

***Daily Devotions***  
***August 23<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>***

***Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> – Active Faith***

***Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.*** James 1:27

Sam's father had to flee for his life during a military coup. With the sudden loss of income, the family could no longer afford the crucial medicine that kept Sam's brother alive. Seething at God, Sam thought, what have we done to deserve this?

A believer in Jesus heard about the family's troubles. Finding he had enough money to cover the medicine, he bought a supply and took it to them. The life-saving gift from a stranger had a profound impact. "This Sunday, we will go to this man's church," his mother declared. Sam's anger began to subside. And eventually, one by one, each member of the family put their faith in Jesus.

When James wrote about the necessity of a lifestyle of integrity accompanying a profession of faith in Christ, he singled out the need to care for others. "*Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food,*" James wrote. "*If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?*" (2:15–16).

Our actions demonstrate the genuineness of our faith. Significantly, those actions can influence the faith-choices of others. In Sam's case, he became a pastor and church-planter. Eventually he would call the man who helped his family "Papa Mapes." He now knew him as his spiritual father—the one who showed them the love of Jesus.

**Challenge:** Do something for someone else today. Random act of kindness!

***Prayer***

*Faithful God, help me to live out my faith in You. I want the way I serve others to honor You. Amen!*

## ***Tuesday, August 24<sup>th</sup> – Accessible to All***

***Faithful God, help me to live out my faith in You. I want the way I serve others to honor You.***

Matthew 7:14

From a manmade bridge on the small Caribbean island of Eleuthera, visitors can admire the stark contrast between the roiling dark blue waters of the Atlantic and the calm turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea. Over time, storms washed away the original strip of land once marked by a natural stone arch. The glass window bridge that now serves as a tourist attraction on Eleuthera is known as “the narrowest place on earth.”

The Bible describes the road that leads to eternal life as narrow “*and only a few find it*” (Matthew 7:14). The gate is considered small because God the Son is the only bridge that can reconcile fallen man and God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14; see John 10:7–9; 16:13). Scripture also says that believers from every people, nation, and societal rank can enter heaven and will bow before the King of Kings and worship together around His throne (Revelation 5:9). This phenomenal image of contrast and unity includes all of God’s beautifully diverse people.

Though we’re separated from God by our sin, every person God created is invited to enter eternity in heaven by walking this narrow path of reconciliation through a personal relationship with Christ. His sacrifice on the cross, resurrection from the tomb, and ascension to heaven is the good news, accessible to all and worth sharing today and every day.

***How can you be more intentional about sharing it with others?***

### ***Prayer***

*Father, please empower me through Your Holy Spirit so I can show others the accessible path that leads to Your approachable Son, Jesus. Amen!*

## *Wednesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> – Listening Matters*

*I will listen to what God the Lord says.*

Psalm 85:8

“Come at once. We have struck a berg.” Those were the first words Harold Cottam, the wireless operator on the RMS Carpathia, received from the sinking RMS Titanic at 12:25 a.m. on April 15, 1912. The Carpathia would be the first ship to the disaster scene, saving 706 lives.

In the US Senate hearings days later, the Carpathia’s captain Arthur Rostron testified, “The whole thing was absolutely providential. . . . The wireless operator was in his cabin at the time, not on official business at all, but just simply listening as he was undressing. . . . In ten minutes maybe he would have been in bed, and we would not have heard the message.”

Listening matters—especially listening to God. The writers of Psalm 85, the sons of Korah, urged attentive obedience when they wrote, “*I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him*” (vv. 8–9). Their admonition is especially poignant because their ancestor Korah had rebelled against God and had perished in the wilderness (Numbers 16:1–35).

The night the Titanic sank, another ship was much closer, but its wireless operator had gone to bed. Had he heard the distress signal, perhaps more lives would have been saved. When we listen to God by obeying His teaching, He’ll help us navigate even life’s most troubled waters.

Prayer

*Father, help me to stay close to You in my thoughts, words, and actions.  
Please use me as Your servant to bring Your hope to others. Amen!*

## ***Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup> – Love Disciplines***

***Do not despise the Lord's discipline.***

Proverbs 3:11

When I took a family studies class a couple of years ago, we were asked to write a “family history”—a record of the key events that make up one’s childhood. This included the patterns that characterized typical family life and the methods of discipline we experienced. We all had at least one instance of a parent misapplying discipline and leaving an emotional or physical scar. Understandably, traumatic experiences like these may affect the way we interpret our heavenly Father’s discipline.

In Proverbs 3:11–12, the wise teacher invites readers to accept God’s discipline. The word discipline could be translated “*correction*.” As a good and loving Father, God speaks through His Spirit and the Scriptures to correct self-destructive behavior. God’s discipline is relational—rooted in His love and His desire for what’s best for us. Sometimes it looks like consequences. Sometimes God prompts someone to point out our blind spots. Often, it’s uncomfortable, but God’s discipline is a gift.

But we don’t always see it that way. The wise man cautioned, “*Do not despise the Lord's discipline*” (v. 11). Sometimes we fear God’s discipline. At other times we misinterpret bad things in our lives as God’s discipline. This is far from the heart of a loving Father who disciplines because He delights in us and corrects because He loves us.

Instead of fearing God’s discipline, may we learn to accept it. When we hear God’s voice of correction in our hearts or experience conviction when reading Scripture, may we thank God that He delights in us enough to lead us to what’s best.

How do you recognize God’s discipline? How do you sense the love of God in the midst of it?

### ***Prayer***

*Father, help me to recognize Your discipline so that I can discover the freedom You offer. Amen!*

## *Friday, August 27<sup>th</sup> – Fearless Love*

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*      1 John 3:14

There are some images so powerful they can never be forgotten. That was my experience when I viewed a famous photograph of the late Princess Diana of Wales. At first glance, the captured scene looks mundane: smiling warmly, the princess is shaking the hand of an unidentified man. But it's the photograph's story that makes it remarkable.

On April 19, 1987, when Princess Diana visited London's Middlesex Hospital, the United Kingdom was in the midst of a wave of panic as it confronted the AIDS epidemic. Not knowing how the disease—which often killed with terrifying speed—was spread, the public at times treated AIDS victims like social outcast.

So it was a defining moment when Diana, with ungloved hands and a genuine smile, calmly shook an AIDS patient's hand that day. That image of respect and kindness would move the world to treat victims of the disease with similar mercy and compassion.

The picture reminds me of something I often forget: freely and generously offering the love of Jesus to others is worth it. John reminded early believers in Christ that to let love wither or hide in the face of our fear is really to live “*in death*” (1 John 3:14). And to love freely and unafraid, filled and empowered with the Spirit's self-giving love, is to experience resurrection life in all its fullness (vv. 14, 16).

When are you most prone to let fear stifle your love for others? How can you grow in experiencing and sharing the Spirit's boundless love within those fearful places?

### *Prayer*

*God of love, You are love, and to live in love is to live in You. I long to live with that kind of fearless, joyous love. Fill me with Your Spirit, and carry me ever deeper into Your love, until fear dissolves and Your love flows freely through me.*

## *Saturday, August 28<sup>th</sup> – God’s Love is Stronger*

*Love is as strong as death.*

Song of Solomon 8:6

In 2020, Alyssa Mendoza received a surprising email from her father in the middle of the night. The message had instructions about what to do for her mother on her parents’ twenty-fifth anniversary. Why was this shocking? Alyssa’s father had passed away ten months earlier. She discovered that he’d written and scheduled the email while he was sick, knowing he might not be there. He’d also arranged and paid for flowers to be sent to his wife for upcoming years on her birthday, future anniversaries, and Valentine’s Day.

This story could stand as an example of the kind of love that’s described in detail in Song of Songs. *“Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave”* (8:6). Comparing graves and death to love seems odd, but they’re strong because they don’t give up their captives. However, neither will true love give up the loved one. The book reaches its peak in verses 6–7, describing marital love as one so strong that *“many waters cannot quench it”* (v. 7).

Throughout the Bible, the love of a husband and wife is compared to God’s love (Isaiah 54:5; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 21:2). Jesus is the groom and the church is His bride. God showed His love for us by sending Christ to face death so we wouldn’t have to die for our sins (John 3:16). Whether we’re married or single, we can remember that God’s love is stronger than anything we could imagine.

How do you feel knowing how much God loves you?

What reminds you of His love for you?

### *Prayer*

*Jesus, Thank You for loving me so much! Remind me of Your love each day and give insight to realize just how strong Your love for me is. Amen!*

## *Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup> – Extending Grace to Others*

*God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.* Acts 4:33-34

Bob and Lucy's spent the early years of his life in a children's home prior to their adopting him. Before leaving the cinderblock building together to go home, they asked him to collect his belongings. Sadly, he had none. They tenderly exchanged the clothes he was wearing for the new items they had brought for him and also left some clothing for the other children. Even though they were grieved by how little he had, they rejoiced that now they could help meet his physical and emotional needs.

A few years later, the family saw a person asking for donations for families in need. Their now adopted son was eager to donate his stuffed animals and a few coins to help them. Given his background, he might have understandably been more inclined to hold tightly to his belongings.

I would like to think the reason for his generous response was the same as that of the early church: "*God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all*" that nobody in their midst had need (Acts 4:33–34). The people willingly sold their own possessions to provide for one another's needs.

When we become aware of the needs of others, whether material or intangible, may God's grace be so powerfully at work in us that we respond as they did, willingly giving from our hearts to those in need. This makes us vessels of God's grace as fellow believers in Jesus, "*one in heart and mind*" (v. 32).

How's God's grace at work in you?

What could you share with others as a manifestation of His grace?

### *Prayer*

*Father, Thank you for all You have given to me, including Your grace. Help me to extend Your grace to others. May our Grace filled lives be the difference. Amen!*