



# Devotional

Oct. 4 - Dec. 30

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### **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: