

Renew Series Week 5 Devotions

Our devotions for the coming week were written by Terran Williams who is a youth pastor in Cape Town. Each day you will be inspired to become more passionate as a follower of Jesus. Remember we learnt on Sunday that champions know their optimal zone of intensity and get into it quickly to deliver their best performance - so the more passionate you are, the more God will be able to use you to grow His kingdom!

DAY 1: ETERNAL BENEFITS. DON'T SETTLE FOR STALE BREAD.

HEAR:

A man once sailed in a ship across the sea. He could only afford the ticket so when everyone went to meal times, he sat alone, eating stale bread. When they arrived at their destination, the captain asked him, 'Why did you never come to meals? They were part of the price of the ticket.' This story reminds us of so many people who think trusting in Jesus only provides a ticket to heaven. To be a Christian means we have great benefits in this life too.

READ:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. (Romans 8:14-17) Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow - not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below - indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

THINK:

If we trust and follow Jesus, what happens? We receive the Holy Spirit (v14). He is the presence of God who comes to live in us. We receive a brand new identity as a child and heir of God (v16,17). We don't need to be fearful of rejection from God ever again. We know who we are because we know whose we are. We receive an invitation to enjoy God as our loving Father (v15). We can now relate to him as Abba (which means 'Dad'). We receive the promise that God will never stop loving us, no matter what (v35-39). These are incredible promises. Sadly, many Christians either forget them or struggle to believe them. This sounds like the story of the ugly duckling that just didn't seem to fit in with the other ducks, until it found out it was really a beautiful swan. The discovery made it spread its wings and fly for the first time! Let's use our meal ticket and start eating from God's table. Let's use our wings and begin flying on God's promises.

LIVE:

Do you believe these promises? Has your faith been based on your changing feelings or on the unchanging facts of God's Word?

PRACTISE:

Write down 3 things you remember from the session today and 1 thing that you can do this week to stay on fire for Jesus.

DAY 2: THE END. SNEAK PREVIEW?

HEAR:

Ever watched a sad movie that you knew would end well? Knowing that things will get better helps you get through the painful parts. The Bible allows us to glimpse the end in order to help us get through our present trials. On 11 September 2001, the Twin Towers in America collapsed, killing thousands. On 9 December 2004, a giant Tsunami killed 200 000 people. On 12 January 2010, an earthquake in Haiti added yet more deaths to the number of those killed by natural disasters. What catastrophes? It made millions ask, 'When's the world going to end?' Let's see what Jesus taught about the end...

READ:

Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?" Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come. "Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:3-14) For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. See, I have warned you about this ahead of time. "So if someone tells you, 'Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,' don't bother to go and look. Or, 'Look, he is hiding here,' don't believe it! For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near. "Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world - from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven. (Matthew 24:24-31)

THINK:

Jesus teaches us about the end of the world. He gives 10 signs (v5-14) including false Christs and false prophets, worsening wars, natural disasters, many Christians being hated and some Christians even losing their love for God because of the increasing evil in society. It's all happening! The end is coming closer. One unexpected day, Jesus will return in full glory and power to end the world as we know it. Those who have rejected him will mourn (v30), but his own people will be gathered to him (v31). We don't know when it will happen, but one thing we're sure of is this: we are closer to the end today than we were yesterday. Wow! We need to learn how to live with the end in mind. We should heed the Bible when it says, 'Fix your eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen for what is seen is temporary and what is unseen is eternal.'

LIVE:

Practically, how can you fix your eyes not on what is seen and is temporary, but on what is unseen and eternal?

PRACTISE:

Think back on your day and write down 1 situation where you needed to show up with greater intensity; and 1 situation where you needed to lower your intensity to be your best self or give your best performance.

DAY 3: CHURCH. WE'RE FAMILY.**HEAR:**

If you take a burning log from the fire, it soon dies out. It needs other pieces of wood to keep burning brightly. In the same way, our passion for God dies out if we try to follow Jesus alone and don't connect with a church that loves God. In heaven the headlines are not about politics or movie stars. They're about what's happening to God's Church all over the world. The Church is God's family. It exists to reflect him and his message in the community it's placed in. It's not a building or a meeting. It's people. We belong not only to God, but also to each other. The Christian life is about togetherness. No lone rangers allowed! Let's take a look at church at its best:

READ:

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41-47)

THINK:

This story tells us how to be the Church. Devote yourselves to being taught and living out God's Word. Do everything you can to understand and obey the Bible better together. Build strong relationships. Don't only go to meetings; get into each other's homes and lives. Break bread together. Eat bread and wine/juice together, remembering Christ's death (see 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Pray to and praise God together. Draw close to God together, expecting him to reveal more of himself and his ways to you. Care for each other. Try help each other, especially the hurting. Draw in outsiders. Keeping God to ourselves is selfish, so share your faith with others, inviting them to come along to certain gatherings. Don't give up. Every church is an imperfect bunch of people connected to a perfect Head, Jesus. He gives us the grace to not be critical of leaders and each other. He wants us to be part of the solution not the problem.

LIVE:

What experience have you had of church? Do you know of a church that is like this in some way? What's stopping you from joining in?

PRACTISE:

Think of a task you need to get done today, what do you need to do to have the right level of intensity for the task? It will help if you do the breathing exercises that we learnt: **(1) Tactical breathing:** You can tone down your intensity by drawing air in through your nose down into your stomach and then letting it out through your mouth. **(2) Power Breathing:** You can turn up your intensity by taking air in quickly through your nose and letting it out through your mouth.

DAY 4: THE HOLY SPIRIT. WATER, ICE, GAS.**HEAR:**

H₂O can exist in three different ways (water, gas, ice) and yet be the same substance. In the same way, God reveals himself to us in three ways: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19). There's only one God,

not three. Mysteriously, he is all three at the same time. Let's look at the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes to live in us when we become Christians. A sailing boat needs wind or else it will not move. The Holy Spirit is the wind in the sails of each Christian life:

READ:

It is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

THINK:

Who is the Holy Spirit? He's called "Counsellor" (v7) which means comforter, strengthener, advisor and helper. He's also called "the Spirit of Truth" (v13). Why is he given to us? He's Jesus' replacement (v7). Jesus could only be in one place at a time, but through the Holy Spirit, he can be with millions of people at the same time. That's why it's good that Jesus went back to heaven (v7). What does he do? He can convince non-Christians to turn from their sin towards God (v8-10). He helps us understand the truths in the Bible (v13). He communicates the will of God to us (v14). He leads us to worship and glorify Jesus (v14). He allows us to experience God's wonderful grace (v15). That's why knowing and obeying God is impossible without the Holy Spirit! Thank God for this wonderful friend and gift!

LIVE:

In what ways have you been aware of the Holy Spirit's activity in your life? Pray for more of his activity in your life.

PRACTISE:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be able to use the **Park it and Refocus** skill we learnt on Sunday. When something happens in life you need to learn to Park It (let it go) and then Refocus on what needs to be done next. At an appropriate time you can go back and think things through. You should give yourself 5 seconds before you move on. You could say to yourself: "That play is done, now I need to park it and refocus on the next play." This increases our level of concentration.

DAY 5: THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. SHINE!

HEAR:

If someone plays an unplugged electric guitar in a big hall you can hardly hear it. But if you plug it into a big amp and turn up the volume, it can entertain thousands. God wants to take our little lives and to plug them into the power of his Spirit. That way, our impact in this world will be so much bigger than if we tried to do it in our own strength.

READ:

Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. (Acts 1:4-9) On the day of Pentecost all the

believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. (Acts 2:1-4)

THINK:

God promises us a gift (1:5), the Holy Spirit. When we are saved we are born of the Spirit (John 3:5). But he also wants to baptise (1:5) and fill us (2:4) with the Spirit, where we experience his presence and power in a very real way (v2:2-4). Why? So we'll have power to be his witnesses (v1:8). He wants us to influence people with his power, not with our own cleverness and determination. Who will we influence? God wants us to share his passion for people. God wants to use us to begin impacting people where we are, and then send us to people in other places. We must be willing to go (v1:8). How does he fill us? Jesus, in John 7:37-39 tells us we need to come to him, thirsting for him, and asking him with simple trust, to be filled with His Spirit. Once we've been filled, we must keep on yielding control to the Spirit, staying plugged in day after day (Ephesians 5:18).

LIVE:

Have you been filled with the Spirit? Have you sensed him using you in supernatural ways? Do you feel God's call to be part of his global mission? Are there any church mission trips you can join in on?

PRACTISE:

We learnt on Sunday that we need to maintain high levels of intensity in our relationship with God. The Bible challenges us to Love God with all of our heart, mind and strength and keep seeking after him. Remind yourself in the coming days to love God more intensely than ever before!

DAY 6: WORK. WATCHING ME PLAY.

HEAR:

Ted was a talented soccer player who played really poorly. His father never watched him. Then his father died. Curiously, he started to play really well. He never missed practices. When his coach asked him what had changed he said, "Now that my father is dead, he may be watching me play – I don't want to let him down". Let's read about how God, our heavenly Father, watches over us, and how this should inspire hard work in us.

READ:

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. But if you do what is wrong, you will be paid back for the wrong you have done. For God has no favorites. Masters, be just and fair to your slaves. Remember that you also have a Master—in heaven. (Colossians 3:17, 22-4:1)

THINK:

In those days, up to half of the known world were slaves. So most of the Christians were really poor. They lived on hand-outs from the wealthy masters. They felt unmotivated to work. Without a vision for their work, they felt used by their 'masters'. Even today, our work and duties can sometimes feel like slavery. But as Christians we can learn to please God in our work. How should we do work in a God-pleasing way? Do everything with God's help and for God's glory (v23). God wants to help you develop your knowledge and skills. Do it for God, not people (v23). Don't focus mainly on pleasing people (like bosses, lecturers or teachers). Please God first. This will push you to work hard when no one, except God, is looking (v22). Put your whole heart into whatever you do (v23). The way to success is hard work. However overworking doesn't please God either (see Psalm 127:1-2). Work towards a vision (v24). Ask God to help you have a

vision for your life and work wisely towards it. A great vision will inspire great sacrifices, which will result in great rewards. Don't abuse power over others (4:1). God wants equal opportunity for all. That's why Christians led the way in ending slavery a long time ago.

LIVE:

Would you say you're a hard-worker? How can you be motivated to work harder? Alternatively, how can you make sure you don't overwork? What are some of the dreams you believe God has given you to pursue?

PRACTISE:

As you hang out on Friday night or prepare for the weekend, thank God that you had the strength and health to work this week and ask him to help you rest well on the weekend.

DAY 7: WORSHIP. MAKING MUSIC.

HEAR:

God enjoys being enjoyed. "The Father seeks after worshippers" (John 4:24). We worship God because we can confidently access God through Jesus and the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). Worship is our total devotion to God because of who he is, all he's done and all he still will do. Worship is not just singing once a week with other Christians. It's loving and being in awe of God throughout the week. Worship is the heartbeat of a Christian. It's also the pathway to real peace, joy and power.

READ:

Sing a new song to the Lord, for he has done wonderful deeds. His right hand has won a mighty victory; his holy arm has shown his saving power! The Lord has announced his victory and has revealed his righteousness to every nation! He has remembered his promise to love and be faithful to Israel. The ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. Shout to the Lord, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy! Sing your praise to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and melodious song, with trumpets and the sound of the ram's horn. Make a joyful symphony before the Lord, the King! Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the earth and all living things join in. Let the rivers clap their hands in glee! Let the hills sing out their songs of joy before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with fairness. (Psalm 98)

THINK:

Why worship God? Because He is a holy (v1), righteous (v2), loving and faithful (v3), King and Judge (v9). He has done marvellous things (v1) – like saving people, revealing himself, creating the sea, rivers, mountains and everything! How should we worship? Worship God with your mind by filling it with thoughts of God from the Bible. Worship him with your heart by shouting for joy and bursting into song (v4). Worship God with your body by clapping, dancing and, if possible, making music (v6-8). Lastly, worship God with your will by giving everything to him as your King, starting with yourself. "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy Name!" (Psalm 103:1). Worship is the one thing we will do forever. God wants us to learn to worship him even when we don't feel like it, because he never changes. If we put this into action, we will soon discover that worshipping God brings greater satisfaction than anything this world offers.

LIVE:

Are you a worshipper? How can you worship God more on your own? And with others?

PRACTISE:

On your way to church tomorrow morning, remind yourself that you are going to connect with God and worship him. During worship ask God to help you worship Him with a level of intensity that you have never experienced before.