whatever task is before you, God is with you wherever you go.

Exhortation:

- Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Week 3: 15-21 August

Hold Fast: Hebrews 10:23 (KJB)

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised ;).”

Devotional Thought:

- Other versions say, “let us hold tightly, resolutely, unswervingly, firmly, unwavering, or hold on.”
- If someone is holding tight to something, it is impossible to move them unless if you move them with what they are holding to.
- Our scripture denotes holding so tight that no matter what, one is never moved. Storms may come and go but you remain standing, never to be moved like Mount Zion. (Psalm 125:1)
- As the Psalmist said in Psalm 46:2-3, “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”
- Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering for He that promised is faithful.

Challenge:

- Hold fast, hold on, hold tightly, hold resolutely, hold unswervingly, continue to hold, grasp firmly, to the hope you profess, for He who promised is faithful.

Week 4: 22-31 August

Yes You Can: Philippians 4:13 (KJV)

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Devotional Thought:

- The ‘all things’ refers to the circumstances that Paul has spoken of in verse 11-12 where he says, “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”
- His secret was doing everything through Christ who gives him strength.
- We go through different seasons in our lives, mountaintop and valley experiences, but through Christ we can do everything and emerge victorious.
- Sometimes circumstances make us feel inadequate, where you feel you might fall short of expectations. Many questions about making it crop in one’s mind but one thing is certain, yes you can do all things through Christ.

Action Point:

- What specific seasons can you think of where you can depend on Christ for strength?

SEPTEMBER – WHAT FOLLOWS YOU?

Week 1:1-7	What Follows You?
Week 2: 8-14	All Things Work For Good
Week 3: 15-21	If It Had Not Been The Lord
Week 4: 22-30	Your Graces Amazes Me

Week 1:1-7 September

What Follows You? Psalm 23:6 (KJV)

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

42

Devotional Thought:

- Psalm 23 is a profession of joyful trust in the Lord as the good Shepherd. The effect of God’s merciful dealings with David had been to lead his mind to the assurance that God would always be his Shepherd; that He would never leave him.

- The Greek word for follow is *radaph* meaning to pursue, chase or attend closely upon.

- In essence, the Psalmist is saying amidst it all, as stated in the preceding scriptures, he is certain of this that what follows him is the goodness and mercy of the Lord.

- And for this reason, he shall dwell in the house of the Lord which is figurative of being continual in God’s presence. He further stated this in Psalm 27:4 where he says, “One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.” This denotes dwelling in God’s presence all his days.

Exhortation:

- What follows you? Psalm 23:6

Week 2: 8-14 September

All Things Work For Good: Romans 8:28 (KJB)

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

43

Devotional Thought:

- The overall context of Romans 8:28 is one in which Paul addresses living by the power of the Spirit in the midst of suffering and pain. Paul was not a stranger to suffering, he had been beaten, thrown to jail, persecuted etc.

- What, then, is the good? That which conforms us “to the likeness of His Son.”(Verse 29)

- Nothing good might seem to come out of misery and suffering but it does. Job says, “...when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” (Job 23:10).

- So our hope is not that we will escape distress, but that God will make every one of our agonies an instrument of his mercy to do us good.

- In Genesis 50: 20, Joseph says to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” God meant it for good!

Confession:

- Now say with understanding: “All things are working together for my good.”

Week 3: 15-21 September

If It Had Not Been The Lord: Psalm 124:1, 6 (NIV)

“If the LORD had not been on our side... Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth.”

Devotional Thought:

- Our help comes from the Lord the Creator of heaven and earth.
- This is a Psalm of praise of the Lord by Israel for deliverance from powerful enemies. The Lord alone saved them from extinction.
- What if the Lord had not been on their side? As seen in the whole chapter of 124, they could have been 1. swallowed alive (verse 3); 2. the flood would have engulfed them (verse 4); 3. the torrent would have swept over them (verse 3); 5. raging waters would have swept them (verse 5).
- Come to think of it, what if the Lord had not been on your side? Where will you be?

Prayer:

• Thank you Lord that you are with us all the way, you are on our side. You fight for us, you protect us, you provide for us, and under your wings we find refuge. Our help is in your Name, Creator of heaven and earth. We are like Mount Zion, never to be shaken, you will never suffer our feet to be moved. Thank you Lord. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

Week 4: 22-30 September

Your Grace Amazes Me: John 15:13 (NIV)

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Devotional Thought:

- Philip Craig and Dean sang this beautiful piece which to me is a refrain of this wonder;
- *“My faithful Father, enduring Friend; Your tender mercy’s like a river with no end*

It overwhelms me, covers my sin; Each time I come into Your presence; I stand in wonder once again

Your grace still amazes me, Your love is still a mystery, Each day I fall on my knees, Your grace still amazes me, ‘Cause Your grace still amazes me.

It’s deeper, it’s wider, It’s stronger, it’s higher; It’s deeper it’s wider, It’s stronger, it’s higher than anything my eyes can see.”

- What love is this that the Father lavished us with? It just always amazes me.

Thanksgiving

- Thank the Lord for His indescribable gift!

OCTOBER – MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE**Week 1: 1-7****Week 2: 8-14****Week 3: 15-21****Week 4: 22-31****Do Good To All****Encourage Each Other****Regard For Others****Go Ye Therefore**

Week 1:1-7 October

Do Good To All: Galatians 6:10 (NIV)

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

47

Devotional Thought:

- We all have opportunities to do good and create a positive difference in our communities.
- The opportunity may be unseen like in the case of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:13). The Samaritan was on a journey minding his own business and when he saw the half dead man, he had compassion on him and assisted.
- There are many unsought opportunities to do good that come our way as we conduct our daily tasks. Will you take advantage of them?
- We do not always have to wait for opportunities to present themselves to us but sometimes we have to seek them out (Hebrews 13:16).
- There is nothing wrong with looking out for opportunities where you can create a positive difference both physical and or spiritual if its within your power.

Action Point:

- What opportunities can you take advantage of and create a positive difference in your community from now on?

Week 2: 8-14 October

Encourage Each Other: 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

48

Devotional Thought:

- It was a favourite figure of the Apostle Paul to compare the Christian Church and each individual believer to a building.
- The meaning of encouragement in this scripture means coming close to someone's life, their struggles, and their story. It isn't distant, it's close: it's the voice that says, I relate, I understand, I've been there too.
- As we run the race, some get discouraged along the way.
- Make it your ambition to encourage the weary, the hurting, those stumbling and point them to the Lord.

Action Point:

- How can you encourage the discouraged as we run this race?

Week 3: 15-21 October

Regard For Others: Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

49

Devotional Thought:

- Apostle Paul gives two negatives to avoid and two positives to follow.
- Selfishness is defined as lack of consideration for other people whereas conceit means excessive pride in oneself. This all brings about disunity and strife.
- He continues on the positive to say “but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.” There is a saying that humility is not thinking less of yourself but its thinking of yourself less. The goal being that Jesus increases as we decrease (John 3:30).
- There has to be a balance, do not focus merely on your own things but also for the interests of others. Be careful that you do not neglect your own things in the process and end up miserable.

Reflection:

- Do you look out for the interests of others?

Week 4: 22-31 October

Go Ye Therefore: Mark 16:15 (NIV)

“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

50

Devotional Thought:

- We are to take the Gospel, good news, to everyone regardless of colour or creed. No place is out of limit and no one is to be left out.

- What is the message we are to take? Apostle Paul summarised it very well in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

- According to ZONDERVAN NIV Study Bible Christ’s program of missions (Mathew 28:19-20) is: “make disciples of all nations.” It involves three steps: 1) “going”, 2) “baptizing them”, 3) “teaching them to obey everything” Christ has commanded.

Challenge:

- Are you playing your part in sharing the good news to the lost?

NOVEMBER -THANKSGIVING

Week 1:1-7

Extol the Lord at All Times

Week 2: 8-14

You Are My Father

Week 3: 15-21

Shout For Joy To The Lord

Week 4: 22-30

Proclaim His Love and Faithfulness

Week 1:1-7 November

Extol the Lord at All Times: Psalms 34:1-3 (NIV)

Confession: "I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together."

Prayer:

1. I extol You Lord at all times; Your praise is always on my lips.
2. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.
3. Thank You Lord for answering me and delivering me from all my fears.
4. Faithful God, I look to You and I am radiant; my face is never covered with shame.
5. Lord You are good; You are my Provider, the lions may grow weak and hungry, but I lack no good thing.
6. You are my deliverer and my comforter; my Protector, You protect all my bones, not one of them will be broken.

Amen

Week 2: 8-14 November

You are My Father: Psalm 89:26 (NIV)

Confession: “He will call out to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.’”

Prayer:

1. I will sing of Your great love forever; your love stands firm forever, you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
2. I join the heavens to praise your wonders, O Lord, and your faithfulness.
3. There is none like you Lord, none compares with you, you are more awesome than all.
4. God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O Lord, and your faithfulness surrounds you.
5. You are the Creator; The heavens are Yours, and yours also is the earth.
6. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.
7. You are my glory and strength, and by your favor you exalt my horn.
8. You are a covenant keeping God, all your promises are true.
9. Praise be to the Lord forever! Amen and Amen.

Week 3: 15-21 November

Shout for Joy to the Lord: Psalm 98:3-4 (NIV)

Confession: “He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music...”

Prayer:

1. I sing to you Lord a new song, for You have done marvelous things; Your right hand and Your holy arm have worked salvation for you.
2. I praise you for you have made your salvation known and revealed your righteousness to me.
3. Your love and faithfulness you have made known to me; and all have seen Your salvation my God and my Father.
4. I praise you Adonai, my righteous King of Glory.

Amen

Week 4: 22-30 November

His Mercies Endures Forever: Psalm 100:5 (NIV)

Confession: “For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

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Prayer:

1. It gives me great confidence to know that You are the only God, you made me, I am yours.
2. I enter Your gates with thanksgiving and Your courts with praise.
3. I give thanks to You and praise Your name for who you are.
4. Lord you are good and Your love endures forever; Your faithfulness continues through all generations.

Amen

DECEMBER- MERRY CHRISTMAS**Week 1:1-7****Week 2: 8-14****Week 3: 15-21****Week 4: 22-31****The Good News****The Word Became Flesh****In Him All Things Hold Together****Jesus Came and He's Coming Soon**

Week 1:1-7 December

The Good News: Matthew 1:23 (NIV)

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means God with us).”

Devotional Thought:

- What a great promise and what great confidence to know that God is with us. What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31).
- Looking back in Isaiah where this name Immanuel is used, it's set in the context of God's promised deliverance of the Kingdom of Judah at a time of great national threat. Jesus is our deliverer, he came to seek and save the lost.
- When God sends Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, He says; 'I will be with you' (Exodus 3:12), same applies when Joshua succeeds Moses, He says to him In Joshua 1:5; 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.'
- He is with us up to the end of time, He never leaves us nor forsakes us.

Action Point:

- Thank God for being ever present and for being with us always.

Week 2: 8-14 December

The Word Became Flesh: John 1:14 (NIV)

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Devotional Thought:

- The term ‘Word’ in John 1 is from the Greek word ‘logos’ meaning total message. The Word in the book of John 1 is referring to Jesus. Jesus is the total message: the way, the truth and the life.

- Because the Word became flesh Jesus was like us in every way except sin (Hebrews 4:15). He had the same emotions that we do. When John says the Word became flesh, he really means it; Jesus wept when Lazarus died (John 11:35-36). He enjoyed dinners (Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1), He had compassion on the people (Matt 14:13-14). He needed companions, so he took Peter, James and John aside with him on many occasions (Mark 5:37; 14:33), He was tired like all of us (Mark 4:38). In John 12:27, His soul was troubled. Imagine Jesus weeping, enjoying dinner, tired etc.

- God loved us so much and sent his Son to dwell among us.

Prayer:

- Ephesians 1:17-18, ‘I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.’

Week 3: 15-21 December

In Him All Things Hold Together: Colossians 1:17 (NIV)

“He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.”

Devotional Thought:

- Colossians 1:16 says, ‘For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.’

- All things being created by Him, were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure, and for his praise and glory.

- The earth is the Lord’s and its fullness thereof. For he spoke, and it came to be, he commanded, and it was.

- He has the first and final say about everything, our times are in His hands.

Confession:

- In Him we live and move and have our being!

Week 4: 22-31 December

Jesus Came and He's Coming Again: Luke 12:40 (NIV)

“You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect **Him.**”

Devotional Thought:

• Jesus came as a lamb and He's coming for the second time as a Judge. How does it make you feel? Does it frighten you a bit? Does it give you peace? That could reflect your relationship with God.

• Being ready always is the way to go because we don't know the hour nor the minute but it could be at an hour you do not expect. Let's live our lives with this keen awareness.

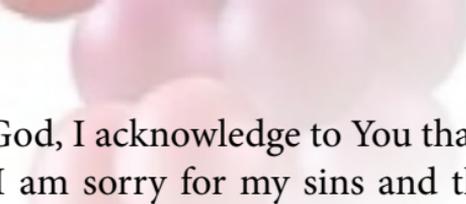
• One cannot afford to be going back and forth because the hour is not known, you might switch off then he appears then what?

• There have been many speculations about Jesus' return, but whether or not you are ready, He's coming soon.

Action Point:

I don't know where a message such as this finds you today.

- Have you received Jesus as personal Saviour?
- Receiving Jesus is like seeing for the first time.
- The scripture says; “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”



Prayer: Dear God, I acknowledge to You that I am a sinner, and I am sorry for my sins and the life that I have lived; I need your forgiveness. I believe that your Son Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on the cross at Calvary and died for my sins, and I am now willing to turn from my sin. This very moment I accept Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour. Amen!

If you have prayed that prayer, congratulations! You are now born again. Fellowship with a Bible-based Church near you.

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Be Encouraged...Be Inspired...Be Challenged
& in turn, positively
Impact Your Sphere Of Influence!

*Surely Goodness & Mercy shall
follow me, all the days of my life...*

Psalm 23:6

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