



# Devotional

Oct. 4 - Dec. 30

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## WEEK ONE (OCTOBER 4–10)

### **Day 278: October 4, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 15:1–16:31**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 11:1–13; 37–54**

Luke 15 reminds us that God loves finding lost things: a sheep, a coin, a prodigal son ... and us. It's followed by Luke 16, which is about wealth: gaining it dishonestly, flaunting it, and not sharing it. Luke 15 tells us we have been found by grace; Luke 16 tells us we should respond to that grace with a faithful use of our finances.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 279: October 5, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 17:1–18:43**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 22:1–38**

Luke 17-18 reminds us of what it means to follow Jesus: forgiveness (17:3), gratitude (17:16), persistence (18:5), humility (18:14), generosity (18:22), and faith (18:42). It is a good list to aim for every day.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 280: October 6, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 19:1–47**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 22:39–71**

Luke 19 begins with Zacchaeus, who welcomed Jesus into his house then decided to give half his money to the poor. It ends with Jesus cleaning God's house of those who monetized the Temple for personal gain. Jesus is serious about our relationship with wealth.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 281: October 7, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 20:1–21:37**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 23:1–32**

It's always important to remember that Jesus' greatest rebukes were not at people who were irreligious non-believers, but against religious people who were hypocritical, dogmatic, and who cared little for the oppressed. In what ways are we like that?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 282: October 8, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 22:1–71**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 23:33–56**

Luke 22: The disciples who shared in Jesus' last meal included Judas who would betray him, Peter who was blind to his pride, and the rest who fought for power. Jesus doesn't pick perfect people to follow him, but calls us to learn how to follow him faithfully.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 283: October 9, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 23:1–56**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 24:1–35**

The gospel that opens by elevating the role of women also emphasizes the role that women played at the end of Jesus' life. Jesus blesses the barren (Lk 23:29), tells us women were with him until the end (v 49), and prepared him for burial (v 55). In what ways can we be more honoring of women?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 284: October 10, 2020**

**Full Plan: Luke 24:1–53**

**Abbreviated Plan: Luke 24:36–53**

Luke 24: It's no accident that both the Emmaus people and the disciples did not recognize the resurrection until they all ate together. It's why an open table is important: everyone is invited to experience new life in Christ for themselves.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**October 4–10, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Amy Kerr**

Luke 15:4-7 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

*“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”*

The Parable of the Lost Sheep is a great illustration of Jesus's love for us and his desire for us to follow him. Jesus loves us just as we are, and we are reminded in Luke 15:2 that he welcomes sinners and eats with them. For despite our flaws and shortcomings

Jesus loves us and recognizes the uniqueness in which we were all made. He shows us that when we are lost and wandering in the wilderness, we are not lost to him. There are likely times in everyone's faith journey where they feel far from God, and as if he may not even see them. Or we may even drift so far that we feel our sins now define us. Jesus welcomes all back, even sinners. Not only does he welcome us back, but he rejoices in our return and repentance. What a feeling to know the joy he feels from the repentance of our sin!

Prayer: Lord you know me, all of me. I remember the love you have for each of us, even your lost sheep who are found again. I ask for your forgiveness of my sin. In your name we pray, amen.

## **WEEK TWO (OCTOBER 11–17)**

### **Day 285: October 11, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 1:1–2:12**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 1:1–18, John 2:1–11**

John 1 is a reboot of Genesis 1: Both open with "In the beginning." God spoke creation into being. (The Word was with God; the Word was God.) God said let there be light. (In him was life, and the life was the light for all people). God separated the waters (Jesus' first sign involved transforming water.) We can be part of God's new creation in the world today.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 286: October 12, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 2:13–3:36**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 3:1–36**

The most famous verse in the New Testament (John 3:16) is a response to a man questioning Jesus in the dark (3:2) which itself was a response to Jesus upsetting conventional wisdom (2:13-16). Darkness and doubt aren't fun, but they can be the gateways to new understanding.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 287: October 13, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 4:1–54**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 4:1–42**

In John 4, Jesus was physically tired, thirsty, and hungry. But his deeper hunger was satisfied when he shared the good news with someone who was spiritually searching (v 33). Physical food satisfies for a short while. Spiritual food impacts eternity.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 288: October 14, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 5:1–6:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 4:43–54, John 8:1–11**

Luke 5-6 has two water miracles: the healing of the paralyzed man by the pool, and the walking on water. In between is the feeding of the 5,000 with a boy's offering. All these stories remind us of the power of baptism and communion, and that Jesus is always present among us.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 289: October 15, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 6:22–7:9**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 11:1–46**

John 6:26-27 is a key verse. We must not make following Jesus about meeting our needs. Worship is not about entertaining us, prayer is not about blessing us, Bible reading is not about feeding us. It's about what we surrender, offer Jesus, and "believe."

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 290: October 16, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 7:10–8:58**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 13:1–38**

John 7-8: People are divided about Jesus: those who believe or don't believe; those who want him arrested or those who are amazed; those who question his authority or those set free by his truth. In John, it's a binary choice: are you with or against Jesus?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 291: October 17, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 9:1–10:42**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 15:1–27**

Caught in the crosshairs of the squabbling by the Pharisees is a man born blind whom Jesus healed in John 9:13-34. By the end of the story, it's the Pharisees who are the truly blind, and those who believe in Jesus "now can see." (v25) Which group do you identify with more?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **October 11–17, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Bernie Lieving**

Welcome to the Gospel of John! It doesn't take reading more than a few verses to know that this 4th Gospel is very different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. One of my favorite descriptions of this Gospel is Scottish biblical scholar William Barclay's: "For many Christian people the Gospel according to St. John is the most precious book in the New Testament. It is the book on which above all they feed their minds and nourish their hearts, and in which they rest their souls." (The Daily Study Bible Series, Westminster Press, 1975)

Who wrote this Gospel? The answer varies, dependent on the study Bible you are using. My three give answers from "The apostle John" (The NIV Study Bible) to a "disciple of John" (The New Oxford Annotated Bible) and a third says that regardless of the author, the important thing is that the Gospel is clearly the work of an eyewitness. (The CEB Study Bible) The apostle John is not named in the Gospel so if he is the author and wanted to remain unknown that makes sense. Interestingly, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is mentioned five times so maybe John does appear in the Gospel.

Several things stand out for me in this week's readings: (1) Jesus (the Word) was with God in the beginning and everything came into being through Jesus and then John announces that "the Word became flesh and made his home among us." (2) Jesus' first miracle is turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. Only John tells this story. (3) Jesus' words to Nicodemus: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life." (4)

The feeding of the five thousand made the people see him "as the prophet who is coming into the world." (5) Jesus enters Jerusalem several times in these first chapters. In the other Gospels he is there only once, when he went for the Passover and was ultimately crucified.

To use Barclay's words, what of these first chapters of John fed your mind, nourished your heart, and gave you a place to rest your soul?

Prayer: Pray for all who need to know and accept in their hearts that God loves them so much that God came to live as a human in Jesus who willingly died that they might know God's love for them.

## **WEEK THREE (OCTOBER 18–24)**

**Day 292: October 18, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 11:1–12:50**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 16:1–33**

Jesus spends much of John 11 telling people that Lazarus' death won't be permanent. Yet, when a grieving Mary tells him Lazarus is dead, Jesus weeps. (v35) Why? Not because he believed death won. But so that in Jesus, we have someone who grieves with us. Even after Lazarus was raised from the dead, he still needed to be unbound. Even though we receive new life in Christ, we still need to be daily unbound from our old ways.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 293: October 19, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 13:1–14:31**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 17:1–26**

Feeling unloved or incapable of receiving or sharing love? Read John 13-14. Jesus' last night with the disciples reminded them to love, showed them how to love, and prayed the Spirit's love upon them. And it begins with John 13:1: "He loved them until the end."

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 294: October 20, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 15:1–17:26**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 19:1–42**

Jesus gives us 3 key values in John 15-17: Love, Truth, and Unity. All are important. Love without the other two is inconsequential sentiment. Truth alone can lead to dogmatism. Unity alone can actually cause harm. The Holy Spirit helps ensure the balance.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 295: October 21, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 18:1–19:42**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 20:1–31**

John portrays Pilate in ch. 18-19 as less of a villain and more of a curious seeker. He asked Jesus, "What is truth?" because Jesus did not fit into his way of thinking. When Jesus upends our thinking, are we open to him, or do we wash our hands of him?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 296: October 22, 2020**

**Full Plan: John 20:1–21:35**

**Abbreviated Plan: John 21:1–25**

John begins with such a high view of Jesus (John 1:1) yet ends with an intimate view of how he relates to us. He connects to us personally (Mary, Peter), he had scars (Thomas), and he ate with his friends (fish). And it ends with a command to be the same for others ("Feed my sheep.").

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **Day 297: October 23, 2020**

### **Full Plan: Acts 1:1–2:47**

### **Abbreviated Plan: Acts 1:1–26**

Acts 1-2. Pentecost is a glorious day of the church year. It hasn't (yet) been touched by commercialism, and the same Holy Spirit that appeared on that day is the same Spirit we can experience today. It is our entry point in the Bible. It is now our story.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **Day 298: October 24, 2020**

### **Full Plan: Acts 3:1–5:16**

### **Abbreviated Plan: Acts 2:1–47**

Acts 3-5 reveals these important truths about God. 1) God can heal, 2) God cannot be silenced, 3) God can empower us to share with others, 4) God cannot be lied to. Our response should then be: Be a conduit for God's healing, Proclaim God's truth, Share God's love, and Live with God's Integrity.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **October 18–24, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Jay Kuhns**

This week's passages are both incredibly impactful in the story of our faith, and for me personally as well. We begin with the famous story of Lazarus...Jesus friend who he publicly raised from the dead. Literally, a miracle before the people's eyes. Imagine being there, watching Jesus speak, and suddenly seeing Lazarus appear.

What I find so compelling about these passages as they lead up to Jesus' entry into the City, and his eventual crucifixion, is that he did it all with the combination of great courage and great faith in God. Would we make those same choices if we knew there was a price on our head?

The powerful images of what we know as the last supper, the washing of the disciples' feet, and the foretelling of betrayal all hit home for us, or at least they should. Are we true to God every minute of every day? Do we hold the feeling of Sunday worship with us all week long; or, is the return to the world of work on Monday somehow a convenient excuse to put God on hold until next Sunday?

My favorite passage in the Bible is part of this week's reading: John 15:5 - "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

It says it all about a life committed to Christ. We are either connected to Him or we're not. There is no fence-sitting. There is no indecision. There is only Him...and the good news...He is with us!

The transition through the familiar, and still always upsetting resurrection holds us spellbound to the text. Jesus' demonstrates his ultimate love and sacrifice for us, while simultaneously following the will of God. Incredible. Imagine if God asked you to do the same thing?

Despite the tragic loss of their leader, the newly inspired and empowered disciples begin to preach confidently and passionately about the one true God, and His son Jesus.

Perhaps as we reflect on these familiar texts this weekend, we should challenge ourselves with this question: Am I doing enough as a believer to spread the word about Jesus?

Prayer: God in Heaven, Thank you for the amazing gift of your Son. May we spend time today quietly considering His life, teachings, example, love and sacrifice. We will not speak, but instead listen with our hearts and let our minds wander along with Jesus as he showed us the ultimate path to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **WEEK FOUR (OCTOBER 25–31)**

**Day 299: October 25, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 5:17–7:60**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 3:1–26**

Acts 5-7 contains a biblical basis for civil disobedience. When the

laws of the land, and even of institutional religion, contradict the values and work of God's mission, Peter offers this word: "We must obey God rather than any human authority." (5:29)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 300: October 26, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 8:1–9:43**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 4:1–37**

Acts starts with crowds becoming believers, but shifts to the stories of individuals. In Acts 8-9, each person is transformed because of a friend. Simon (Phillip), the eunuch (Phillip), Saul (Ananias), Dorcas (Lydia). We are to be that friend for someone else.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 301: October 27, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 10:1–12:25**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 8:1–40**

Acts 10-12: 3pm is an important time in the Bible. It's when Jesus

died, when Saul became Paul, and when Peter received his vision. Do we take time for God in the middle of the day? Also, the city of Joppa is significant. It's where God called Jonah, and where Peter received his vision. On both occasions, God gave Jonah and Peter a wider vision of God's love for all people, not just a select few. What is my "Joppa" moment? Whom does God include whom I would rather exclude?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 302: October 28, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 13:1–15:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 9:1–43**

Acts 13-15. God's love is not proprietary. It does not belong to us, for us to determine who is "in" and who is "out." The circle is wider than we think it is, and it doesn't just include us.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 303: October 29, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 15:22–17:34**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 10:1–48**

Acts 15-17. Paul shows us what it means to be "evangelical" in the best sense: Meeting people where they are (Lydia), pursuing social justice (slave girl), speaking the language of the culture (Areopagus), and "turning the world upside down." (17:6)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 304: October 30, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 18:1–20:38**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 12:1–25**

Acts 18-20. Just like the Parable of the Sower, Paul's efforts had mixed results. Sometimes people were responsive, and other times they rejected him. It is a reminder that we are not called to be successful, but simply to be faithful (Mother Theresa).

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 305: October 31, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 21:1–23:35**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 13:1–52**

Acts 21-23. Paul tapped into his Jewishness to speak to Jews, his Roman citizenship to speak to Gentiles, and his legal background to speak to religious officials. We need to be theologically multilingual, sharing Jesus by meeting people where they are.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **October 25–31, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Susan Northcutt**

The Books of Acts is the narrative bridge between the Gospels and the books of the New Testament. It is a sweeping account of how the word of God was spread and how the early Christian church was established. It took many decades in several locations (from Jerusalem to Rome) to plant the seeds of “The Way.”

Most important of all was the evangelistic work of steadfast apostles and disciples as outlined in the Book of Acts. Peter’s magnificent and powerful ministry, or Stephen’s valuable efforts which ended in tragedy, or Paul’s compelling journeys to the far-flung regions of the Roman Empire. These early apostles faced challenges, conflict, persecution, imprisonment. The descriptions, contained in many chapters, are vivid.

It is Paul’s story that dominates the Book of Acts, from his conversion as Saul that began on the road to Damascus and then to his “call” to speak in the name of Jesus throughout Asia Minor and into Europe. He witnessed in synagogues, marketplaces,

lecture halls, and public squares, bringing the word of God to Jews and non-Jews, the Gentiles.

I took a trip in 2015 “The Journeys of Paul.” Sponsored by the Florida Conference, the trip was led by Bishop Ken Carter and attracted over one hundred people. We flew to Rome and then boarded a cruise ship. Visiting Athens, Corinth, Malta, and Rhodes (among other places), we learned more about Paul’s ministry and his missionary journeys. For me, the highlight of the trip was a worship service in the amphitheater of Ephesus. Communion was served in this ancient Roman theater, the exact place where Paul witnessed.

All in all, the Book of Acts is an account of how Jesus began to spread across the world.

### **WEEK FIVE (NOVEMBER 1–7)**

#### **Day 306: November 1, 2020**

#### **Full Plan: Acts 24:1–26:32**

#### **Abbreviated Plan: Acts 14:1–28**

Acts 24-26. Paul was bounced from trial to trial, getting into trouble for preaching about “justice, self-control, and the coming judgment.” (24:25) And he was accused of “too much learning.” (26:24) Would that we would each be found guilty of such things.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 307: November 2, 2020**

**Full Plan: Acts 27:1–28:31**

**Abbreviated Plan: Acts 15:1–41**

The book of Acts ends with Paul in a torrential storm and shipwreck, and finally in Rome, where he preached to the masses. Then it just concludes, open ended. Perhaps we are the living continuation of the story, making Acts a story for us today.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 308: November 3, 2020**

**Full Plan: Romans 1:1–3:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: Romans 1:1–32**

Romans opens with a sobering indictment on humanity. We are broken, prone to harming each other, and unable to keep moral law on our own. Paul is beginning to build his legal case for why we need Jesus.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 309: November 4, 2020**

**Full Plan: Romans 3:21–5:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: Romans 2:1–29**

Romans may be the most important letter Paul ever wrote. So much of western civilization is based on Greco-Roman thought and ideals, and the case that Romans makes for Jesus is the basis for much of our theology today. Romans 3-6 is the gospel in a nutshell.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 310: November 5, 2020**

**Full Plan: Romans 6:1–8:17**

**Abbreviated Plan: Romans 3:1–31**

Romans 6-8 uses enslavement language to explain the gospel. Sin enslaves us, removing our personhood & freedom. Now grace enslaves us, giving us personhood in God & disrupting our freedom to sin (7:6). As Wesley says, “I am no longer my own, but Thine.”

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 311: November 6, 2020**

**Full Plan: Romans 8:18–10:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: Romans 4:1–25**

Romans 8-10. God's love is expansive and inclusive. It breaks through every barrier that might separate us from God (8:38-39) and it shows no favoritism to any one people. (10:9-13) Our response to God's love then is to claim it (10:9) and share it. (10:15)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 312: November 7, 2020**

**Full Plan: Romans 11:1–13:14**

**Abbreviated Plan: Romans 6:1–23**

The first two-thirds of Romans is about belief; this last third is about behavior. Romans 12-16 is easier to understand, but harder to apply. We are called to obedience, humility, prayer, peace, and most of all, love. (ch 12-13) Nothing else but love mattered for Paul, and nothing else should matter for us.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**November 1–7, 2020: Weekly Devotional by Mandy Cloninger**

*Ezekiel 18:20 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*

*“The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own.”*

This verse clearly outlines to us that we must be responsible for our actions, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot cling to the righteousness of those around us and rely upon their good deeds to carry us into life. Nor, can we allow the excuse of others poor judgement to become our excuse for poor judgement and bad deeds. Depending on your circumstance this may come as a relief or may seem overwhelming. We are surrounded each day with temptations and opportunities to stray from God's will. We are tested by those around us and sometimes loving our neighbors and enemies becomes very difficult. We can have people around us that continuously fall to sin and therefore tempt us to follow in their footsteps. Still we must remember that we are going to be held accountable for our actions. We must confess our sins to Jesus, spend time in prayer, and remember that he died for our forgiveness of sin.

Prayer: May we feel your spirit Lord and go through each day with you guiding our way. May we remember to praise you and you alone, love all, and be selfless. Amen.

**WEEK SIX (NOVEMBER 8–14)**

**Day 313: November 8, 2020**

**Full Plan: Romans 14:1–16:27**

**Abbreviated Plan: Romans 12:1–21**

We can't help but imagine what a better country, world, and church we would have if we all took Romans 14 to heart: Pursue peace. Don't judge or live for yourself, or let your strong convictions get in the way of your relationships. Could you imagine?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 314: November 9, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Corinthians 1:1–3:23**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Corinthians 1:1–15; 3:10–23**

Few churches were as culturally divided as the Corinthians. 1 Cor. 1-3 reminds us that no one has cornered the market on ultimate truth, for God's foolishness is wiser than our wisdom. It's not about claiming to know it all, but knowing the One who does.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 315: November 10, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Corinthians 4:1–6:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 6:12–20**

1 Cor. 4-6. Paul decries sexual immorality, not because sex itself is sinful, but because infidelity is. It is a recurring OT theme: faithfulness in marriage is a metaphor for faithfulness to God. Paul goes even further, saying we are God's "Temple." (6:19)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 316: November 11, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Corinthians 7:1–9:27**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 11:17–34**

The issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians may seem antiquated today, but his guiding principles are just as applicable now: self-control, respect for others, concern for those who are weaker, & devotion to God. Regardless of the issue, these values apply.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 317: November 12, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Corinthians 10:1–12:31**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Corinthians 15:1–41**

1 Cor. 10-12. The Christians in Corinth were plagued by a “me first” mentality, creating division and inequality. For Paul this was a spiritual problem, solved by humility, servanthood, and a commitment to doing everything for the glory of God. 10:31)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 318: November 13, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Corinthians 13:1–16:24**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Corinthians 15:42–58; 16:1–14**

1 Corinthians ends with a tour de force of the hallmarks of the Christian faith, which we should remember: the centrality of Christ’s resurrection (ch15), the promise of eternal life (ch15), a call to service (ch16) and most of all, a call to love. (ch13)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 319: November 14, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Corinthians 1:1–3:18**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Corinthians 1:23–24; 2:1–11**

It’s a very different Paul writing his second letter to the Corinthians. He has suffered greatly (1:8) with a restless mind (2:13). He’s now more humble and heartfelt, drawing strength from those he calls the aroma (2:15) and living letter (3:3) of Christ.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**November 8–14, 2020: Weekly Devotional by John Dormois**

The only full book of the Bible I studied while at Duke Divinity School was 1st Corinthians. The text for the study was written by the dean of the school at the time, Dr. Richard Hayes, a well-respected Pauline scholar. In the introduction to the book, Dr. Hays made an interesting observation. He likened the study to “reading someone else’s mail”.

Paul had been to Corinth and established the fledgling church around 51 CE. He began to have correspondence about some problems in the church around 53-55 CE. There were no formal churches at the time; the followers of Jesus met in peoples’ homes, often by sharing a meal. Corinth was at the crossroads of major trade routes, and as a result there was a wide range of people of many faiths and customs.

Perhaps it’s easier to relate to the Corinthians given the current

controversies in our own Methodist church. There were divisions that had developed; Paul encouraged the focus to always be on Jesus, the good news. There were problems of a sexual nature; Paul insisted that sexual integrity was symbolic of one's response to Christ and that it matters what one does with one's body. There was controversy about whether food offered as a sacrifice could then be eaten; Paul redirected the focus to love as the guiding principle. There were concerns about members speaking in tongues; Paul encouraged that the faithful not be distracted and remain focused on love. Finally, there was an expression of doubt about the resurrection; Paul emphatically declared that without the resurrection the new faith was meaningless.

Prayer: Times change but in so many ways things stay the same. Someday in the future the communications surrounding the current concerns of the church will be read by others. With continued faith, it's our prayer that the church will endure and our mail will be understood as the natural reflection of a people dealing with life's many challenges.

## **WEEK SEVEN (NOVEMBER 15–21)**

### **Day 320: November 15, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Corinthians 4:1–7:16**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Corinthians 4:1–18**

Twice Paul again recalls the suffering and hardship he experienced since his last letter to the Corinthians. (4:7-12; 6:3-10) What kept Paul going? Faith in Christ (ch 5) and love from others, who "open their hearts wide open to him." We should do the same.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 321: November 16, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Corinthians 8:1–10:18**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Corinthians 8:1–24**

"Prosperity gospel" preachers have warped 2 Cor. 9 to suggest that if you give money to the church, God will make you rich. Not at all. Rather, Paul is saying that God already has everything necessary to transform the world. It's just up to us to surrender it.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 322: November 17, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Corinthians 11:1–13:13**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Corinthians 9:1–15**

Paul concludes 2 Corinthians with a reprise of his sufferings. Yet he offers his greatest encouragement in the whole letter: God told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Words to live by, especially in tough times.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 323: November 18, 2020**

**Full Plan: Galatians 1:1–2:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: Galatians 1:1–9; 2:16–21**

Until now, Paul opened his letters by addressing the recipients as “saints.” But not to the Galatians. He chastises them for veering away from the gospel. In chapter 2, we discover why: the Galatians are not welcoming of Gentiles. Paul’s gospel welcomes all.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 324: November 19, 2020**

**Full Plan: Galatians 3:1–4:31**

**Abbreviated Plan: Galatians 3:1–6–29**

The hits continue. Paul calls the Galatians “foolish” because they refuse to welcome Gentiles. He says such actions are done by those who are enslaved to the law. But in chapters 3-4 he makes it clear: “You’re better than this. Act like it. Welcome all.” (3:28)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 325: November 20, 2020**

**Full Plan: Galatians 5:1–6:18**

**Abbreviated Plan: Galatians 5:1–26; 6:11–18**

Galatians 5-6 is pretty direct: Don’t bite other people. (5:15) Instead, love them (5:14), don’t envy (5:26), bear their burdens (6:2), and work for the common good. (6:10) Just imagine what a better world we would have if everyone did these things for each other.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 326: November 21, 2020**

**Full Plan: Ephesians 1:1–2:22**

**Abbreviated Plan: Ephesians 2:1–22**

Ephesians 1 has the odd distinction of containing Paul’s longest sentences. They are long sets of run-on sentences, as if transcribing a fast-talking person with something exciting to say. This is what has made Paul so excited: We have received the gift of Jesus and the gift of praising God.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **November 15–21, 2020: Weekly Devotional by Joanie Mellen**

This week we conclude 2 Corinthians, read all of Galatians, and begin the opening verses of Ephesians. These letters of Paul are filled with guidance for living in Christ.

2 Corinthians chapters 4-13 deal with Paul's emphasis upon following the way of the Cross where Jesus died for our sins and gave us a new 'Way of Life'. He instructed the Corinthians of the need to give up their old ways and become generous and humble servants, transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Paul's letter to the Galatians has been referred by some scholars as the "Magna Carta" of the Christian faith. It is revolutionary in its teachings to reject all authority of past customs and laws of the Torah that prevented an individual from having direct access to his God. According to Paul's teaching, God's forgiving love through Christ was the only way to salvation. Faith is the way to God's kingdom.

My favorite part of Galatians are verses 19-26. It begins with describing the '*works of the flesh*', all those traits we wish we didn't have. Then comes the listing of the '***fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control.***' The ending reminds us that '***if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking***

***one another and envying one another***'. Wonderful words to live by.

Prayer: Lord, we give thanks for your gift of the Holy Spirit. Let our hearts receive the full measure of your grace to walk in the way that leads to life.

### **WEEK EIGHT (NOVEMBER 22–28)**

#### **Day 327: November 22, 2020**

**Full Plan: Ephesians 3:1–4:32**

**Abbreviated Plan: Ephesians 3:1–21**

Ephesians 3-4. God's love is without boundaries (3:18-19) so that God's people can love without boundaries. (4:1-6) Christian unity and mutual respect (4:25-32) is a reflection of God's love, so put away sinful anger and malicious talk.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

#### **Day 328: November 23, 2020**

**Full Plan: Ephesians 5:1–6:24**

**Abbreviated Plan: Ephesians 4:1–32**

It's unfortunate that Ephesians 5 has been used to enforce the subjugation of women. Before 5:22, we read 5:21. It is not that husbands have more authority than women. All of us must be

subject to each other. This is about mutuality, not hierarchy.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 329: November 24, 2020**

**Full Plan: Philippians 1:1–2:30**

**Abbreviated Plan: Philippians 1:12–30; 2:1–13**

Philippians 1-2 shows us how to be joyful amid hardship. God isn't finished with us yet. (1:6) We have the support of others. (1:19) The way down (humility) is the way up. (2:1-11) God is at work in us. (2:13) We can be lights in a dark world. (2:14-15)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 330: November 25, 2020**

**Full Plan: Philippians 3:1–4:23**

**Abbreviated Plan: Philippians 3:1–21**

Philippians 3-4 contain some of the most beautiful and encouraging words Paul ever wrote. They remind us to keep Christ

first, press forward in faith, stay joyful, don't worry, accept God's peace, keep your mind set on God, and receive God's strength.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 331: November 26, 2020**

**Full Plan: Colossians 1:1–2:23**

**Abbreviated Plan: Colossians 2:1–23**

Colossians begins with the equivalent of a satellite image of the Christian faith. It is the highest view of Christ in any of Paul's letters, emphasizing Jesus as Lord of the cosmos. But then it shifts to an indictment of false teachers, who get caught up in squabbling over petty matters. This is what a high view of Jesus can bring us: a realization of just how small our view of God really is, along with our staunch, rigid defense of our own perspective. These are "simply human commands and teachings," with no eternal benefit.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 332: November 27, 2020**

**Full Plan: Colossians 3:1–4:18**

**Abbreviated Plan: Colossians 3:1–25; 4:1–6**

Colossians 3:1-17 is worth reading, re-reading, and most of all, applying. It depicts life just as God intends you to live, in which Christ shines through you (4) and dwells richly in you (16). Imagine the difference that would make in you.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 333: November 28, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Thessalonians 1:1–3:13**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Thessalonians 2:1–16; 4:1–12**

1 Thessalonians 1-3 tells us why Paul shared the gospel with others. Not to amass converts for numbers' sake, but out of genuine love. In 2:8 he says he cared for them so much that he not only wanted to share the gospel with them, but also his own life with them, because "you have become very dear to us." The question we should ask is not "who needs Jesus?" but "whom should I love with my own life?" The answer, always, is everyone.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**November 22–26, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Jayne Cabigas**

In Ephesians 4, Paul gives us a roadmap to renew ourselves in the Spirit. Lead a life worthy of your calling in Christ, with humility, patience and love. Make every effort to maintain unity in the Spirit. Don't be angry or let evil talk come from your mouth. Use your words to build up, not tear down. Put away bitterness and be kind and forgiving to one another as God forgave you.

As much as we strive for this, it's hard to achieve in such polarizing and uncertain times. Too often, it feels like people in our families or community believe in an alternate reality and it's hard to understand or respect one another. Even if we are willing to listen and try to understand, it feels like we are speaking in foreign languages without much in common to ground us. We become defensive and judgmental, and in our anger, we speak words that hurt one another and cause further divisions. Or we refrain from "evil talk" but still harbor a bitterness that keeps us from being kind and forgiving.

Gandhi invited us to be the change we wish to see in the world. Practicing patience and humility means setting an example of tolerance and kindness in the face of intolerance and unkindness. It means walking away from a fight instead of into one. It means looking for that of God in everyone, helping to bring out the good in people. Love is the only thing that lights the darkness and melts a hardened heart. And love wins when we are ambassadors of compassion and forgiveness.

As we get ready for Thanksgiving and Advent, we give thanks for all that was, is and will be. We claim our calling in Christ with humility, patience and love, knowing that when we send that out into the world around us, we are changed and maybe even those around us are too.

Prayer: Loving God, help us to lead a life worthy of our calling in Christ, to love generously and without conditions. Help us to build up your kingdom with kindness, not tear it down with angry, hurtful comments. Help us to be thankful for what we have, not envious of others, as we live into your coming Light. Amen.

## **WEEK NINE (NOVEMBER 29–DECEMBER 5)**

### **Day 334: November 29, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Thessalonians 4:1–5:28**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 5:1–24**

1 Thessalonians 4-5 is the basis for much speculation about the return of Jesus. But Paul is less interested in how or when Jesus returns, and more interested in our living out the faith every day and not losing heart. It has been used to talk about the return of Jesus in an effort to scare the hell out of people. But Paul reminds us here that it's better to love the hell out of them instead.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 335: November 30, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Thessalonians 1:1–3:18**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Thessalonians 2:1–17; 3:6–16**

In 2 Thessalonians, there's something worse than working without observing Sabbath. It's working without actually accomplishing anything of value. Paul called this "idleness." (3:11) It's worth asking: "Does what I'm doing create value, for God and others?"

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 336: December 1, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Timothy 1:1–3:16**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Timothy 1:1–7; 3:1–13**

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul says women should be silent in church and are redeemed only through childbearing. Today many (sadly, not all) Christians appropriately deem that command anachronistic. Doing so does not undermine the Bible's authority. It is a reminder that biblical interpretation is inexact and requires trust in the Spirit's work in a particular time and context.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

not from God. Instead, God has given us power, love, and self-discipline. We have everything we need (body, heart, and mind) to live without fear and rekindle God's gift within us.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 337: December 2, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Timothy 4:1–6:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Timothy 4:1–16**

Of the many items on your to-do list today, 1 Timothy 6:11-12 may have the best ones: "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of eternal life for which you were called and made." Check those off your list every day!

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 338: December 3, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Timothy 1:1–2:26**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Timothy 2:1–26**

The second letter to Timothy reveals a different Paul and Timothy: They are more battered and worn by life and ministry. So Paul calls Timothy to remember that God put a gift in him that has never gone away, and it is time to "wake up that fiery beast." (1:6) In times of weariness, we would do well to remember 1:7: Fear is

**Day 339: December 4, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Timothy 3:1–4:22**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Timothy 3:1–17; 4:1–5**

The responsibilities involved in being a Christian, particularly a leader in the church, can often feel too big, almost impossible. Paul and Timothy certainly felt that. But press on, regardless of whether the times are "favorable or unfavorable." (2 Tim. 4:1-2) God will strengthen and rescue us. (4:17-18)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 340: December 5, 2020**

**Full Plan: Titus 1:1–3:15**

**Abbreviated Plan: Titus 2:11–15; 3:1–11**

Setting aside the troubling commands for slaves to submit to their masters and wives to submit to their husbands, the overall message of Titus is that character matters. Self-control, sound judgment, and trustworthiness must supersede unprofitable quarrels.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**November 29–December 5, 2020: Weekly Devotional**  
**by Trish Krider**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NRSV) Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

I have always found this scripture to be a challenge, one I work on daily and have researched to try to understand how this is even possible. But through my readings, and through the example set by a lady for whom I pray daily, I am coming closer to understanding just how to do this.

For the past few years I have been privileged and blessed to lead a small group study. Over the years, these women have become my faith partners, my prayer warriors and my friends. As part of our weekly study, we share prayer concerns with each other. Through this, we have gotten to know Jeannie. A friend of one of the ladies

in our group, the rest of us feel we know her as we have been her prayer warriors - and she has set an example for us. Jeannie has been battling cancer of the red blood cells. We have known her to have good days and bad, improvements and setbacks. But what we know best about Jeannie is that nothing dampens her faith that God is good, God is with her, and God will see her through. The positive attitude with which she lifts praises to God, even in the most difficult of situations, has been a shining example to all of us. She has shown us that she understands just what is meant by this scripture.

Reading Bible commentaries on this scripture helped me in trying to understand this for myself. In MacLaren's commentary on this subject, he makes the following analogy: "To rejoice, to pray, to give thanks, are easy when circumstances favour, as a taper burns steadily in a windless night; but to do these things always is as difficult as for the taper's flame to keep upright when all the winds are eddying round it." We all know that giving thanks in the challenging times is difficult, but it helps to put it in this perspective: "...the essence of it [prayer] is to have heart and mind filled with the consciousness of God's presence, and to have the habit of referring everything to Him, "

The beauty of Jeannie's attitude is that, although she has challenges, and may well feel some turmoil, she turns to God to maintain her inner peace. As MacLaren states, "one part of a man's nature may be steadfastly rejoicing in the Lord, whilst the other is feeling the weight of sorrows that come from earth. The paradox of the Christian life may be realized as a blessed experience of every one of us: a surface troubled, a central calm; an ocean tossed with storm, and yet the crest of every wave

flashing in the sunshine.” We are grateful to see that brightness illustrated in the example she has set in praying without ceasing.

## **WEEK TEN (DECEMBER 6–12)**

### **Day 341: December 6, 2020**

**Full Plan: Philemon 1–25**

**Abbreviated Plan: Philemon 1–25**

In Philemon, we are reminded of how disruptive God’s grace can be. It can unsettle dysfunctional relationships and reset them in love and reconciliation. In what way does your desire to follow Jesus put you at odds with others and the world, who don’t understand the way of Jesus?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 342: December 7, 2020**

**Full Plan: Hebrews 1:1–3:19**

**Abbreviated Plan: Hebrews 1:1–3; 2:10–18**

Hebrews 1-3 poses and answers these questions: Do you want to understand who God is? Look at Jesus. Do you want to know who Jesus is? Read the Scriptures. Do you want to understand the Scriptures? Rely on the Holy Spirit. Do you want to rely on the

Spirit? Listen and believe in God.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 343: December 8, 2020**

**Full Plan: Hebrews 4:1–6:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: Hebrews 3:1–6; 3:12–19; 4:1–2**

Hebrews 4-6 describes Jesus as our high priest, who reconciles us with God through his dual, human/divine nature (5:1-10) In Jesus, God is transcendent enough to remind us that we are not God, and imminent enough to remind us that we are not alone.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 344: December 9, 2020**

**Full Plan: Hebrews 7:1–9:28**

**Abbreviated Plan: Hebrews 7:1–28**

Hebrews 7-9 says that Jesus is the high priest whose self-sacrifice fulfilled the sacrificial requirement for our salvation. A modern way

to see it is that Jesus' willing subjection to violence exposed and ended the notion of redemptive violence. How will you commit yourself to peace and non-violence?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 345: December 10, 2020**

**Full Plan: Hebrews 10:1–11:40**

**Abbreviated Plan: Hebrews 10:1–39**

Hebrews 10-11 reminds us that while we are not saved BY good works, we are saved FOR good works. Our salvation in Jesus bears a responsibility: to live with a pure conscience before God and to provoke acts of love for each other. (10:22-24)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 346: December 11, 2020**

**Full Plan: Hebrews 12:1–13:25**

**Abbreviated Plan: Hebrews 11:1–40; 12:1–2**

If most of Hebrews is about how Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for us, it ends with how we can live as an offering to God. Hebrews 13 is a worthy daily to-do list for a life well-pleasing to God, and verses 20-21 sum up the whole book.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 347: December 12, 2020**

**Full Plan: James 1:1–2:26**

**Abbreviated Plan: James 1:1–27**

James and John go hand in hand, not just as brothers and disciples, but also in the books named after them. John emphasizes belief, and James emphasizes behavior. Both are necessary in the Christian life and inform the other. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works. Faith without works is dead, but works done without faith is empty. Today, let's ask ourselves, "What will I do to demonstrate my faith and show it in love for others?"

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **December 6–12, 2020: Weekly Devotional by Ed Cronyn**

These chapters reveal the inextricable bond between the good news of mercy and salvation on the one hand and our frailties on the other, which together form the foundation of our faith: humility, repentance, obedience and service. In Philemon, we read that the runaway slave and the imprisoned missionary, both facing consequences for their pursuit of freedom, come to each other's aid as brothers in Christ, who sacrificed Himself for them. In Hebrews and James, that same message of hope and solidarity includes all who face challenges:

*“It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist . . . should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. . . My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.”* (Hebrews 2:10; James 1:2-4, NRSV).

So here's the paradox: challenges produce struggles, which offer the opportunity to lean both on God and one another, ultimately resulting in the joy of knowing Him and one another more fully. Even during times of our own struggle, we are called to a faith which is active and demonstrable as we coming alongside others in their time of need. Having accepted salvation from the one who sacrificed His own life for us, we find both hope for ourselves and encouragement to act in mercy towards those around us.

*“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above. . . Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who*

*deceive themselves. . . Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”* (James 1:17,22,27, NRSV).

Challenge: When have you felt closer to Christ: during times of difficulty and struggle, or in times of relative comfort? How do your own experiences with hardship and these scriptures motivate you towards love, generosity, justice and caring for others in need?

Prayer: God, thank you for your mercy, lifting us up when we are down and giving us the strength to do your work with and through one another. Help me to show your love and mercy to others.

## **WEEK ELEVEN (DECEMBER 13–19)**

**Day 348: Decemer 13, 2020**

**Full Plan: James 3:1–5:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: James 5:1–20**

There's so much practical guidance in James. Tame your tongue, resist envy, be humble, pray for others, and help them restore their faith. And it ends with where it began: practice patience amid your suffering, and it will strengthen your heart. (5:7-11)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 349: December 14, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Peter 1:1–2:25**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Peter 1:1–25**

1 Peter is for those suffering and exiled:

Live in hope; the future's bright. (1:3-12)

Live in holiness; you were bought with a price. (1:13-25)

Live in harmony; you are building something eternal. (2:1-10)

Live honorably; others are watching. (2:11-17)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 350: December 15, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 Peter 3:1–5:14**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 Peter 4:1–19; 5:1–11**

It's important to hold to your convictions, and to still live in love and humility with one another. A key to doing that is 1 Peter 3:15: Always be ready to profess your convictions, but do it with "gentleness and reverence."

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 351: December 16, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Peter 1:1–2:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Peter 1:1–21**

2 Peter 1-2. God has give you everything you need for "life and godliness." Full stop. You've got all the raw material to live life as God intends it, including the free will to choose to. 1 Peter 1:5-8 shows us how to "make every effort" to do so.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 352: December 17, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 Peter 3:1–18**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 Peter 3:1–18**

Waiting is hard. 2 Peter was written to people getting tired of waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled. It's hard, but God sees the long game. (3:8) What we see as God's slowness, God sees as deliberateness and intentionality. Be alert. Don't give up.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 353: December 18, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 John 1:1–3:24**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 John 1:1–10; 3:1–24**

The gospel of John and the epistle of 1 John are two sides of the same coin. The first is about belief, the second is about behavior. The first is about truth, the second is about love. The first is about the light of Jesus, the second is about living in that light. Both are necessary for true life.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 354: December 19, 2020**

**Full Plan: 1 John 4:1–5:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: 1 John 4:1–21**

1 John 4: Love! It's the essential nature of God (16), the antidote to fear (18), and is to characterize our relationships with everyone (20-21). We love, because God first loved us. (19)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**December 13–19, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Whitney Smith**

Recently at church we were studying about Samuel hearing God, and as part of the service I heard the testimony of three different members of our congregation on how they hear God speak. Most of us have not heard the audible voice of God like Samuel. The three people gave examples of their different experiences involving hearing God through scripture, prayer, meditation, intuition, wisdom from others and in overcoming obstacles. But how do we really know if the message is from God or not?

The author writes at 1 John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” The early church struggled with false teachings. “In John’s day, the issue was about if Jesus had truly come in a real body of of flesh and blood. Many Gnostic-influenced teachers said that Jesus, being God, could not have actually become a flesh and blood human being, because God could have no partnership with “impure” material stuff (<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-john-4>). “The heretics asserted that they possessed perfection, were “born of God” and were without sin. By placing themselves above the Commandments, they in fact sanctioned moral laxity” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/letters-of-John>).

These false teachings led the author (traditionally the letters are attributed to John the Evangelist, son of Zebedee and disciple of Jesus, the author does not specify) to give some advice to the

churches under his mentorship know whether the message the person heard is from God.

1. Does the message correctly present Jesus and his teachings according to scripture? “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in flesh is from God.” 1 John 4:2

2. Who is listening and supporting the message? Other believers? Non-believers? “We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” 1 John 4:6

3. Is the message loving? Is the person giving the message behaving out of love of God and neighbor? “Beloved let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.” 1 John 4:7 “For this is love of God that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” 1 John 5:3

4. Is the message fearful? Is the person giving the message fearful or fear-mongering? “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” 1 John 4:18

John gives these words of wisdom to help brothers and sisters in Christ discern and live in the word of God, but while he gives instruction, he also gives encouragement. He encourages Christians to live with joy and confidence knowing we have overcome and have the victory of eternal life and relationship with God.

As people who have relationship with God, hearing from God isn't something that is considered rare, but as something expected. He reminds the readers that God hears them. “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” 1 John 5:14.

He also reminds us that we are given protection and understanding as children of God from the untruth of the world. “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20

This news is exciting, powerful and comforting! When thinking about false-prophets, lies and evil in the world looking to sway us from God's truth, it can be very intimidating and scary. No one wants to be deceived. But also sometimes we don't want to accept the truth, sometimes accepting lies that keep things the same seems easier than to accept the change that can come with truth.

Sometimes false messages can sound interesting, wise or esteem-building. We may have people close to us who try hard to convince us of falseness. Those people may have good intentions, but are speaking out of their own hurt or misunderstanding. I've had people from all backgrounds speak lies about God to me... people from church, people who do not believe, people who are spiritual, but not religious.

I would say the thing that specifically has really helped me with discernment is a combination of asking for it in prayer and reading scripture with intent to memorize. I've had moments in my head

of “That doesn’t sound right.” followed by a bible verse. We are blessed that we have access to the Word of God and relationship to keep us in truth! With the message of John, we can all be reminded of whose we are and the tools we have to continue to live in the truth.

## **WEEK TWELVE (DECEMBER 20–26)**

### **Day 355: December 20, 2020**

**Full Plan: 2 John 1–13**

**Abbreviated Plan: 2 John 1–13**

2 John was written to a female leader of a house church, a modern day Susanna Wesley. Our spiritual responsibilities should not just be relegated to Sunday mornings, but must include who we are at home, and impact how our families grow in Christ. (vs. 4)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 356: December 21, 2020**

**Full Plan: 3 John 1–15**

**Abbreviated Plan: 3 John 1–15**

3 John is the shortest book in the Bible, but it contains one of its simplest and most poignant verses: “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good.” (11) Adopt that as your daily filter,

and you will begin to live life as God intends.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 357: December 22, 2020**

**Full Plan: Jude 1–25**

**Abbreviated Plan: Jude 1–25**

Jude’s message is straightforward: don’t be immoral, don’t follow a perverted version of the faith. Those who do are “waterless clouds” (12) prone to prevailing winds. Instead, “keep yourself in the love of God,” (21) which is a good rule to live by today.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 358: December 23, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 1:1–2:29**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 1:1–19**

Revelation 1-2. Everyone has a blind spot: those aspects of character and private behavior that we don’t want others to see. In

these letters to the churches, God first affirms their noble qualities, the ones that are visible to the public, but then also says, “But I have this against you,” and names their faltering faith, their worship of other gods, their adherence to false teachers. Hearing the truth about our private lives hurts, but it’s necessary toward living life as God intends.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 359: December 24, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 3:1–5:14**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 2:1–29**

Of the seven letters to the churches, it’s the one to Laodicea that seems most relevant today. It’s for lukewarm Christians who choose a faith of convenience rather than full commitment. It’s the last letter in the opening of Revelation, and it is the most relevant to us today.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 360: December 25, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 6:1–8:05**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 3:1–22**

Revelation 7:9 is a powerful passage in the book. It is an image of the kingdom of God, in which there is no ethnic or socioeconomic division and there is unity of purpose: to praise God. It is a vision of the church which we can work toward today.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 361: December 26, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 8:6–11:19**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 4:1–11; 5:1–14**

Before “Hunger Games” and “Divergent,” Revelation was the original dystopian novel: a vivid vision of a future that we can avoid if we persevere and resist in the present. It is less about what will happen tomorrow, and more about staying faithful today.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

## **December 20–26 2020: Weekly Devotion by Jay Kuhns**

Wow. This week has been an overwhelming series of messages; warnings about obedience to God and the wrath that could come if we stray from our faith. From the pleadings to focus on love and the teachings of Jesus, then the battle between self-serving and others-serving, we were gently reminded to focus on Christ above all else. The challenge of false teaching in a faith-driven society (fake news?) was again a powerful reminder to focus on the Son of God. These messages ring so true today, that I found myself feeling as if I was reading a contemporary text, not an ancient one.

But then we transitioned to Revelation. What exactly does one make of this book? Are the warnings, the imagery of the lamb, and the horrific devastation that is rained down upon the earth as the trumpets are blown real? Has God offered a glimpse behind the curtain of eternity to see that He is more than willing to come full circle to the time of our ancestors in Genesis, Exodus, and the other early books we read back in the beginning of the year? Or, has the Father signaled something different? If the second coming is truly meant to be something spectacular, these early passages of Revelation certainly get our attention.

Perhaps that attention is exactly what God is counting on as we complete our year long journey? Maybe, He wants us to be absolutely focused on the messages He has sent since the world was created? It just might be that the power and intensity of these early verses are setting us up for something special?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the patience you have shown us throughout human history. Despite our failings, self-

serving behavior, and wandering into a sinful life, you somehow show us mercy when we don't deserve it. Thank you for grabbing our attention, and focusing us on what is most important. Amen.

## **WEEK THIRTEEN (DECEMBER 27–30)**

### **Day 362: December 27, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 12:1–14:20**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 12:1–18; 13:1–18**

Revelation 14:12-13 summarizes the whole purpose of the book: to encourage Christians to stay faithful and for the church to endure, so that at the end of one's life, we can know that our labors were not in vain. It's an everyday epitaph.

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

### **Day 363: December 28, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 15:1–17:18**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 14:1–20**

The Song of Miriam & Moses is thought to be the oldest piece of scripture in the Bible (Ex. 15:21). We come full circle here in Revelation 15:3-4, with the song of Moses, and bowls of wrath that echo the ten plagues. The Bible ends with where it begins, with a reminder of God's power to deliver us from captivity, and make right that which has become wayward and wicked. As we close out another year and look to the one ahead, we would do well to remember that "Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty!" (15:3)

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 364: December 29, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 18:1–20:15**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 20:11–1; 21:1–27**

The final battle! Perhaps we can't help but make some pop-culture connections to Frodo vs. Sauron, Harry vs. Dumbledore, and Rey vs. Palpatine. But let's remember: This is not the Bible's final battle. And the dispensationalists who would want us to believe that the final battle is coming have it all wrong. The Bible's final battle already happened on the cross, and the empty tomb proclaimed the victor. So Revelation is not about foretelling how the battle will end. It's a reminder of who has already won, and how we need to act like it and stay faithful. It's like a football coach telling his team, down at halftime, "Look, fellas. You've already won this game. You just don't see it. Now go out there in the second half and act like it."

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**Day 365: December 30, 2020**

**Full Plan: Revelation 21:1–22:21**

**Abbreviated Plan: Revelation 22:1–21**

Revelation 21-22: The words of the Bible conclude, but the Word of God in Jesus continues as we live out the hope and promise of Christ in the world. "Come, Lord Jesus," indeed. Amen! Happy New Year! And thank you for being on this journey! As you reflect on this Bible Project 2020, what difference has this made in your life? And what of this journey will you continue, moving forward?

What God is revealing to me today, and how I will apply it to my life:

**December 27–30, 2020: Weekly Devotion by Whitney Smith**

Alleluia! We serve the Resurrecting King! The last few chapters of the bible speak over and over of renewal and resurrection brought by God. The Creator has sculpted a new Heaven, a new Earth and a new Jerusalem. Intentions are clear as the Resurrecting King says "Behold, I am making all things new" (Revelations 21:5).

We then receive a glimpse of made-perfect, most-beautiful. When the Creator finishes the masterpiece, what dimensions does it have? What hues? What facets? What is HOLY? God is HOLY. What about people? Well, we all know we are not perfect, but the One on the throne declares, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man." (Revelations 21:3). Where God dwells is HOLY.

How does this made-perfect happen? It is freely given. The new

Jerusalem is brought down from Heaven from God (Revelations 21:2). The water of life is given without payment (Revelations 21:6). We are sons and daughters of God. A new sinless community with God and each other is revealed. The beginning was Eden with an innocent humanity, the end is the new Jerusalem with a redeemed humanity. The text says, "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the city has not need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb" (Revelations 21:22-23) God is the provider, Jesus, the Lamb illuminates the truth of God. God is everywhere. All is holy. The purpose of creation - to be in communion with The Creator is fulfilled! God is making all things new! Amen!







