

AWAKEN

A 4-WEEK DEVOTIONAL

Introduction

Last year was a year that we will never forget. It brought about physical, mental, and spiritual challenges; however, be encouraged because every storm passes. The New Year brings us new opportunities such as uniting together as followers of Christ and growing deeper in our faith and closer to God. We hope that this four-week devotional will help transform your heart as you establish new spiritual rhythms this year. As you know God deeper through establishing new spiritual rhythms, you will be refreshed, receive wisdom, obtain joy, and see the world the way God sees the world.

The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.

-Psalm 19:7-8 (NIV)

How to Use this Devotional

This four-week devotional is designed to help you get your spiritual life back on track. It focuses on developing specific spiritual rhythms which will help you grow in your faith. Each week consists of four daily devotions. These daily devotions consist of two elements, Scripture and devotional readings followed by two questions that will challenge you to think about your life and how to get back on track for Jesus. At the end of each week, you will be challenged to continue developing that spiritual rhythm throughout the year and write a prayer to help you follow through with your commitment.

Devotional Content

Week One - **Bible Reading**: Knowing God through His words.

Week Two - **Prayer**: Speaking and listening to God.

Week Three - **Generosity**: Serving God with our time, talent, and treasure.

Week Four - **Community**: Uniting with God and other believers through Jesus.

Week 1/Day 1

Bible Reading: Knowing God through His words.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:12

Building relationships have always been an important part of our lives. Relationships are exciting because they require us to know one another. People in great relationships continue learning about one another long after the relationship is formed. Our relationship with God is no different in this regard. One way God communicates with us is through His word, the Bible. The Bible is authored by God and gives us a story of how He has interacted with people throughout history. The Bible is God's way of telling you about Himself. If we want to have a relationship with God, then we must read what His word is revealing to us about Himself.

After reading today's Scripture and devotion, explain why Bible reading is an essential part of knowing God?

What is the biggest challenge you have with reading God's word? What can you do to overcome that challenge?

Week 1/Day 2

Bible Reading: Knowing God through His words.

Read John 1:1, 14, 18; Hebrews 1:1-3

God has continually shown us His desire to be in relationship with us. Scripture is packed full of stories where God has spoken to his people. He has reached out to His people since the beginning of time with Adam and Eve. He spoke to Noah about an upcoming flood. He spoke to Abraham about being the father of a great nation. The Old Testament is full of prophets whom God had spoken through, but the best way we can get to know God is through the person of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect embodiment of God. Spending time uncovering the truths about Jesus clue us in to the truths about God. If we want to know God, then we need to know Jesus. There is no greater way to learn about Jesus than to read the biblical accounts of His life known as the Gospels.

What does God's willingness to communicate to His people tell us about Him? Why does it matter?

How does the life and person of Jesus help us know God in greater depth?

Week 1/Day 3

Bible Reading: Knowing God through His words.

Read: John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12

One of the greatest aspects of our relationships is spending time with the ones we care about. It is always great to have someone to walk alongside life with you and share life experiences with. God wants to be a part of our everyday experiences as well. As a matter of fact, God actually wants to help us out as we go through our life experiences. He does this through the Holy Spirit. From the moment we decide to commit to our relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins to dwell within us. The Holy Spirit is sent to help us be more like Jesus. As we grow in our relationship with God, the Holy Spirit transforms our heart in a way that makes us think, speak, and act differently. Ultimately, He wants to guide us closer to being like Jesus and sharing in an intimate relationship with Him.

What is something new you learned from today's Bible passages regarding the Holy Spirit?
Why is the Holy Spirit essential to knowing God in greater depth?

Can you identify an area in your life where you need the Holy Spirit's help to be more like Jesus? What would you like changed?

Week 1/Day 4

Bible Reading: Knowing God through His words.

Bible reading is an important aspect of building a relationship with God. How can we know about God if we don't spend time hearing from Him? There is no greater way to know God than to read His word. Developing a relationship with God takes prioritization and commitment. Today is about a day of commitment; commitment between you and the One who desires a relationship with you. Our God is a God who has acted with His creation since the beginning of time. He desires that interaction with each of us. As you prepare your hearts for a time of commitment, remember that we have a merciful and gracious God desiring a relationship with you. He desires you where you are and He promises to walk with you. You are His priority, and we get to make God a priority in this new year.

Make a commitment by showing God that He is the priority in your life. How can you make a greater commitment to knowing God through His word? In the space below, write out a personal commitment of time you will devote to knowing God through His word:

Take a moment and write out a prayer about your commitment. Keep this prayer and read through it and pray over it during times when you struggle with your commitment.

Week 2/Day 1

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: Matthew 6:9-13; Hebrews 4:16

Last week, we learned that God reveals himself to us through His word. The Bible is His way of telling us about who He is as God; however, communication is a two-way street in relationships. A way we can communicate with God is through prayer. Prayer is the means by which we come face-to-face with God. Prayer is our opportunity to intimately engage or communicate with God. The greatest aspect of prayer is our ability to directly communicate with the God of the universe. We don't need someone to relay our thoughts to God. Prayer gives us a direct link to speak to the One who desires us. Jesus consistently engages God through prayer during His ministry. We can be confident that when we come before God in prayer, He will meet us in our time of need.

Jesus gives us a model of prayer in Matthew 6:9-13:

9 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Meaning: God is our heavenly Father. He is holy and perfect.

10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Meaning: Seeking God's desires instead of our own desires.

11 Give us today our daily bread.

Meaning: God provides for our daily needs.

12 And forgive us our [sins], as we also forgive [those who have sinned against us].

Meaning: We need to forgive others as Jesus forgives us.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Meaning: Empower us and guide us toward you and away from sin.

What is similar to and different from Jesus' model of prayer and what you pray for?

What aspects of Jesus' model of prayer do you need to include during your time of prayer?

Week 2/Day 2

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: Matthew 14:22-23; Luke 5:15-16; Philippians 4:6-7

One of the most difficult things to do when we communicate with others is to listen. We do a pretty good job talking, but we seldom open our ears. The same thing happens in our prayer life. Throughout Jesus' ministry, he often retreated to places of solitude to spend time in prayer. It was important for Jesus to remove himself from distractions and to focus solely on talking and listening to the Father. Listening may sound like a foreign aspect of prayer, but it is just as important as actively talking to God. When we seek solitude, we empty our minds and allow God to communicate directly with us through our thoughts and ideas. This means that when we pray, we need to take time to listen in silence. We can know God is talking to us because our thoughts and ideas are consistent with His Word and what he desires from us. He may be trying to give you an answer to a struggle in your life or prompting you to do something. If we don't take time to sit in solitude and listen, we may miss what He is trying to say to us.

What new ideas or thoughts do you have about prayer after reading the Scripture and devotion?

What is challenging to you about listening to God? What distractions are preventing you from listening?

Week 2/Day 3

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: Luke 18:1-8; Ephesians 6:18

We have heard it said that when we do a task over and over, we build what is called “muscle memory.” The idea behind “muscle memory” is to become repetitive in nature. In other words, something becomes so repetitive that we do it without thinking about it. We want to become so repetitive in prayer that it becomes a part of who we are. Jesus made prayer a regular part of His day. It was such a part of his life that it continuously flowed from Him. We ought to be practicing that same kind of persistence with our prayer. When we focus on talking to God silently in our hearts about different situations we are facing, we begin continuously praying through both good and bad circumstances. Praying then becomes a way of life, not a ritual. The more we build the repetition of talking to and listening to God throughout all aspects of our life, the deeper our relationship will grow.

Do you have a developed repetition of prayer? What excites you about establishing a regular time of prayer?

What do you need to do to make prayer more repetitive in your life? What obstacles are preventing you from doing this?

Week 2/Day 4

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: John 17:1-26

Summarize Jesus' prayer in this passage.

What is Jesus desiring of you in this prayer?

Jesus committed to praying for each of us. As His followers, we ought to be committing ourselves to Him in prayer as well. Make a commitment this week to establish a prayer routine that allows you to speak and listen to God. Establish a time in your day where you can retreat to a solitary environment that will allow you to focus on communicating with God. Make a prayer commitment between you and God today.

Make a commitment by showing God that prayer is an essential part of your life. In the space below, write out a personal commitment of time you will devote to communicating to God in prayer:

Take a moment and write out a prayer about your commitment. Keep this prayer and read through it and pray over it during times when you struggle with your commitment.

Week 3/Day 1

Generosity: Serving God with our time, talent, and treasure

Read: Matthew 6:19-34; Proverbs 3:9-10

What we think about money can quickly tell us where we orient our focus in life. We believe that we can keep a good balance between money and God; however, the temptation of money is often too powerful for us to control by ourselves. The result of this temptation leads us to pride, power, or even selfishness. None of these characteristics are godly. These characteristics are driven from our love of money. Jesus knew that money would become a powerful force in our lives; he warns us about our love for money. Our love for money can shift our priority away from our relationship with God and others. It is only when we put our love of God above our love for money that we grow in an intimate relationship with God. Even though money has a pull in our lives, a godly view of money can help us accomplish God's purpose.

What is your view of money and its role in your life? Do you place a majority of your security in money or in God?

How do these Scripture passages challenge or encourage your current view?

Week 3/Day 2

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: Psalm 24:1; Matthew 25:14-30

Understanding our relationship with money is one of the great struggles we face in becoming fiscally responsible. We need to clearly understand the relationship between us and money. Are we the owner or the manager? There are two principles that can help us orient our relationship with money toward a biblical perspective. The first principle is understanding that God is the true owner of our money. God is the Source, the Creator of all things. It is Him who entrusts us with worldly wealth. The second principle to understand is that we are to be good stewards of what God entrusts to us. We are to take care of God's possessions and manage them wisely. What does wisely managing our resources look like? Being good stewards of what is entrusted to us means that we prioritize God's purpose before our own. We are to use our resources to accomplish God's purpose and trust that God will provide for our daily needs. The best way to ensure that we are using God's blessings appropriately is by living on a budget. Placing God first in our personal budget is how we can effectively manage the resources he has entrusted to us.

How does today's readings challenge your current perspective on money?

Would you consider yourself currently as the owner or manager of your finances? How does viewing God as the owner of all money change your perspective on your finances?

Week 3/Day 3

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: Proverbs 22:7; Proverbs 22:26-27; Romans 13:8

Living at peace in the midst of our finances is a result of a content heart. The world will encourage us to go after the next best thing, but living beyond our means is not what God intended for us. The debt from living beyond our means is a result of not being content with what we have. God wants us to be able to live free from debt and He will provide for all we need. When we are content with what we have, our hearts are focused more on serving Him than serving ourselves. Living with a content heart will keep us from desiring more than what is truly needed. Simply put, a desire to have more than what God says we need will drive us to mountains of debt. When we learn to live with a content heart, we trust that God will truly provide for all of our needs.

Do you have any debt that is burdensome? What is that debt doing to the condition of your heart?

How could focusing more on the things of God free you from the burden of debt that is holding you back from spiritual growth?

Week 3/Day 4

Prayer: Speaking and listening to God.

Read: Proverbs 23:4-5; Malachi 3:8-12

Trust is the key to becoming more generous with our time, talent, and treasure. The Bible is full of examples of God blessing those who trust Him. There is a constant struggle between trusting in ourselves and trusting in God. If we place our trust in our time, talent, and treasure to guide us to our desires, then we are placing our trust in temporary things. Instead, trusting God with our time, talent, and treasure helps us plan for the goals God has for our lives. Further, being able to trust God with our time, talent, and treasure helps us live worry-free and become more generous with our resources. Trusting God with our time, talent, and treasure develops the spiritual rhythm of generosity. A generous heart is one that becomes sacrificial. Sacrificial love is the type of love that we are to display toward God and each other. The more we sacrifice our desires in life, the more we rely on God's desires for our lives.

Make a commitment by showing God that generosity is a part of your worship. In the space below, write out a personal commitment outlining how you plan to be more generous with what God has entrusted to you:

Take a moment and write out a prayer about your generosity. Keep this prayer and read through it and pray over it during times when you struggle with your commitment.

Week 4/Day 1

Community: Uniting with God and other believers through Jesus

Read: Romans 12:9-16; Ephesians 2:19

Our nation's motto is *E Pluribus Unum*. This phrase is Latin for *Out of Many, One*. The purpose of this motto is to remind citizens of this nation that we are one nation formed of many backgrounds. The church is not much different. John Stott emphasized the importance of the church as community:

"I am assuming that we are all committed to the church. We are not only Christian people; we are also church people. We are not only committed to Christ, we are also committed to the body of Christ. At least I hope so...For the church lies at the very centre of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history. On the contrary, the church is God's new community."

If the church is God's new community, then belonging to God means that we are all united within that community. We are a part of a family of believers. We belong to something much greater than ourselves. As believers in Christ, we belong to the church - the body of Christ. Being in community as the body of Christ means that genuine love flows between members of the family.

How would you describe the difference between someone who attends a church and someone who belongs to a church?

After reading the Scripture passages and devotion, do you feel that you belong to the church or just attend church? Why do you feel that way?

Week 4/Day 2

Community: Uniting with God and other believers through Jesus

Read: John 4:21-24

One way we connect with God is through worship. Whether worship is done individually or in community with other believers, we are to worship God in spirit and in truth. What does it mean to worship in spirit and in truth? For many, worship may come through different forms. Many worship by singing hymns, attending Sunday church service, lighting candles, or even kneeling in an aisle. These aren't necessarily bad things, but the means of worship is not what should define our worship. Worship is defined by how we focus our hearts and minds in praise of God for all that he is: His love, wisdom, beauty, holiness, compassion, mercy, grace, power, and everything else that He is. True worship is a lifestyle. Living for God means that we humble ourselves by freely expressing our gratitude, submission, and sacrificial service in different ways. Worship is not about us, it is about our response to who God is as we form community with Him.

How does the idea of worship being a lifestyle challenge your current practice of worship?

What do you need to change in your life to develop a lifestyle of worship?

Week 4/Day 3

Community: Uniting with God and other believers through Jesus

Read: Acts 2:42-47; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Proverbs 27:17

Growing in community with other believers is an important aspect of growing in our faith. Surrounding yourself with other believers helps us grow in our faith as we walk alongside others. One of the best opportunities for community within the church is connecting with a small group. The early church showed us the importance of being in community with one another. They prayed together, served together, and encouraged one another to grow in their faith. Small groups provide an atmosphere that encourages you to live life like those in the early church. Your journey in a small group will lead to greater transformation as you grow deeper in your faith. God has created us with all kinds of unique gifts and talents. When small groups are formed, those gifts and talents come together to grow God's kingdom. As you grow together, you also have the opportunity to find ways to transform the community around you. The disciples' lives were drastically changed by being in community with Jesus. You have the opportunity to have your life transformed as well when you are in community with a small group of believers.

What do you find challenging about being committed to a small group?

How have small groups impacted your life? If you are not currently in a small group, what is preventing you from joining one?

Week 4/Day 4

Community: Uniting with God and other believers through Jesus

Read - Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Yesterday we focused on being united together with other believers, but there is one we must unite with more. That One is God. The Bible gives us two examples of how we can unite with God through our faith, baptism and communion. Baptism is an important step in our faith journey. Baptism is that outward symbol or expression of the work that God has already done in our lives. The New Testament is filled with examples of people professing faith (trust) in Jesus, and then being baptized. Baptism is considered that first step of obedience to following Jesus. The act of baptism is an expression of our faith and launches us on our spiritual journey.

Communion is an experience where believers in Jesus recognize the work he accomplished on the cross. Jesus instituted communion while celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples. It is important to participate in communion with a worthy heart. This means that we need to confess and repent from the sins in our lives. After we prepare our hearts, we should celebrate communion in remembrance of Jesus and what he accomplished on the cross.

After looking back through the other readings and questions this week, make a commitment between you and God about growing in community with other believers and being united with Him through Jesus. In the space below, write out a personal commitment to God about how you plan to grow in community as a way to grow closer to Him:

Take a moment and write out a prayer about growing in community. Keep this prayer and read through it and pray over it during times when you struggle with your commitment.
