



ignite 2021

Rekindle your passion for Jesus
Rekindle your connection with each other
Retool to reach your world

Five Week Devotional

*Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls."
— Jeremiah 6:16*

*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God... for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.
— Paul (2 Timothy 1:6a, 7)*

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— Paul (2 Timothy 1:6a, 7)

I've yet to meet anyone who wants to repeat 2020. Confusion, chaos, fear, distrust; at times, it seemed as if the very fabric of our society is falling apart. Everything left us with a helpless feeling of desperation. We so want to return to "life" again.

What if desperate helplessness is part of the redemptive plan of God to return us, our city, and our world to true life! More than 2,600 years ago, the prophet Jeremiah gave some stark instructions to a people who were missing their sense of helplessness and thus missing true life.

Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads...

Notice, stand by the roads. Not in the roads. Don't jump into the highways and thoroughfares of the crowds. It is filled with throngs of people being thrust to and fro by the whims of the times, spreading opinions, "truth," and thoughts on what to do, but arriving nowhere that lasts. Jeremiahs says to "stand by." Not in.

and look...

Look carefully at what is going on in this time. Notice, don't follow. Look. Observe. Ask questions. But some questions are better than others.

and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is...

At a time when everyone is looking for the "new" — new normal, new cure, new deals, new moralities — we are to look for something ancient. The path that is good. The path that has stood the test of time. The path that has given life amidst centuries of turmoil, chaos, and pain. While others cram into highways, we will search and find the "good way."

and find rest for your souls.”

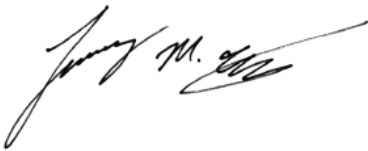
This is what we so desperately need. True rest. True peace. True refreshment. A rest that energizes us for life and our future. Where is it found? Rest is found in the ancient paths.

I believe God is calling Harvest Community Church to Ignite a passion for Jesus that will propel us into a new season of fruitfulness. A season where we can lead with no fear, with power, with love, and with wisdom. In 2021, our 50th year as a church, God wants us to stoke the flames of His Spirit so that we can grab all that He has called us to be. But first, before we Ignite, God wants us to return to some ancient paths. He wants us to find rest.

That is what this devotional is designed to do. To help us Ignite our passion and calling for Jesus by encountering some ancient paths of rest. These are not new things. They have proven to endure the test of time.

They are the Spiritual Disciplines; simple practices that teach us to search and find the ancient pathways of God. When they are fully encountered, a passion for Jesus will grow so hot that revival can't help but explode.

So Harvest, let's stand by the highways these next five weeks and ask for those ancient paths in our souls. Then prepare for God to light a new fire of passion for Jesus, for each other, and for our world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy M. Gwaltney', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeremy M. Gwaltney
Lead Pastor
Harvest Community Church

Week 1

Rekindle Passion by Returning

***Ignite a Passion for Jesus Through
Confession and Silence***

*Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is...
— Jeremiah 6:26a*

The highway is busy. It is bustling, fast, intense, noisy. The highway is full of people jockeying for position, cutting others off in traffic, pushing the speed limit, all to get somewhere. Yes. Highways take us somewhere. But often, they are just taking us "away."

God says "stand... and look."

Don't jump into the busyness, the noise, the intense traffic. Stand. Look. Both are positions of stillness and silence. Often, one of the first places to find God is in the stillness and silence. "One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel helpless..." writes scholar Richard Foster. "If we are silent, who will take control? God will take control, but we will never let him take control until we trust him. Silence is intimately related to trust."

When we stand, when we look we are making room for God to take control in our lives. We are pausing before we take control ourselves in the highways of life.

... ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is...

The way of the highway might not be the right way. The highway might be taking us away, when we really need to return. After all, there is no path more ancient than returning to the Lord. God paved the path for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when He said, "Adam, where are you?"

Returning to God, or what the Scriptures call "repentance," is all about a pathway. It is the confession that God's way is right and my way is wrong. It is me taking a U-turn off of my path onto the pathway of God. It is a choice to follow Jesus. It is a choice best made in silence.

This week we are going to look at the pathway of return by examining the disciplines of confession (or repentance) and silence. Let's prepare to find the good way.

Week One, Day One — Confession to God

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

— 1 John 1:9

Returning to God begins with our confession of total and complete dependency upon Him. I have said many times that the greatest lie of the enemy is to convince you that life is “up to you.” Believing it is “up to me” causes us to grab control, be in charge, determine our destiny, and achieve our goals. Before long, there is no room for God because we are doing it all.

Confession stops the “it’s up to me” lie in its tracks.

Confession declares to God, “I need you... I am hopeless without you... break through in my life.” Confession willingly brings to God anything you are hiding or doing that you know breaks His heart or ways — our sin. It asks God to take the burden of our actions — good and bad — and free our souls from the weight we are not meant to carry.

Take Action: Read the verse above a few times and notice what it says. In the space below write your confessions of your dependency upon God or any sins you want Him to forgive.

Week One, Day Two — Confession to Each Other

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. — James 5:16a

Confessing your need for God is hard enough. Confessing, “I am wrong” to a friend or family member is even harder. God knows this. That is why He encourages us to confess our sins — where we are wrong — to each other. He knows that it is much easier to confess to a God you cannot see than to your wife, kids, parents, co-workers, boss, or neighbors who you see all the time.

God knows that the true power, freedom, and healing comes by confessing to someone who has consequences in your life. He commands it for the sake of your freedom and healing.

Take Action: In the space below, answer the following questions.

Is there something I need to confess to God?

Do I need to go tell someone that I was wrong and ask for their forgiveness? Who?

I will go to that person when/how?

Is there a significant sin pattern in my life I need to take to a spiritual leader and get help?

I will go to them when/how?

Week One, Day Three — Silence

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

— Psalm 46:10

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, [Jesus] departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.

— Mark 1:35

Life is always full of activity. Often, this is good activity. In the verses surrounding “be still and know that I am God” there is a lot of activity — most of it instigated by God Himself. The entrapment of activity is to become so used to it that we forget to stop and listen to the voice of God. This is why learning silence, especially silence in our souls, is so important.

Author Richard Foster speaks of this skill by saying, “Though silence sometimes involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of listening.” Our souls need time to listen. Times to “stand by the road... look... ask” so that God can speak.

Jesus practiced silence. When it was dark, He got up and went to a desolate place to listen to His Father God. Imagine. The perfect Son of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, still needed silence of soul. Let’s practice today.

Take Action: Find a place away from others and set a timer for 15 minutes. In the following space, write your name next to the word “Dear.” Take a moment and pray, “Lord speak to me.” Then wait a moment and begin to write. Just write what comes to mind. Listen to God and write. When you are done, sign it “Love, God.”

Dear _____,

Week One, Day Four — Silence of Jesus at the Beginning

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

— *Matthew 4:1-2*

Yesterday we mentioned that Jesus practiced silence while in His ministry. This was a sustaining connection between Him and God, and Jesus started at the very beginning. Before He started the ministry God called Him to do, He practiced a prolonged period of silence — 40 days. Before Jesus was called to speak, He would surrender and listen.

“The tongue is a thermometer,” writes Foster, “it gives us our spiritual temperature. It is also a thermostat; it regulates our spiritual temperature.” Jesus’ silence was a way of surrendering His words to God. Later, He would call God’s words His bread.

This is why moments and seasons of silence are important. They prepare us for the work God has called us to do. Whether it is 40 days, or 4 minutes, it trains us to surrender to God by surrendering our noise and busyness to Him. It teaches us when to speak and when not to speak. We will see why this is important tomorrow.

Take Action: Find a place away from others and set a timer for 15 minutes. Get quiet and begin to pray. Write down your prayer to God below. Then listen. Write down anything that comes to mind.

Week One, Day Five — Silence of Jesus at the End

*But Jesus remained silent.
— Matthew 26:63a*

Jesus was arrested and accused of false charges. He remained silent. He was brought before the Jewish priests and accused. He remained silent. He was brought before King Herod. He remained silent. He was brought before Pilate. He was silent, for most of the conversation. Can you imagine being on trial for your life, your reputation being assailed, torture and death being on the line, and yet, you say nothing? This is the power of the discipline of silence.

Richard Foster writes, “One of the fruits of silence is the freedom to let God be our justifier... Perhaps more than anything else, silence brings us to believe that God can care for us — ‘reputation and all.’” Jesus remained silent because He was trusting God for His will and outcome.

I think it is instructive to realize that Jesus began His ministry with silence and ended His ministry with silence. He spoke when God told Him to speak. He remained silent when God told Him to remain silent. His silence was the outworking of His surrender to God. The discipline to remain silent was the discipline to surrender.

Take Action: Find a place away from others and set a timer for 15 minutes. Get quiet and begin to pray. Write down your prayer to God below. Then listen. Write down anything that comes to mind.

Week 2

Rekindle Passion by Pondering

***Ignite a Passion for Jesus Through
Meditation and Fasting***

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

— Psalm 119:105

Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

— David (Psalm 1:1a, 2-3)

Assuming we get off the highways, Jeremiah then tells us to stand, look, and ask. There are so many times where we feel ill equipped to face challenges in our life; days when we would love to feel like a prosperous tree planted by the all-satisfying waters of a flowing river. Instead, we often face a languishing reality desperate for a sense of hope. What is the answer? How do we find the ancient path, the good way?

The Word of God is the lamp that lights the path to the “good way.”

David tells us that the person who meditates, thinks about, and ponders the Word of God is like a thriving tree. A tree that bears fruit and prospers in all its ways. When the Scriptures get inside of us we tend to view our life through the eyes of God and are better able to thrive!

Like a tree, we don't grow to thrive overnight in the soil of God's Word. It takes time and intentionality to dig our roots into its rich treasures. That is why David speaks of “meditation.” We take the time to think — ponder — over the Words of God, to understand them, and allow them to fully impact our lives.

The skill of pondering is not difficult, but it is important to know how. We must learn to slow down and read the words. This week we will look at how to “ponder” the Scriptures.

In addition to meditation, we must know what to feast upon while we are walking the good path. We are called to feast upon God. One of the best ways to learn how to feast upon God is with the discipline of fasting.

Writer and pastor, Sam Storms says, “[F]asting is not the suppression of desire but the intense pursuit of it...Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food.”

The purpose of fasting is, in a practical sense, to replace something that we consider a daily necessity (food) or daily source of pleasure (hobby or activity) with an intense focus on God (prayer). It declares to ourselves and to God that He is the greatest pleasure, necessity, and source of life. Fasting is a physical way to declare “we are dependent upon God alone, and God alone is our greatest desire.”

The combination of pondering God’s Word and declaring in a practical way our ultimate delight in Him through fasting will surely prove powerful kindling to ignite afresh our passion for Jesus.

Week Two, Day One — Four Meditative Questions

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

— 2 Timothy 3:16-17

One of the keys to pondering Scripture is to simply understand the context of who is writing it, who they are writing it to, and then what the author is saying. Every word of the Bible had an author who had a purpose for what he or she wrote. Once we enter the world of that author and discover their purpose, we will understand the words of Scripture better.

There are four simple questions we can start with to begin to get at this important information. 1) What does this passage tell me about the author? 2) What does this passage tell me about the reader/audience? 3) What is the author telling his/her audience? 4) What is God telling me?

Take Action: Let's get practical. Ask these four questions of the verse above in 2 Timothy. I will give you some help, the author is Paul and the audience is Timothy, his disciple. Write your answers below.

- 1) What does this passage tell me about the author?

- 2) What does this passage tell me about the reader/audience?

- 3) What is the author telling his/her audience?

- 4) What is God telling me?

Week Two, Day Two — Words to Ponder

Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

— Psalm 1:1a, 2

“Day and night.” That seems like a lot of time to devote to “delighting” in God’s law. But one of the keys to understanding, or meditating, on God’s Word is to SLOW DOWN and read it carefully. Meditation is not a speed reading method. It is intentionally slow so we see what God is telling us.

Today, let’s practice slowing down and reading God’s Word by using the Annunciate It method of reading. Read through the verse below. Each time you read through it ANNUNCIATE the next word in the sentence more than the last word (example: first time, “FOR our sake...” and the second time, “For OUR sake...” etc.). This means for the verse below you will read it 24 times announcing a different word each time.

In the space below write down anything God says to you as you notice the words you are reading.

Take Action: Read this verse 24 times, announcing a different word each reading and then write what you notice below.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. — 2 Corinthians 5:21

NOTES:

Week Two, Day Three — Words to Ponder, Again

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day... How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

— *Psalm 119:97,103*

In a world where there was no sugar, honey was the apex of sweetness! I hope you are starting to taste the sweetness of God's Word in your heart. When we slow down, ponder, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us there are powerful truths that will equip our lives.

Today let's turn again to the Annunciate It method to ponder God's Word. As God speaks to you, write His revelations down in the space below.

Take Action: Read this verse 15 times, annunciating a different word each reading and then write what you notice below.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. — Romans 8:37

NOTES:

Week Two, Day Four — Fasting Food

[Jesus] answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

— Matthew 4:4

I quoted Sam Storms earlier this week when he says, “Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food.” We are dependent upon food. Our bodies can’t go more than a few days, maybe weeks, without it. In our country, we idolize food! How many networks are there to tell us how to cook things we will never cook?

That is why the power of fasting is so real. We lay aside something we both enjoy and depend upon to declare our enjoyment and dependency in God. God honors that investment and uses it to teach us more about Himself.

If you do not fast regularly or are new to fasting I recommend you begin with one of the following fasts today or tomorrow.

- **24 hour Food Fast:** Begin by eating your normal evening meal at night. The next day, skip eating your breakfast and lunch meals and spend the time praying and seeking God. Then break the fast that evening with your evening meal again.
- **Week-Long Fast of a Food or Drink:** Take the week and fast from a favorite food or drink as a sign of your dependency upon God. Example, no meat for the week, or no dessert for a week, or no coffee for a week, etc. Then spend some extra time praying and seeking God.

Take Action: If you haven’t already eaten, begin a fast today. If you have eaten plan to fast tomorrow. Or begin a favorite food or drink fast for a few days. In the space below, write out a few things you will pray for during your fast.

Week Two, Day Five — Fasting Things

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

— *Matthew 6:25b, 33*

One of the biggest distractions on the highway is our stuff. We own so much stuff! And that stuff demands our time and often reinforces the idea that we are self-sufficient. “I have accumulated this stuff, look how amazing I am.” Stuff can distract us from our real need to depend upon God and seek His ways.

Author Randy Alcorn writes in his book *The Treasure Principle*, “We think we own our possessions, but too often they own us.” There are two great ways to escape this ownership and find freedom in God. First, be generous with your stuff. Generosity breaks the control of stuff. If your stuff is God’s stuff and can be given to anyone for any reason on the command of God, it doesn’t own you. The second is to take a break from the stuff. This is another form of fasting.

Consider taking a Week-Long Fast of a Hobby or Activity. Pick a hobby or activity that takes time in your life and fast from it for the week and fill the time with prayer. For example, I love listening to talk radio when I drive. It reminds me of the stuff of sports that I enjoy. Sometimes I will fast talk radio and may even fast watching sports for a while to invest in my dependency upon God. It keeps my stuff and God in right priority order.

Take Action: Pick a hobby, activity, favorite food, etc. and fast from it today. Consider fasting from it next week as well. Then invest the time in the discipline of silence and prayer. See how much God will increase your delight in Him during that time. In the space below write down what you will fast, how long you will fast from it, and what you will pray for during that time of fasting.

Week 3

Rekindle Passion by Dependency

***Ignite Passion for Jesus by the
Filling of and Submission to the Holy Spirit***

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

— Paul (Romans 8:14)

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. —

Jesus (John 16:7)

After heeding Jeremiah's advice to get off the highway to stand, look, and ask, what are we to do when God illuminates the "good way?" We are to "walk in them."

But how? How do we walk the good ancient path without falling victim to the hustle and bustle of the highway again?

The answer is simple. Paul tells us that we are to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus did not leave us to walk the ancient paths alone. He gave us a Companion, a Helper. The Spirit of God dwells in our hearts by faith so that we can passionately pursue the path Jesus has for us.

How important is walking with the Holy Spirit? Jesus says it is to our "advantage" — it is better for us — that we have the Holy Spirit than if He were still physically here walking by our side. The Holy Spirit is vital to igniting our passion for Jesus.

It was a passionate relationship with the Holy Spirit that launched Harvest Community Church — then Zion Chapel — 50 years ago. A passion that ignited revival fires in Goshen. Walking with Him is one of the most critical ancient paths we are called to follow.

This week we are going to spend time investing in our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Let's ask Him to invade our hearts and change our lives.

Week Three, Day One — Jesus' Helper

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

— Jesus (John 14:26)

I used to wonder all the time, “how did Matthew, Peter, and John remember all those teachings of Jesus when they were writing and preaching their Gospels?” Then I realized that Jesus said the Holy Spirit would remind them of His words. Wow! What power. The Holy Spirit helping us to remember what Jesus says and how we should apply those words to everyday circumstances.

I love that the English Standard Version uses the word “Helper” to describe the Holy Spirit. That is what the Holy Spirit does. He helps us in our walk with Jesus. Where we lack the ability to live in grace the Holy Spirit comes and supplies that grace.

Of course, this means that we have to admit our need for help! That is why this week is about dependency. If we are good on our own, if we believe the “It’s up to me” lie, then the Holy Spirit won’t be useful to us. But if we understand our desperation for Jesus and His ways, we will come to Him seeking help and He will provide the Helper, the Holy Spirit to us.

Take Action: Perhaps take a minute and go review Week One, Day One on confession. Before we jump into asking for the Holy Spirit’s help, let’s spend some time confessing our need for Jesus. In the space below confess your need for Jesus as well as any sins you need to bring to Him.

Week Three, Day Two — Asking

*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those
who ask him!"*

— Jesus (Luke 11:13)

We are just a few weeks removed from Christmas time. My wife loves to give gifts, so Christmas is a big deal in our family. Periodically she looks over the purchases, gifts from the relatives, makes a list, and then asks, "What else?" She loves the joy on our children's faces when they open that perfect gift and squeal with glee.

That is the picture of God's heart when it comes to the Holy Spirit. He is so eager to fill your heart with that perfect Gift. Whether you know it or not, you first encountered the Holy Spirit at salvation. He enters your spirit and confirms that you are a child of God. But, the Scriptures also talk about an ongoing filling of the Spirit (more on that tomorrow) and God is so eager for that to happen. All you have to do is ask and God will provide.

Sometimes when people ask the Holy Spirit to fill them, it is dramatic — a moment they never forget. For others it is a still small voice experience that doesn't seem impactful, but later proves to bring tremendous peace and joy in our lives. Whatever the experience you will have today, take time to ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Take Action: Take a few moments and ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Take some time of silence, ask, and then wait. In the space below write down what happens next. Maybe there is nothing, maybe the Spirit will speak to you, maybe there is a sense of peace and joy that is new. Whatever it is, after waiting for a few minutes, write it down. Then take some time to pray.

Week Three, Day Three — Continue Filling

... but be filled with the Spirit
— Paul (Ephesians 5:18c)

Now that you have asked, ask some more. That is what Paul says in this passage to the Ephesians church. “Be filled.” Paul is writing in the first century Greek language. In that language, this phrase, “be filled” has a sense of “be in a place of constantly being filled” by the Holy Spirit. We are to ask regularly to be filled. We are to ask often to be filled.

Why? If the Holy Spirit filled you once at salvation or once yesterday when you asked; why ask often? It’s the same reason healthily married couples daily tell each other “I love you” even though they declared it to each other at the altar on their wedding day. One is meant to be a permanent statement for the rest of time. The other is a present reminder for the every day. The Holy Spirit filled us permanently at our salvation. But He has daily fillings to strengthen us in our present realities.

So ask. Ask again. Ask often.

Take Action: Just like yesterday, take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you for today. Practice a few minutes of silence and then see if He says or reveals anything to you. Take a few moments and write about it below.

Week Three, Day Four — Submission

But be filled with the Spirit... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

— Paul (Ephesians 5:18c, 21)

This might surprise you. But do you want to know what one of the most powerful results of the Holy Spirit's filling is? It's submission. Paul commands "be filled with the Spirit" and then lists a variety of evidences of the Holy Spirit working in your life. The last one, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

This makes sense. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Paul says in his letter to the Philippian Church, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who... emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant..." The Holy Spirit submits to Jesus, serves others, and defers His preferences to glorify God. That is what He will work out in us.

In short, the Holy Spirit works an ever-increasing sense of dependency between us and Jesus. The more we depend on Jesus the more our passion for Jesus grows. That passion for Jesus is always expressed in our love and service towards others. Therefore, as we honor others, we are honoring Jesus. An honor that is empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Take Action: Let's do three things today. First, take a moment to get silent and then ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh today. Second, use the Annunciate It Method of Scripture reading and read the verses at the top of the page 15 times, annunciating a new word each time. Finally, answer the question, "Is there something I need to submit to God or someone I need to honor?" Write down your thoughts and answers below.

Week Three, Day Five — Fruitfulness

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

— Paul (Galatians 5:22-23)

I read these verses wrong my entire life. Every time I would read them or hear someone teach them, I thought, “these are the things I have to do if I love Jesus.” A few years ago I realized, “No! That is the ‘it’s up to me’ lie!” If I have to “do joy” or “do peace” to prove I love Jesus, then I am trying to earn Jesus’ love.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is not a “to do” list! It was so freeing. The fruit of the Spirit are fruit! Fruit is produced from a healthy tree that is being nourished daily. When I am filled with the Holy Spirit daily, submitted to His leadership, and delighting in Jesus; then love will happen, joy will happen, peace will happen! They are the result of a nourishing relationship with the Spirit.

I don’t have to try harder to stay under control when I get angry. I pause. I ask for the Holy Spirit to fill me, I submit, and I follow Him as He produces His fruit in me. As I increase my dependency upon Him He builds these amazing character qualities into my life.

Take Action: Take a little time to think about your day ahead. What fruits of the Spirit do you anticipate needing today? Take a moment to get silent. Now, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and ask Him to fill you with the fruit of the Spirit you need for today. Write about it below.

Week 4

Ignite Joy

***Rekindling a Passion for Jesus by
Delighting In Him.***

... ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. — Jeremiah 6:16

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
— David (Psalm 51:12)*

All paths are meant to go somewhere. The good ancient path leads to “rest for your souls.”

Rest is a powerful reality. How often does a simple nap change the outlook for our day? Or a long weekend change our outlook on life? We were designed for rest and restoration.

David talks about the power of restoration. What two things did he long for?

The first was “joy.”

The joy of salvation. The joy of a loving God who unconditionally loves us. The delight and joy of living in His will. The joy of being free from sin, shame, guilt, and weariness. When we encounter the joy of God few other things matter. That is why the Scriptures say that “the joy of the Lord is our strength.”

Why do we need strength? To continue down the path of the purposes of God! To continue our calling to reach people and build lives. To continue to do all that God asks of us.

The second thing that David longed for was “a willing spirit.” In the stress, weariness, beat-down of life rest and joy restore the willingness of our soul to fight on!

This week we are going to invest in the joy of the Lord. We are going to seek God to be the ultimate delight of our heart and lives. We are going to become the best pleasure seekers of all because the Source of our pleasure is the One who is glorified by our joy.

Let’s restore our souls in the joy of the Lord.

Week Four, Day One — Fullness of Joy

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

— Psalm 16:11

The end of the “good way” is “rest for our soul.” St. Augustine wrote, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

St. Augustine picks up on two key issues in the human heart. First, we need rest. Second, we are restless and will stop at nothing, until we find something to give us rest.

St. Augustine is simply saying that the human heart desires something. We are hardwired to seek delight, fulfillment, joy, and rest until we find it. It is never the pursuit of rest and joy that it is the problem. The problem is where we look for rest and joy. Most of the time, we try to find them on the highway, not the ancient path. But, the ways of the highway leave us so unsatisfied.

C. S. Lewis writes, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable answer is that I was made for another world.” The lack of rest and joy in our world, the highway, means we were meant for something different; something eternal. God Himself is the only one that provides that joy eternally, “pleasures evermore.” Today, we begin a weeklong investment in the joy and rest that is from “another world.”

Take Action: Take a moment, get silent, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Then use the Annunciate It method and ponder Psalm 16:11 above. Read the verse 24 times, and annunciate a different word each reading. Write your thoughts on what the Holy Spirit is telling you below and then pray.

Week Four, Day Two — Joy is a Command

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”
— Paul (Philippians 4:4)*

That is right. Paul commands us to rejoice. When? Always! We are commanded to pursue the joy of God at all times in all circumstances. Why? Because God’s joy is a weapon for us in all circumstances (but that is a topic for tomorrow).

But, Pastor Jeremy, I can’t control my emotions. Well, yes and no. There are ways to bring our emotions to God and submit them to His commands and then pursue His ways of joy until we get the breakthrough we need. So, how do we align our emotions to pursue joy when the “feeling” isn’t there. Pastor John Piper offers the following words of wisdom.

I am often asked what a Christian should do if cheerfulness in obedience is not there. It’s a good question. My answer is not to simply get on with your duty because feelings don’t matter. They do! My answer has three steps. First, confess the sin of joylessness. (“My heart is faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I,” Psalm 61:2.) Acknowledge the coldness of your heart. Don’t say that it doesn’t matter how you feel. Second, pray earnestly that God would restore the joy of obedience. (“I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart,” Psalm 40:8.) Third, go ahead and do the outward dimension of your duty in the hope that the doing will rekindle the delight.

If Scriptures list joy as a command, then lack of joy is often connected to sinfulness. By confessing it to God, we are acknowledging that joy is dependent upon our desperate need for Him and not generated by our attitude or circumstances. Then the true power of lasting joy is unleashed.

Take Action: If you are in a place in life where joy is easy for you, list in the space below reasons you have to be joyful in God. If, however, you are finding joy difficult, take the steps given by Pastor Piper to find restoration:

- 1) Confess the sin of joylessness.
- 2) Pray for God to restore.
- 3) Seek God about an action you need to take to restore joy.

Write about these steps below.

Week Four, Day Three — Joy is a Weapon

*For the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
— Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)*

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
— James (James 1:2-4)*

A keystone of rest is provision. James says we “lack nothing” when we make joy the focal points of our trials. This is why God’s joy is our strength and why it is a weapon. Can you imagine anything more discouraging to the enemy than your ability to find joy in the middle of the worst he can throw at you?

In Acts 16, we read about the reality of this power. Paul and his buddy Silas were beaten illegally for a crime they didn’t commit and then put into prison. Instead of staying in the pit of depression, blaming God for all their sorrow, they sang! They worshipped! They invested in joy!

The result. A miraculous earthquake hit the prison, they were set free, and led the prison inmates and the jailor himself to the love of Jesus. That is a weapon. That is investing in joy. That is the power that intentionally delighting in God can give to you!

Take Action: Are you choosing joy in your trials right now? Take a few moments to begin that process. In the space below, take the following steps.

Make a list of the trials your are facing below:

Make a list of things you can be grateful for:

What is something the Holy Spirit is asking you to do to invest in joy?

Week Four, Day Four — Joy is a Fruit of the Spirit

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy ...
— Paul (Galatians 5:22-23)*

As we mentioned last week, the Fruit of the Spirit is not a “to do” list. It is not “up to you” to manufacture joy. As we surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit and invest in the delight of Jesus, the Spirit produces joy in our heart and souls.

The discipline of delight teaches us how to invest and seek the Holy Spirit for joy in all circumstances. It begins with daily surrendering to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s do that today.

Take Action: Look at the list of trials you wrote down yesterday. Spend just a little time telling God about them.

Take a moment to get silent. Now, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and ask Him to fill you with the fruit of His joy. Write about it below.

Week Four, Day Five — Worship as Surrender

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

— Paul (Romans 12:1)

The modern worship movement in our churches have created wonderful atmospheres where it is easy to get enraptured with the emotional “high” of delighting in God. As awesome as that is, and it is awesome, the true act of spiritual worship is that of surrender. Our declaration that “all I have is yours.” The complete emptying of ourselves so that only God can fill us.

This is where the power of joy and delight come from; total surrender.

And from this surrender, God tells us where to present our bodies (acts of service and sacrifice) for His glory. We delight in following God by doing the actions God gives us to do. As Paul says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Let’s surrender again today.

Take Action: Read the verse above a few times and notice what it says. In the space below, write your confessions of your dependency upon God. Ask God if there is something he wants you to do to serve Him. Ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Week 5

Ignite Connection

***Ignite a Passion for Each Other Through
Community and Service.***

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

— Hebrews 10:19-25

There is one last critical secret to traversing the “good way” of the ancient paths — never walk alone. Lighted by God’s Word and filled with His Holy Spirit, we take our steps with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

“Don’t Hike Alone” and “Always Let Someone Know Where You Are and Are Going” are two frequent warning signs backpackers encounter before beginning a trip. They are important. Following these instructions provide a partner to help you along the way and accountability if you get lost. If trouble comes, there is someone to get you to a place of safety and your ultimate destination.

The writer of Hebrews says “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together...” Walk together. Cheer each other on... “one more step... just over the next ridge... isn’t that view amazing...”. Don’t pull off the path and don’t leave each other behind.

This week we will look at the disciplines of community and service and how they are meant to ignite our passion for Jesus and each other.

Week Five, Day One — Connection to Jesus

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

— Hebrews 10:19-25

Sometimes I get asked, especially by introverts, “why do I need to be in church or see other people?” Well, it is because our connection to each other is a natural outflowing of our connection to Christ. Jesus says that you love Him by loving “one another.” If we want to increase our passion for Jesus we must seek to also increase our connection with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is why the writer of Hebrews says “let us draw near” to Jesus before He says, do “not neglect to meet together.” Drawing near to Jesus results in drawing near to each other.

Take Action: We are going to study Hebrews 10:19-25 this week. Let’s begin by asking our four key questions below to get a good idea of the passage. As a hint, no one really knows the identity of the writer of Hebrews. We also only know that he or she was primarily writing to an audience with a Jewish background. Let’s begin.

What does this passage tell you about the author?

What does this passage tell you about the readers?

What is the author telling the readers?

What is God telling you?

Week Five, Day Two — Confession of Hope

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

— *Hebrews 10:23*

We began our study with the concept of confession. A confession of our utter dependence upon God. Our confession of the places of sin and brokenness in our lives where we do not measure up to God. Our confession that it is not up to me but completely up to God's will for me. This was the confession of humbleness, brokenness, and weakness. A confession that allows God to pour His passion into us.

But there is another confession; a confession of hope! That is the confession we give in confidence that Jesus is our Savior, Jesus does have purpose for our lives, Jesus' ways do work, and we can trust Him even when the "good way" is unclear. It is the confession that God will always prove faithful to us.

Isolation is the enemy of the confession of hope. That is why the author moves from "confidence" in Jesus (v.19), through "confession" (v.23) towards "one another" (v.24). The confession of hope has two great anchors; the person of Jesus and the community of the church. Without both our confession becomes hopeless. That is why our church family is so critical to igniting a passion for Jesus.

Take Action: Take a moment, get silent, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Read Hebrews 10:23 above four or five times, taking some time to think about what it says. Write your confession of hope in Jesus below. Then spend some time praying.

Week Five, Day Three — Encouragement

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...
— Hebrews 10:24*

We followed our week of confession with a week of “pondering.” We took time to invest in God’s Word and to learn how to consider them carefully to fuel our passion for Jesus. But as we ponder and consider God’s Word to ignite the reality of His love towards us, we are to begin to ponder and consider something else; our love for each other.

The writer of Hebrews picks up on this reality. Out of our confession of hope in Jesus we should “consider” how to encourage others to “love and good works.” How can we help our brothers and sisters in Christ to love better? How should we help our brothers and sisters in Christ choose the “good” thing?

Today, let’s take some time to “consider” our connection to each other.

Take Action: Take a moment, get silent, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Then use the Annunciate It method and ponder Hebrews 10:24 above. Read the verse 15 times, and annunciate a different word each reading. Then answer this question, “How can I apply this verse to my relationships today?”

Week Five, Day Four — Gathering

... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

— *Hebrews 10:25*

This is an often quoted Scripture verse. But it is rarely appreciated in its likely historical context. When you read the entire letter of Hebrews, you can quickly discern that church is facing persecution. People who were holding to their confession of Christ were being attacked, ostracized, and threatened. While the letter says that their struggle has not yet led to bloodshed ; physical injury, or imprisonment, the threat of death seems to be imminent.

What does this mean? Gathering was dangerous. Gathering made it harder to go undetected. Gathering invited risk. Gathering could result in bondage, bankruptcy, or even death.

How important is our connection with our brothers and sisters in Christ? Even in these dire circumstances, the writer commands them not to neglect “meeting together.” The community connection that binds us to the confession of hope is that important. Isolation kills eternally. The family of God keeps you on the eternal “good way.”

Take Action: Take a moment, get silent, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Read Hebrews 10:25 above four or five times, taking time to think about what it says. Then answer the following questions.

Why is meeting together so important?

What do you think “all the more as you see the Day drawing near” means?

How are you connecting with your Spiritual Family right now?

How can you apply this verse to your life?

Week Five, Day Five — Service

*The greatest among you shall be your servant.
— Jesus (Matthew 23:11)*

As we close our study, we should consider one last ancient path; service. The Last Supper was the foundational commissioning event of Jesus. Here, He stooped like a slave and washed the feet of the disciples who would abandon Him a few hours later. He served them. He loved them. At this hour, He would humble Himself to wash their feet. In a few hours He would hang on a tree do die for them.

Slaves had no rights. Slaves were dependent upon masters for their survival. Slavery was a life of desperation. While encouraging His disciples to love one another, Jesus' actions identified Him in the posture of a slave.

Our passion for Jesus is ignited by our sense of desperation. Serving our fellow, sinful humans is the posture of desperation. "I will serve you the way Jesus served you." I will live out my desperation for Jesus by serving others in love. Put your passion into practice and consider how you can begin to serve anew your fellow followers of Jesus.

Take Action: Take a moment, get silent, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Then use the Annunciate It method and ponder Matthew 23:11 above. Read the verse 8 times, and annunciate a different word each reading. Then answer this question, "How can I apply this verse to my life?"