

# YOUTH

*A 30-Day Devotional*

**FINDING FAITH**

**DISCOVERING IDENTITY**

For Every Girl

For every young woman that has found herself looking for hope.  
This devotional is for you to find that hope in the arms of our Savior  
~ WIW Youth Leadership Team

## Day 1

Being Faithful In a Faithless World  
Written By: Kayla Walker

***“Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked...They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind...They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. And they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children. But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin...When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”***

***Psalms 73: 9-18, 21-25, 27-28***

There was a time when I was like Asaph. I knew that God was good to others, but I didn't think he was good to me. While I was trying to live right and struggling to get by, it seemed like people who were living recklessly were being blessed. It appeared as though I was getting nothing. I almost missed God's goodness because I was too busy envying others around me. I worshipped, prayed, and studied my bible more, and then I began to realize that I was envious of people who would soon self-destruct.

Eventually, I understood the meaning of Psalm 73. It means that I am more blessed than those who are "wicked" and prosperous. I am blessed with God's goodness, which has been right in front of me all along. I am blessed with the privilege of being able to enter God's presence where He can reveal all my mistakes to me.

I finally understand that if I acted like my peers, I would have done an injustice to God and His people. My lifestyle can't match theirs because I'm not like them. God didn't build me to walk the same path as them. ***In Proverbs 14:12 it says, "There's a way of life that looks harmless enough; look again—it leads straight to hell" (The Message Bible).*** As I continue to walk with Christ, this passage encourages me to stay committed to His way and not the world's way.

In a generation where everyone wants to be rich and famous, where posing nude on Instagram is acceptable, where matching cars and Jordan's are "goals," and where reality shows are on every channel, it's hard to be "good" and live a life that pleases God. It's even harder to please God when it seems like "the wicked," or those who dishonor God, are constantly being rewarded. Meanwhile, those who do well go eerily unnoticed. Most of our generations' role models appear to be blessed while doing whatever they want without consequence. These celebrities who live so carelessly are our examples because they are so visible, and we tend to mimic them, even if we don't agree with how they live.

Despite what society's depiction of "being cool" is, God's version of "being cool" is much better. Stay encouraged, stay focused, but most importantly stay committed to God!

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, thank you for this day. I am thankful for another day to do Your will. Please help me to never get tired of being an Asaph. Help me to remember, that while it may look like the wicked are in first place now, they will ultimately lose the race when it's all over, unless they turn to You. Guide my steps, and keep me close to You. Allow me to be a blessing to someone. Guard my heart, give me wisdom, and help me to extend grace always. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen!

## Day 2

### More Precious Than Rubies Written By: Chante Truscott

Women are constantly faced with pressures on how to look, how to act, and how to speak. Television, movies, and other forms of media attempt to educate us on what an “ideal” woman is. Precious time, energy, and space are given to accomplishing the perfect look, the perfect walk, and the perfect hairstyle. Unfortunately, most of us sacrifice individuality for the sake of perfection.

We don't understand that we are perfectly imperfect. Our flaws and our weaknesses are what make us beautiful. God made us each to be one of a kind and a designer's original. There is no formula for perfection because God is the only mathematician that can take the mess of our pasts and create something as beautiful as us. It's important for us to understand that what has happened to us and what we have endured is what speaks to the core of who we are. Television cannot replicate what God has so masterfully created.

#### ***Proverbs 3:15 She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her***

As a masterpiece modeled from the hands of the Master, there is nothing that even comes close to who you are.

Don't allow what popular culture has come up with to override the care God used to create you. Your worth does not lie in the curve in your back or the fullness of your lips. Your soul is what makes your priceless. Physical beauty holds merit but anything that can decrease in value based on the way it looks never supersedes the ability your soul has to increase in its worth.

The closer you get to God the more precious you become. Just as the precious metals that are refined in the highest heat garner the greatest price. Something can be so valuable that there is no amount of money that can buy it. There is no value that can be assigned to it because that currency has not yet been imagined.

Perfection is something we strive for but it must be done in your lane. You can only be a perfectly flawed version of yourself. What makes stones so precious is because of the different sparkle that each one emits. The sparkle that comes from them is indicative of the area where they were created. No stone is like the other but it still remains beautiful in its own right. It does not take after another beautiful stone, but it basks in the beauty of its uniqueness.

The time that is put into trying to replicate who someone else is or what they have can be put into mining for your own beauty. You can take your experiences and see the scars they left or you can see how close they pushed you to God, creating something more precious than rubies. Had you not endured the pain of your past experiences you would not be able to withstand the process of seeing your sparkle shine.

Pray this prayer with me: It's okay for me not to look like everyone else, walk like them, or talk like them. They didn't create me so that don't determine my value. What I have is incomparable, invaluable, and priceless. I am far more precious than rubies! Amen.

### Day 3

His Word Is His Bond  
Written By: Marsha Pope

***So shall My word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to Me void. But it shall accomplish what I please; and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.***  
***Isaiah 55:11***

When I was growing up, I remember being told, if you tell someone you're going to do something do it because: your word is your bond. Over the years I've really tried my best to live by that principle, particularly when it comes to those I have a relationship with.

I do my best to keep my word because I understand no one wants to be in a relationship with someone they can't trust. Promising to do something or giving someone your word but failing to honor it, undermines trust and tears away at the very fabric of the relationship. Trust is the hallmark of any relationship and if you've ever talked to someone who has "trust issues", they're often rooted in the painful experiences they've had with someone who gave them their word but didn't follow through on it. What they were promised never came to pass. Broken promises affect our earthly relationships as well as our relationship with God. The enemy would love nothing more than to take the pain and hurt you've experienced in your past and use it to make you believe that you can't trust God.

Our relationship with God must be built on a foundation of trust and in order to trust Him, you have to get to know Him and knowing Him means knowing His word.

God's word is His promise to us and Isaiah 55:11 He reminds us that every word that goes forth from His mouth shall not return to Him void.

God doesn't make empty promises. If He has given you a word on something, you can trust Him. Stand on the word He's given you knowing that His Word is His Bond.

Pray this prayer with me: Father, you know that it's hard for me to trust at times but thank you for being the one who I can always trust. You never break your promises to me and I believe that whatever word You have spoken over me shall come to pass. Lord, I give my trust issues to You and I ask you to give me the grace to stand on Your word and to trust You more and more each day.  
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Day 4

Return to Sender

Written By: Chanell Hill

***For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation  
Psalms 149:4***

Whore, thot, unwanted, ugly, fat , b\*\*\*h, lazy.....you may have been called these negative words or more by a family member, a guy who you may have rejected on the street, or an enemy. However, this is NOT who you are! When a package comes into the mail that doesn't belong to you, it is likely returned to the post office. The post office indicates it has the wrong name and/or address, stamps "return to sender" and sends it back. My beautiful sister, when someone calls you by a name other than the government name your parents named you, return it back to the sender. I don't mean call them a name back, but don't internalize that name. I know being constantly called out of your name can be hurtful especially if it's by someone close to you. It can come to a point that you may actually begin to believe you are that negative name.

STOP!!!

Sister, you are more than what they have called you. You are nothing less than who God wants you to be. You are not a negative word, but you are BEAUTIFUL, CHOSEN, KIND, SMART, and IMPORTANT!

Hidden Gem of Wisdom: Being called negative names hurts, but don't let the hurt cause you to react negatively and treat another sister the same way. Hurt people hurt people. Ask God to free you from hurt and forgive those who may have called you out of your name.

Pray this prayer with me: God thank You for the name You've given me. I may have been called a mean name but God help me return that name back and walk in the names you have given me.

## Day 5

### Identity

Written By: WIW

Doctor, Lawyer, Mother, Minister, Wife, Addict, Sister, Best Friend

Titles make life easy. They help us identify the positions people hold in life. Titles give us the standard that we should hold a person to. We wouldn't expect a doctor to go into a courtroom and argue a legal case and we would not hold an addict to the same standard as we hold a CEO to.

But what happens when we use those titles to place worth on the individuals that do or don't hold them? What happens when we esteem the doctor over the addict, or the wife over the sister? What does that tell either individual? We tell them that based on what they or don't do determines their worth and what's more important is their title instead of their identity. We teach people how to treat us based on how we treat ourselves. And if we allow what we've done or what we do to set the stage for how we should be treated, we have already done a disservice to the One who's created us. We've forever identified ourselves by our actions instead of the substance of who we are.

As a teenager, it was difficult for me to ever think about being whole: mentally, emotionally, physically, or spiritually because the only thing I had never known was being broken. I didn't know what it felt like to achieve wholeness in spite of the titles I held. I let those achievements replace true healing. I had not wrapped my mind around the concept of my identity because I had settled for titles instead. I hadn't realized that a title was what people called you but your identity was what you answered to.

The definition of identity is: the fact of being whom or what a person or thing is. I had not disconnected who I was from what I did so I thought that's the identity I had to carry. I missed that what God had to say about me was true regardless of what my titles said or even what my actions said.

I hadn't taken to the time to study **1 Peter 2:9 that says *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.***

***I didn't understand 2 Corinthians 5:17 that teaches *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.****

I couldn't grasp ***Ephesians 4:24 that reads *And to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.****

It took surrendering what I did to realize who I was. When I stripped away all of the titles, the labels people had given me and the ones I placed on myself to leave me with my heart. Who I was on the inside was the one that is beloved by Christ, chosen for His enjoyment, and a member of His family (among other things). I am the woman that God loved before He formed the world.

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, Your words are always greater than your actions! I want to live in who You say I am. Amen,

## Day 6

Perfecting Our Speech  
Written By: Laneice McGee

***The tongue is a fire, a world of evil. Placed among the parts of our bodies, the tongue contaminates the whole body and sets on fire the course of life, and is itself set on fire by hell.***

***James 3:6***

Internal bleeding, if left untreated, can cause your whole body to dysfunction, shock to occur, damage to your brain, and even death.

In James 3:6 we see that one of the smallest body parts has the influence to speak life or death. We must not underestimate the power of the tongue, for those things we take lightly, we don't address carefully but those are the things that need the most attention.

How has what I've said contaminated someone's perception of themselves? How has what I laughed at, or gossiped about deterred a wicked world from knowing a Resurrected Savior? Sharing that post or responding that way on social media, was it good for God or did it complicate my witness? These are questions we must ask ourselves. Contamination is dirty, unclean and can be hazardous to everyone around it. To get rid of contamination there are different steps we may have to take.

- 1) Get by ourselves (***Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.***) We need to pray without distractions and ask for God to show us our heart and reveal anything that is not like him, ask him to (***Ps. 141:3***), "***Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.***"
- 2) We must admit we have a problem & need help (***Hebrews 4:15-16 "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."***) We cannot address what we will not confront.
- 3) We need to flee, when we are weak (***1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."***) I am sure you have heard, if you don't have anything nice to say, they don't say it at all. If it means you send that gossiping tongue to voice mail, then reject that call, if you have to deactivate some social media accounts, remove yourself from certain groups, then do so, it's that important to flee.
- 4) We need to get our squad (***Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.***) Birds of the same feather flock together, well get your prayer warriors and your accountability partners and confront that which can ultimately destroy you. Together we can do more, so don't allow shame or guilt keep you from getting your close & trusted squad together, develop a game plan and relentlessly pursue a life of righteousness for his name sake.

Pray this prayer with me: Dear Heavenly father, I am thankful that life and death is in the power of my tongue, please give me the wisdom to use my words to bring life and edify your people. Help me lord to speak of myself and others as you see us and not as I wish they would be. Help me lord to restrain and have self-control over the fruit of my lips. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Day 7

You're So Beautiful  
Written By: Chanell Hill

***So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.***

***Genesis 1:27***

"...You're so beautiful. I want you to know..." When God created us, He created us in His likeness. Nothing about God is ugly or deformed, everything about Him is good. Therefore you, my sister, are good! Don't let anyone tell or allow you to feel less than because you don't meet their personal beauty standards.

Who are they compared to HE?

It doesn't matter how dark, light, short, tall, skinny or fat you think you are. In God's eyes you are perfect. As God's creation, He is well pleased with your freckles, gap, glasses, bow legs and/or kinky hair. When feelings of worthlessness or little value arise, remember that God created you with a good reason in mind. You are so valuable to Him. Don't stress yourself try to live up to society's twisted beauty standards. Take pride in who God created you to be.

Hidden Gem of Wisdom: I was teased a lot as a child for my gap in my teeth. If my mother would have let me, I would have gotten braces. It took me a while to love my smile. However, I'm so grateful I didn't change it because it is now one of my biggest assets.

Pray this prayer with me: God help me to love everything about me, the way You do. Amen.

## Day 8

More Than A Conqueror  
Written By: Secilie Jones

***“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ “Behold, all those who were incensed against you Shall be ashamed and disgraced; They shall be as nothing, And those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them— Those who contended with you. Those who war against you Shall be as nothing, As a nonexistent thing. For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’”***

***Isaiah 41:10-13***

I used to wonder why it was me that had to go through certain storms. It was as if I was in the middle of a tornado, and there was nothing but mayhem around me. Some things weren't happening directly to me, but it was happening to those around me. However, the things that were happening to me were tearing me down! I never knew why it was I seemed to always have a harder time in life than others, until recently. I finally realized that God had chosen me and placed a high calling on my life. Everything that had or has happened, to or around me has built me up. I never expected to overcome certain situations, but God had another plan. God took me through those storms, but He never left me. Every time I felt weak, He was holding me up. With every path he made clear, my faith increased. When I look back I can't help but to think if I made it out of foster care, having a drug addicted mother, no father, having a baby at 18 with no help from the father, going to jail, and being homeless, I know I can conquer anything! I may have stumbled more times than I count, but he NEVER let me fall.

***“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Romans 8:37***

God is a loyal father and because of my faith in Him, I know I don't have to worry about tomorrow. I appreciate my storms, and the fact that they've made me into the woman I am today! I've heard it preached many times that the enemy attacks to destroy our seed/next generation and because of my experiences I know this to be true. However, God says in his word, ***“But in that coming day no weapon turned against you will succeed. You will silence every voice raised up to accuse you. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the LORD; their vindication will come from me. I, the LORD, have spoken!” Isaiah 54:17***

I'm a conqueror for my daughter's sake. You are a conqueror because of what God has placed inside of you-your seed, your purpose, and the Holy Spirit. Remember, ***“You are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.” 1 Peter 2:9-10***

Pray this prayer with me: Father God, I love you. I trust you. Whichever road you send me down I know that you'll be with me because said in your word that, "You will never leave me nor forsake me." I pray that you continue to have your way and use me as YOU see fit, Lord. I thank you that every battle is already won, every city is already conquered, and that everywhere I go I am blessed. Amen.

## Day 9

American Idol  
Written By: WIW

***“You shall have no other gods before me”.***  
***Exodus 20:3***

The nation was taken over by the phenomenon that is known as American Idol. This is a competition that places singers one against another to achieve a great prize at the end. The uniqueness of this competition is that the public is able to vote for their favorite contestant. So, the winner may not necessarily be the best singer but the person who is most liked by the voters.

When God gave the children of Israel the Ten Commandments, He was giving them direct laws of how to live their lives in order to honor Him. These laws are ingrained in the Christian faith today. The 1<sup>st</sup> thing that God outlined to them that they should not have any other gods before Him.

The same holds true for us today. God should be the center of everything we do. Nothing should take God’s place in our life. During bible times, they would build statues and bow down to them. Today, people do worship other gods and give reverence to them. But God is concerned with His children that worship other things in a way that only belongs to Him

When God blesses us with material possessions we should understand that we worship the Creator and not the creation. God may not be the favorite among the world but He is the best thing that has ever happened to us. His laws are representative of His love for us. He wanted to be in covenant with us and anytime that happens, the instructions must be outlined.

God places things on this earth for us to enjoy but never to be worshipped. Our worship is reserved for the One, true, and living God. We owe all to Him and our praise is not exempt from that. Keep things and people in their proper place, beneath the Father.

Pray this prayer with me: Father God, you know us better than we know ourselves. Thank you for blessing us in the natural and we promise to honor you with those gifts. Nothing and no one is above you. You sit high and look down low, cleanse us of all unrighteousness and help us to use our things to bring glory to You.

In the Matchless name of Jesus We Pray, Amen.

Day 10

Selfish

Written By: Shukriyah Thomas

***1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me. 3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying a fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord."***

***Jonah 1:1-3***

Has God ever given you specific instructions? Have you ever disobeyed those instructions? How long did it take you to make a decision to do what God has asked you to do? Have you ever been like Jonah and ran?

Many of us have been in Jonah's position and have disobeyed God's specific instructions. We've tried, unsuccessfully, to divert our attention to other places, people, and things in an attempt to push God's instructions and our calling to the back of our minds. But, have you, while you're running, thought of all the people your gift is supposed to save? When God gives us instructions to minister to someone, it's never about us, but about the glorification of our God. Jonah didn't want to deliver the message that God gave him because he knew that God would be gracious to the people and forgive them. Are you selfish with grace, too? Have you ever been in a place where God has nudged you to minister to someone you've ministered to on several occasions, but no matter what you do or say, it doesn't seem like they'll change? If they don't change, they don't deserve grace, right? So, why waste your time going to pray for or minister to someone who's a repeat offender, especially when you know God will be gracious to them and let them "off-the-hook"? But, if they're repeat offenders, what are we? And if they don't deserve grace, why should we?

Pray this prayer with me: God, help me to be obedient to your commands. Place love and compassion in my heart for the people you've created, and help me to love them as I love myself. Thank you for your grace and mercy. Thank you for the gifts you've given me. Help me to not be selfish with my gifts or with your grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## Day 11

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Written By: Ashley Love

***Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven't stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you'll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul—not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us. God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He's set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating."***

***Colossians 1:9-14***

I never knew that God wanted me to pray for others or even carry out miracles he once performed. I knew God always had a plan for my life, but I never knew what my life plan consisted of. I knew God wanted me to first be Stalwarts (loyal, reliable, and hardworking) follower of his word. He wanted me to start getting to know him for myself. God wanted us to have a one on one connection. By studying closer I realized that God wanted all of his children to obtain all that he has for us. God wants us to deliver people and do all the works he once and still continues to perform.

Nothing that God does or promises his children disappears. It always stays the same like his love does. It grows and helps us to grow alongside it.

God wants us to believe in him and teach others to believe in him as well, but not only believe spread the news to others.

In Numbers 14:20-24, God is saying he sees how we treat him. He sees how we act like he hasn't done over and beyond for us. Once he shows us what he needs from us it is our responsibility to deliver. We cannot hide from God nor erase the plan he has set for our lives. The people who follow him faithfully and are loyal stalwarts will begin to understand and be able connect with him. God will give us whatever we need as long as we follow him diligently.

God has a plan for all of us it is only our decision whether we walk out or road map, or try to avoid God. "God organizes and holds everything together, like a head does a body."

The head contains the brain = your brain sends signals through a neurotransmitter to tell everything in your body what to do, without a head you don't need a body nor can you have one."

Pray this prayer with me: God I thank for giving me this word so that it can be a blessing unto someone's life. I pray that this message not only blesses someone but also that it encourages someone to get to know Christ better. I also pray that this word will help others better understand who they are and what you have given to them. In Jesus name I pray Amen.

## Day 12

Lose Control

Written By: Katherine Kopp

***“How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.”***

***Habakkuk 1:2-4***

All my life I have been someone who thrives when I have control of the reigns. The less control I have in a situation, the more anxiety I feel. I grew up in the church and one of the first verses you learn in Sunday School is ***Jeremiah 29:11 which says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.”*** I know. I get it. I believe it in my heart to be True. However, I can’t handle not knowing EXACTLY what those plans are. Well, I take that back, I can’t handle it on my own and neither could a man named Habakkuk.

This verse shook me to my core! In a society where injustice, lies, violence and wrongdoing are thriving I’ve found myself praying similar prayers. These things, violence and destruction, are displayed in the news and media all the time, but consider these things in our relationships and personal lives as well. Habakkuk is experiencing emotions such as desperation, frustration

The very beginning of the book of Habakkuk is complaining. is Habakkuk praying, and hurt. I know I’ve had my fair share of those feelings as well and have asked God “How long, O Lord!?”

Next the Lord does something that’s so special and so vital to our faith. He responds. He heard Habakkuk’s cries and complaints and he communicated back to him. ***Habakkuk 1:5 says, “Look at the nations and watch – and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.”*** When I first read that verse, I had no idea what God was planning for Habakkuk, but I was ready! I was excited! I knew whatever God had in the works was going to be good and would bring Him glory at the end of the day. This verse might mean things we are going to enjoy and look forward to, but they may also be scary and things we didn’t put in our 5 year plans. That’s okay, though! It’s okay, because as Christians, we have faith, and part of that faith is built on the understanding that God’s got things in store for us that we could not have dreamt, if we stay in touch with Him.

Communication is the key in all things: relationships, professional, social, sometimes even private. (Admit it, you talk to yourself sometimes!) God understood that Habakkuk was human and sometimes he would feel frustrated, desperate and hurt. He kept talking it out with Habakkuk until Habakkuk was at peace with His answers. When the Lord equipped us with the Holy Spirit, he equipped us with many things but one of the most special is the relationship between man and God that the Holy Spirit allows. Habakkuk was a prophet, so he was one of the blessed souls to experience the Lord first hand before Jesus Christ came along and ultimately, the Holy Spirit in the way we, as Christians, have received.

I challenge you, Sister, to talk to God in the same urgency that you talk to your best friend. Did something make you laugh? Tell God about how you found it joyful. Did someone hurt your feelings today? Tell God about the situation and ask him to reveal to you *why* that hurt you. Are you confused

about something? Tell God what's going on and be expecting his answer. I tell you the truth: "God is going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told."

Pray this prayer with me: "Heavenly Father, thank you for the situation that I am in. Thank you for Your Word so that I may use it to light the way to Your will for my life. May I be curious and caring like Habakkuk, enough so that I may hear You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 13

Gossip Girl

Written By: Tomi Jenkins

***Don't judge, so that you will not be judged.***

***Matthew 7:1***

During my junior year of high school, my friend's other close friend began to sit with our friend group at lunch. Originally, she was very friendly and funny, but once she became well acquainted with the four of us, she showcased a different side of herself. Every day she would sit at the lunch table, and gossip, criticize, judge, degrade, and belittle everyone in our grade; she even subtly made fun of us, her only "friends," but she never saw fault in herself. But after I found out that she identifies as a Christian, I asked her why she felt the need to put herself in God's place, and told her that making fun of people for anything— especially something out of their control— is a sin.

***"If we examined ourselves truly, we would not be examined by God. Yet when we are examined by God, we are disciplined so that we won't be doomed with the rest of the world (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)."***

No one is perfect, except God and Jesus. And because of this, we cannot criticize others in vain. Just to make it clear, Jesus is not against constructive criticism; but if you continuously "pick apart" others, on Judgment Day you will have to answer to God as to why you put yourself in his position.

Sometimes we justify our wrong doings, just to make ourselves look and feel better. Instead of putting down others, we should pray and ask God to place his love for everyone inside of us. When we make fun of people, we are not treating them how Jesus would. ***"There's no one living without sin, not even one (Romans 3:10)."*** So the next time you or someone near you is about to gossip, ask "what would Jesus do?", and do the right thing.

Pray this prayer with me: God, examine my heart and my motives. I want my life to be pleasing to You. Amen.

## Day 14

### What's Within?

Written By: Tanisha Williams

I remember walking through my college campus one night feeling out of touch with myself. Even though I was surrounded by so much beauty, I was empty inside. I walked to my favorite part of the campus and sat in a nearby gazebo. Instantly, my eyes filled with tears. I was overwhelmed because I did not know how to handle being a minority student. I did not understand why God had sent me to this place. I asked God what was my purpose and why was I here? My life made no sense. I was attending one of the top universities, but I felt invisible to everyone around. I was starting to feel invisible to God. I would pray and He would remain silent. I sat in that gazebo for at least an hour--just sitting and thinking. By the end of the night, I came to the conclusion that this school was not for me.

I will never forget that night of my freshman year. ***Psalm 46:5 says "God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at the break of day".***

God's power is within each of us, God provides us with His wisdom to help us make sound decisions that will eventually lead to the fulfillment of our purpose on this Earth. Once we fully commit ourselves to God, He will not allow us to fail. I was never invisible to God. Even when I tried to leave the university, something within my spirit tugged me to stay. I discovered that there was a reason why God had placed me at that particular school. I decided to trust God's plan entirely, even though it did not make sense at the time.

Never compare where you are to someone else. God has strategically laid out a path specific to each of us. Every experience that we go through helps build our character. In ***Psalm 46:10 God says, "Be still, and know that I am God"***. Because God is within us, He will help us along the way. However, we must allow God to do His job. Once we place our concerns and anxieties in His Hands, we cannot take them back. We can't allow God to be the driver one day and the passenger the next day.

Throughout my undergraduate years, I often went back to that same gazebo. I would pray to God, read the Bible, and just sit in His presence. The whispers of the wind would bring me comfort, and God's silence became more peaceful each time. Sink yourself in God's love and surrender every area of your life to Him. God will not fail, but you have to be courageous enough to take that journey with Him.

Pray this prayer with me: God, I know your power is within me. I am not a failure, because you won't allow me to be. Get me out of your way so you can do what only you can.

## Day 15

### Girl Talk

Written By: Chante Truscott

The company that you keep says a lot about you. As you mature, you will begin to understand what friendship truly means. Friendship has no universal meaning because everyone defines it differently. My definition of friendship can be totally different from someone else's. However, we all must determine what our friends represent in our lives. In the judicial system, someone can be convicted of a crime because they are guilty by association. This is true in regard to the positive and negative characteristics of your friends. True friends are those that hold you accountable and make you a better person.

Friends are gifts from God. ***Proverbs 27:17 says "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another"***. Clay cannot sharpen iron because it is too soft. If hot iron is placed against clay, the clay will melt and the remainder of the clay will be stuck to the iron.

Just as with any other relationship, friendships should bring out your best qualities at all times. When you need advice, you should be able to call your friends and trust that the information they are giving you is valuable because they love you and want the best for you. One of the worst feelings in the world is to feel that you are being a friend but do not feel that they are being a friend to you. Your friendships should help you grow into the woman that God created you to be. They should nurture and help you cultivate the gifts that are inside of you. Encouragement is the key when you are stepping into a new chapter of life and beginning to do things differently. As you grow, your friends should grow along with you.

You cannot expect to soar like an eagle if you are hanging around a bunch of chickens. Chickens are not created to fly; they are yard birds that are raised for a sole purpose of being devoured by someone else. Eagles fly at an altitude that is stifling to those that are destined to be in that area. Eagles are birds of prey while also being so rare that they are prohibited from being caged. Chickens cannot become eagles, they will always be chickens. As you begin to fly to new heights, you will encounter other eagles. You have the choice to make: remain on the ground with the yard birds or to accept your destiny and fly like the eagle you were created to be.

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, help me to evaluate the people I call friends. If they aren't friends of yours, they can't be friends of mine. Amen.

## Day 16

### Fear Factor

Written By: WIW

Have you ever wanted to do something so badly but as soon as it was time to go through with it, you found yourself paralyzed by fear? Not just a little scared but genuine fear that you could not overcome! You become stuck between the fears of what the future will bring but fed up with what the past has not done.

I have experienced this same kind of fear. I was so drawn to my destiny that I could not stay away. But at the same time, each attempt I made at walking forward was matched by two steps backward because I was afraid of the unknown. The future was attractive but it was unknown and foreign. The past wasn't so great but it was comfortable, I knew all about it. I could predict what would happen and I had pretty much mastered my emotions when it came to disappointments. I couldn't be let down about the past because it was just more of the same.

This makes me think of that old show Fear Factor: where the contestants have to go through a series of obstacles in order to achieve the ultimate prize at the end. The prize could change their life as soon as they receive it. But the catch is they have to complete all of the challenges quickly and effectively before the next/person or team does. In other words, they have to be first at conquering their fears and doing things they have never done before. Their fear cannot be a factor if they want to win the prize.

God had filled my plate with things to do for Him and I wanted to do all of them to the best of my ability.

But I was afraid.

I was afraid to let Him down. I was afraid of what I wasn't capable of doing. I was afraid of not representing the Father well. I was afraid that I wouldn't have the right answers. I was afraid that I would mess up God's plans. In short, I was afraid to fail.

I knew there was a promise for me if I could just get past the fear of not living up to my own standards of greatness. Not only was I keeping myself from His promise, I was also slowing down and deterring the promises He had for others through what He told me to do. He led me to this scripture: **2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (KJV).**

That was a big SMACK in the face. God has not given us a spirit of fear and here I was walking around with that very spirit. So if it didn't come from God it could only come from one another place. Fear is a trick of the enemy to keep you bound to your past. If he can convince you that the future is too scary or unknown, he has you right where he wants you: DOING NOTHING!

What have you put off? Not because you don't want it but because you are afraid of what you don't know?

Don't let God's work go undone because of fear. He has already established a plan; all you have to do is trust Him.

Prayer this prayer with me: Help me to kill the fear of the enemy with the truth of your love, God. Amen.

## Day 17

Simon Says  
Written By: WIW

I'm not sure if they play this game today but when I was younger there was a game called "Simon Says". In this game there would be several players and 1 "Simon". Simon would give instructions that would lead the players to the finish line. If the players followed the instructions they could win the game. The catch was you could only do the things that "Simon" said, so if an instruction was given without the phrase "Simon says" at the beginning, the players were not supposed to move. But most of the time, the players would get so excited to get to the finish line that they overlooked the fact that "Simon" may not have said. If that happened, the player or players who didn't follow "Simon's" instructions would have to start all over.

***Proverbs 16:20 "Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD".***

The truth is that God gives us instructions all of the time. He tells us who to speak to, who to let go, where to move, who to marry, and when to do it all but we aren't always listening. And even when we do hear God, we aren't always happy with the instructions.

Do you trust God enough to pass up what/who God rejects?

One phase of a relationship with the living God is hearing His instructions. We have to take the time to get our ear tuned to hear from Him. You have to be able to silence your surroundings or God will do it for you. Sometimes, God will speak to you loud and clear but for those times when He is a still, small voice you have to be able to listen for His voice.

***John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me".***

After you hear from God, you HAVE to heed His instructions and follow Him. Without obeying what God says you cannot call yourself one of His. We get ourselves into lots of trouble because we don't wait for God to say and when He does, we only do what we think is best.

Life is not a game, it's a process that always has a purpose. If God tells you to do something, as His child, you have to obey no matter how painful it is. Telling God "no" cannot be an option. When you fell in love with Him the only response you left yourself with was "yes" and "amen". If you don't listen to God's voice how will He know that you are His?

His sheep can hear His voice and they follow it. Are you waiting to hear what God has to say?

Pray this prayer with me: Father, I want to only obey your instructions as I listen to your voice. Help me to focus my life on you. In your Son Jesus' name we pray. Amen

## Day 18

Released

Written By: WIW

We hold on to the things and people that cause us the most pain and disappointment. The boyfriend who breaks up with us. The friend who abandons us. The past that we cannot change. We hold on to them so tight that the only way to get rid of them is to have someone pry our claws off of them.

Why do we always want to stay attached to those things that hurt us more than help us? **1 Samuel 18:1** ***And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.*** Soul ties are real!

In the scripture, Jonathan and David are friends. Their souls were knitted together because of the essence of what friendship should truly be. There is a covenant or connection that comes through friendship. When you get into a relationship with someone, you are entering into covenant (agreement) with them. So when things go bad, you have to disconnect yourself before you can move on.

But it can be difficult when you have established a tie with someone or something. Even when we get hurt or disappointed, our soul still wants to hang on.

This is why God wants to be first in your life so He can lead and guide the decisions you make. He will lead you to the man He wants you to date. He even wants to dictate the friendships you make. Everything that God does has a reason and a purpose; He doesn't let anything get wasted.

So if you are struggling with whether a relationship has a purpose in your life, earnestly ask God to reveal it to you. If He says no, ask Him for the strength for it to be removed. Dead weight holds you back from the purpose and promise God has for your life.

Think of it this way. You are trying to run a race while pulling 100 additional pounds of weight. It is possible for you to finish the race but it will take you longer to get the finish line and you will be more tired than if you didn't have the additional weight. Negative soul ties add the weight behind you, while positive soul ties pull you forward.

What are you holding on to that should have been released a long time ago? Is it your childhood friend who doesn't want to see you change for the better? Or is it your romantic relationship with a counterfeit?

Whatever it is, let it go. Your destiny is waiting!

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, if there is something that I am connected to that keeps me from being connected to you, I don't want it. Amen.

## Day 19

Ride or Die

Written By: WIW

We all have times in our lives that are moments that dictate whether we move forward or lose everything we have worked so hard for. Those moments are break or make moments and they define the path we take to get to our destiny. One choice to say yes or no can propel you into your purpose or leave you wandering through life with no direction.

***Esther 4:14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and they father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?***

The story of Esther is blueprint of a woman choosing God over her fear of uncertainty. He said it so she did it!

Everything that happens in our lives is preparation for a divine season later to come. God never allows your experiences to be wasted. There will be a time where you will have to buckle down and use what God has taught you to live for Him or die doing nothing.

Choosing to do nothing is making a choice.

How many times have you sat back and thought "If I would have just done this or not done that, things would have turned out differently?" When you choose to live your life for God, you choose to go all out in serving, loving, and worshipping Him. Choosing to just blend in with the crowd is no longer an option for you. God will not allow you to be comfortable in the abyss of nothingness.

Lots of times we find ourselves not giving God a real yes because we don't want to stick out from a crowd like a sore thumb. We love Him but we want to be comfortable, choosing to shrink back rather than step up. But we only have two choices when it comes to God: Ride or Die!

Being for God means you are against those things that He is against. There is no in between. Everyone has to die but where you spend the rest of eternity is tied to the choices you make while you live. You cannot say you love God but fail to give Him a real yes!

His will always comes to pass; He doesn't need you to do that. But when He chooses to include you in His plans your answer should always be "Yes God, I'm riding with you". Do not choose to die with the regrets of the choices you make.

Pray this prayer with me: God , You have come to give me a more abundant life and choosing to ride with You gives me access to that. I'm grateful for the sacrifices You made for me. Amen.

## Day 20

### Emergency Exit

Written By: Chante Truscott

When unexpected things happen in your life, you are left with very few choices. There are not many things you can do when you aren't prepared. You are left to sit and complain or put a plan into action. The problem that most of us have is that we have a poor response.

Calling 911 signifies that there is a problem that is outside of your control. Emergency situations can cause for emergency matters. If your house is on fire, I would think that you would not sit there and do nothing watching your most prized possessions go up in flames. You would take action by calling 911 for help and doing everything in your power to save what you can.

***Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.***

Planning our lives out is human nature. We want to know how and when we are going to accomplish things and we make life goals. There is much care given to these plans and putting them into action. We even have options A, B, and C to those plans.

But what happens when your plans completely go up in smoke? Where is your emergency exit? What do you do when none of your plans work?

What happens when God changes where you thought you would be, who you thought you would be with, or how your life would be?

You don't have time to worry or complain because trusting God is more important. You need Him to give you the tools you will need to be the best you can be. It may not be part of your plan or on your timeline but when you serve God, all you need is an emergency exit. I see mine, do you see yours?

Pray this prayer with me: God you have always been faithful and I know you won't stop now. I love the way you take care of me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## Day 21

Yes! I am WORTH it!

Written By: WIW

***Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?***

***1 Corinthians 3:16***

Life is not always peaches and cream. Every day is not going to be a good day and that's okay. Lots of times we are under the impression that if bad things happen to us then we must be bad people. When people abandon us we might feel that we are the problem, that we just might not be loveable. Or maybe you're thinking that it was your fault that they didn't appreciate you or that you did something wrong to cause them to hurt you. But that is not so! You are valuable to God, no matter how people treat you.

We have to make ourselves aware to the tricks of the enemy. All he comes to do is steal, kill, and destroy. He wants to steal your worth, kill your hope, and destroy your future. He doesn't have to ability to create anything but he can and will imitate the word of the Lord. He will try to convince you that your past has forfeited the blessing of your future. The devil will even stoop so low and tell you that you deserve to be treated poorly because of how you were raised or because someone violated you in the past. He might even try to condemn you for the things that God has already forgiven you for.

The influx of women who are settling to be baby-mama's and side chicks have fallen for the lies instead of being patient for the truth.

The truth is, you are worth it!

When you come to God with a sincere heart and ask for His forgiveness, He answers those prayers....no matter what you've done in the past. Yes, He is a just God and there will be punishment for our sins but He is also a God of love. He died on the cross in order to give you a chance at a new life. You don't have to continue to be who you once were. Your life is not even about what you've done it's about what He did for you.

The devil wants you to believe that once you've been a sinner that you always have to be a sinner. A sinner settles for the punishment while the redeemed fight for their grace. They make sure to live a life that's worth the ultimate sacrifice that God made for them. Don't accept what the devil throws at you, God said you were worth fighting for.

Dying to yourself daily means dying to thoughts that are contrary to what God says. You have to bring those things that don't come from God under submission. He gave you the power to overcome because you are worth it. You're worth waiting for, you're worth fighting for, and you're worth saving! Not because I said so, but because God says so.

Don't value yourself by what happened to you, what was done to you, or what you did. When you realize the plans God has for you and the grace He has already provided for you, it changes the way you see yourself.

Pray this prayer with me: I don't mind waiting for God's best because I know you are of the same quality. I am worthy of the best of everything God has for me. It is so!

## Day 22

Sticks and Stones  
Written By: WIW

Have you ever been able to trace back a situation or person in your life because of something you said? Are you now in a predicament that you created with what came out of your mouth? Did you put yourself in a bind because you couldn't control what came out of your mouth? The words that you speak define what kind of person you are. Words are expressions of our thoughts.

All of our words have power, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. Even when you apologize for saying something you shouldn't have and you apologize, that's asking for forgiveness for the offense but it doesn't change what was already said. The best thing to do is to think before you speak, you can't let emotions rule your life and let your mouth get you into a situation that your spirit can't handle.

***James 3:11-12 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.***

The nastiest words flow from some of the most beautiful vessels. What we fail to realize that what's in you eventually makes its way to the outside. So if trash is coming out of your mouth, that's what is truly living on the inside of you. We assume that because we go to church and praise God on Sunday that we have free reign to say whatever we want the rest of the week. But fresh water and salt water can't flow from the same spring, it's just not possible.

Being made new is about having your nature changed, that what's inside of you is so pure that it flows from your mouth. If you speak dirty, you are dirty! We have blurred the line so that it makes it easier for us to live with one foot in the kingdom and one foot out. But take a quick survey over your life and determine where you belong. Just by the words we speak we can get a good idea of where we are. Are you speaking death and destruction over yourself? Do you speak negativity over every situation in your life? Is cursing your only form of communication? We remove the opportunity for God to work because we keep Him out with our words.

The old saying "Sticks and stone may break my bones but words can never hurt me" is far from the truth. Not only can words hurt you, they can kill you. What we allow to live through our words can ruin our lives and the lives of those connected to us.

The same power that you used to create the situation can also be used to end it. You don't have to be a prisoner to what your words gave birth to. The only way to fight a lie is with the truth, you can kill that deception with transparency. You have a choice of what you're going to be. A fresh spring only produces fresh water; there should be no other option!

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, I surrender my words to you. I belong to you and so does everything I do and say. Clean me up. Amen.

## Day 23

Mirror, Mirror  
Written By: WIW

Mirror, mirror on the wall...who's the fairest of them all?

The way we view ourselves dictates our behavior and what we attract. A woman who seems to have all the confidence in the world can internally be struggling to accept who's looking back at her in the mirror.

How is it that our choice of entertainment is contrary to what we say that we believe? Each and every day we are struggling to fit in and be accepted and we say that bothers us, but we "enjoy" shows and music that further demean our actual beauty. Could it be that our so-called "entertainment" feeds something inside of us that we should be killing? Why do we consistently choose entertainment over empowerment when it's clear that we need an abundance of the latter? We have chosen to ignore why our palette prefers entertainment instead of encouragement. Ignorance is not bliss!

We have allowed "reality" TV and the Billboard Top 100 to dictate what sexy and feminine means to us. We can't ignore that what we see on our television is being reenacted in real life. Phrases like "no new friends" have permeated through an entire culture, so do we dare believe that the similarities stop only at the words? NO! Take a long look around you.

***Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.***

There's a lot of energy being put into trying to pluck fruit off a tree that needs to be totally uprooted. We can trace a lot of our issues back to not accepting, embracing, and loving ourselves; but if we aren't willing to change what we plant, things will remain the same. If you want something to survive, you feed it and if you want something to die, you starve it. There is no coincidence that a large amount of what's being broadcast on the radio and on television is receiving ratings through the roof. It confirms what we already feel about ourselves. You cannot grow beauty when you plant ugly seeds, it's not possible. Does what you take in reflect what you want to come out?

As women, we have to do a better job of speaking life to our sisters and killing those stereotypes that keep us from loving that woman in the mirror. Choose your "entertainment" wisely and ensure that it's awakening the beauty inside of you and not piling another brick on top of your head. Your spirit could use the CPR and so could someone else's. Take the time to turn off "Basketball Wives of XYZ", "Love & Hip Hop of Wherever", and "Scandal" and use that time to empower another woman. It sounds so simple but does so much.

Pray this prayer with me: I really want to see change in the world. I know it starts by being it. Lord, give me the power to be the difference I'm looking for. Amen.

## Day 24

### No Counterfeits Allowed

Written By: WIW

A counterfeit only fools the people that are looking at it but the owner knows that it's not the real thing. The other day I was admiring a nice handbag that someone was carrying, she told me that she would put me in touch with the person she purchased it from. She said it wasn't the real thing but it was close as you could get. I was immediately turned off because I didn't want to buy something to fool someone else when I knew it wasn't authentic. Even if I could save myself time and money, I would rather wait until I could afford the real thing. A penny spent on the fake is too high a price to pay. Why invest in a knock-off when you can have the real thing with a little hard work and discipline?

Sometimes we see things we want but instead of doing the work and having the faith to get His best for us, we settle for whatever we can get with the least amount of effort.

We let our feelings getting in the way of our waiting because it's too painful to wait for something that you think may never come. So instead, we become satisfied with that which is not authentic. But we have to face the reality that God is doing to do some things in His own timing and it's not up to us to look to the counterfeit to bring us comfort. You don't get to throw your dream away because God hasn't given it to you yet.

Times have changed and our expectations have changed right along with them. Settling for whatever you can get has become the name of the game. We don't have the patience to wait for the best so we accept whatever "right now" brings. That may mean taking something that belongs to someone else or forever staying with Mr. Right Now. What we fail to realize is that settling for the counterfeit comes with its own set of consequences. A counterfeit is a poor representation of the real thing. It only looks the real thing but it really isn't. It won't serve the same purpose in your life that the real thing does.

When you try to rely on the counterfeit, it will reveal its true nature. It was never built to do what you needed it do, it only looked like it could withstand the pressure. What I reap from one area doesn't replace what I'm supposed to reap somewhere else. You can't keep those frenemies around and expect for them to give you the support and encouragement of genuine friendship. And that relationship that you're in just so you won't be lonely, you're going to have to let that go. You see the counterfeit looks like the real thing until you expose to the light, the truth of God's word! Those weak spots, those cracks in what you've used to pacify yourself are not going to fill the hole that your promise has left.

Sometimes you just have to wait until God positions you to handle the real thing. Don't make excuses for why it hasn't come and don't convince yourself that you no longer want it, but most of all don't try to pass the counterfeit off as the real thing.

As much as I love ***Jeremiah 29:11***, I also take hope in ***Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.***

Pray this prayer with me: What's in our hearts dictates our lives but we also have to follow the directions that You give us, God. It's Your voice that keeps us from being satisfied with the counterfeit and being attracted to the authentic! Amen.

## Day 25

### Open Heart Surgery Written By: WIW

Open-heart surgery is any surgery where the chest is opened and surgery is done on the heart muscle, valves, arteries, or other parts of the heart (such as the aorta). The term "open" means that the chest is "cut" open. The definition of open heart surgery has become confusing because new procedures are being done on the heart through smaller cuts. Some new procedures are being done with the heart still beating.

In order to repair the damage done to our hearts, God has to cut them open. Anytime we go through cutting, it's a painful process during and after the procedure is done. And the new types of surgery means our heart could still be beating with the pain of our pasts when God decides to cut us open. ***Hebrews 4:12 says "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires".***

There have been some things that I held on to because I thought it was too painful to let it go. These were not things that other people did to me, but it was pain I inflicted on myself. Just like the person with the clogged arteries, I made decisions that were damaging to my health (spiritually and physically) and I was too ashamed to tell the doctor (God) how the problem started. So God began to prep me for surgery. Slowly, but surely, I would reveal parts of my heart to God until I was comfortable enough for Him to cut my heart open. Some things I couldn't bear to think about, He started to repair them...with my heart still pumping. He is allowing me to witness my own heart being changed so I can understand the damage my secrets have caused. I have been given a front row seat to watch my heart of stone be transformed to a heart of flesh.

***Psalm 51:17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.***

In addition to allowing the surgery to happen, you have to take care of where you've been cut:

- v Keep the incision clean and dry.
- v Use only soap and water to cleanse the area.
- v Eat a healthy diet to help healing.

The same instructions the doctor gives his patient are the same instructions God gives us. Be sure to keep the area exposed to the Son so it can stay clean and dry and feed yourself the Word so you can keep healing. This process is easier said than done but the point of cutting you is to heal you, not make you worse. Be on the lookout for any sign of a sin infection: wanting to go back to what God just delivered you from, craving anything other than the truth, and a resistance to changing your behavior. In order to keep your heart healthy, you have to continuously examine it and the things that go in it.

Pray this prayer with me: God, I want to be complete and healed. Expose any area of my life where I haven't let you in. Make me whole. Amen.

## Day 26

Perfectly Imperfect  
Written By: WIW

The world sells you a dream that you can never cash in on. You grow up seeing a happy, well-rounded two parent household with two well-mannered children, a dog and a white picket fence. This model family includes a housewife a husband that reads bedtime stories to your two perfect children after you've had a perfectly prepared dinner at your dinner table as a family. The American dream becomes more like the American fantasy when you look at the typical American household.

While that may not be your idea of what your future will be, you do have ideas of what your family will look like. Our own fantasies may be the driving factor behind who you date, who you become friends with, and what kind of classes you take. You put your timeline together of what you think you need to do to achieve that. But what God will do is take your dream and turn it upside down. And, if you're anything like me, that's devastating. Everything I perfectly planned to happen had fallen apart. All of my dreams were shattered. I didn't realize then that was exactly where God needed me to be.

***Isaiah 46:10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.***

It's great to memorize and quote scripture but what happens when you have to live it? How many times have we chosen the perfection of our plans over the purpose of God's? Our plans try to avoid the pain of purpose for the sake of perfection. From the shattered pieces of my past, God have given me His perfect will for my life.

Whether we choose to accept that God allows us to endure pain, we still have to deal with it. God's promise is that He will perfect those things that concern us but He doesn't ever promise us a perfect life. See, perfection is just like beauty. It's in the eye of the beholder.

Wherever you find yourself on your journey, make sure it's exactly where God called you to be.

Pray this prayer with me: God, I have my plans but I give them to you. Place me where I need to be and give me the peace to stay there. Amen.

## Day 27

Smart Investments

Written By: WIW

At the beginning of the year, many people are rushing to get everything in order. They flock to the gyms, run to church, and make plans to save money. Those are all wonderful ideas because you are able to see the fruits of your labor. What you invest into something (including yourself) plays the biggest factor in the return you receive. It's truly a law of sowing and reaping.

***2 Corinthians 9:6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.***

We are all taught to sow into good ground so that we can reap a harvest. It's not always a financial reaping but we do see the benefits of a good investment. Even in our relationships. Where we choose to plant our hearts and what we allow them to be watered with determines the success of any relationship/friendship. But what happens when you have planted more than the soil is capable of handling? The ground looked good upon first inspection but by the time you realized it wasn't, it was too late. You kept planting thinking that it's the seed that's the problem but that isn't really the case.

Be careful to not surrender who you are for someone who hasn't yet discovered who they are. Before you invest all of you into a relationship, determine if they have made plans for what you give them. Some people are willing to take everything you have to offer but have no intention to have you as part of their forever. It's up to you to decide if what they are willing to give you is worth a permanent investment. Wisdom teaches you that just because someone offers you a place in their life doesn't mean they aren't still taking applications. Be cautious to not hand your heart to someone who doesn't plan on keeping it for an eternity.

It's difficult to recognize the people and things that God has created for you if you don't know why you were created. Life sometimes causes us to cross paths with people who want to be loved but haven't learned how to love who God says they are. Someone who doesn't know the purpose of something is bound to abuse it. That equals heartache for them and for you!

Rebuke the tendency to not inspect the ground you're planting in just because you want to. Everything you're ready to give, the other person may not be ready to receive. An investment in anything is only a good one if you are able to see a return. Everyone has potential but they may not be ready to see theirs with you, AND THAT'S OKAY! For some, you may be a temporary stop on their journey to forever. They may need the interaction with you to prepare them for their future and vice versa. That only becomes a problem when you don't understand that you're a stop and not the destination.

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, teach me that everything I want may not have been created for me. Instead of trying to turn them into something that was made for me, help me to invest in those people and things that already have my name on them. Amen.

## Day 28

Cute, Classy, Covered  
Written By: WIW

Modesty: freedom from conceit or vanity; propriety in dress, speech, or conduct

We live in a world that says the more you show, the greater the attention. There is no shortage on the quantity of attention you receive, but the quality of it is the concern. Using your body to define who you are is a never-ending battle that you will always lose. Sure, you may be in great physical condition but if you've demeaned yourself to show off what should be covered....what kind of shape is your heart in?

***Proverbs 7:10-12 10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. 11 (She is unruly and defiant, her feet never stay at home;12 now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.)***

The first impression we give people typically sets the tone for how they treat us. What does your clothing say about you? For so long, I let my body do the talking because that was the only thing I thought I had going for myself. I wore the skimpiest and tightest clothes I could get away with wearing because I "had the body to do it".

It was much easier to flaunt my body than to be honest with my heart. Although I was barely clothed most of the time, I used that as a mask to hide my ugly heart. My appearance made me look like I was for sale, at a very low price, instead of reflecting that I was redeemed.

I had to learn to look in the mirror and see ME instead of my body, if I wanted anyone else to. I had diminished my own worth by not keeping my body sacred and treating it as a temple of Christ. I let everyone see parts of me that should have been for my future husband's eyes only.

And then THIS happened: ***1 Corinthians 6:18-20 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.***

I had already been bought with a price and my body belonged to God. I was abusing property that didn't even belong to me. A real estate agent can't show every house that's available because they have to get permission from the owner. I was that real estate agent that had placed an "Open House" sign on the lawn and let everyone who wanted to see the home take a tour without ever checking with the honor to see if they met the qualifications. The people were only doing what I was allowing them to do. They need they had nothing to offer but I required nothing.

When I realized how valuable God thought I was, I was able to change the way I saw myself. When I changed how I saw ME, then I could change the way I presented myself to other people. Modesty is not about dressing like you're 90 and not being fashionable. It's about valuing yourself enough to reflect who God says you are. As a woman, it is your responsibility to set the standard on how people treat you. If you don't, who else will?

Prayer this prayer with me: I have been bought with a price and redeemed by God. Amen.

## Day 29

Stay in Your Lane

Written By: WIW

When I was 15, I was so excited to learn to drive and get on the road. I wanted to get my license so I didn't have to rely on anyone else to take me where I wanted to go. I had gotten tired of waiting to get where I needed to be because we all know that 15 year-olds have so many important places to be. My parents decided that I needed to take Driver's Education to ensure I was properly trained on the rules of the Texas roads (and because I was driving them crazy when they tried to teach me). One of the things that have always stuck in my mind from my Driver's Ed. class was when my instructor said "stay in your lane, if you go into someone else's you might get ran over". Although I was learning the rules of the road, I have applied that advice to my entire life.

***Romans 8:29-30 29For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified***

Life has a way of making you believe that you are not as awesome as God thinks you are. When you're peering over into the lane that He made for someone else, you may be tempted to veer off into their direction because it looks like they're moving faster than you are or heading somewhere much more glamorous than you. You could even see them speeding down the highway of life while you seem to be stagnant. And, if you're like I have been at times in my life, you could even see those who aren't even letting God do the driving achieving what you want. We have the inclination to want to jump in the driver's seat, change lanes, and follow their lead instead of being patient and trusting God to get you to your destination safe, sound, and in a timely manner.

We frequently plant seeds of discontent at different seasons of our life and it becomes so apparent when it's time to "drive". We compete with others at the things God predestined them for instead of trying to be the best at the purpose and the plan that He has for us. But just like on the road, when you take the bait and jump into someone else's lane you will end up getting ran over. There is the attraction to step out of the will of God in order to achieve the success we perceive other people have gained. But what we don't understand is the responsibility and sacrifice those people have given to be in the lane they're in. We are on the outside looking in at their results but we don't know the process they went through to live up to the calling God has on their life.

You don't have to be a preacher to be called, you simply just need to realize you have a lane that God specifically created for you. We sometimes fall for the trick that if we don't hold a title that someone else holds or if we aren't in charge, we don't have a lane. That's the farthest thing from the truth. Before you were formed in your mother's womb, God knew you. If He knew you, He had a purpose and plan for you before He ever formed the Earth. You don't have to envy the lane or the vehicle that anyone else has because it was created specifically for them, not you. We find ourselves miserable and in pain because we have taken upon ourselves to jump in a lane that belongs to someone else or to try snatch the wheel out of the hands of the Lord. But before you turn your blinker on and hop into the lane that has someone else's name it be sure that you seek the One who created the road.

Pray this prayer with me: God, You know me and why you formed me. That's more than enough. Amen.

## Day 30

Naked!

Written By: Chante Truscott

My sister loves to say “you have to get naked before God”. The first time she said that, I was a bit confused. Why would I have to take my clothes off in order to be with God? That seemed like the last thing I wanted to do. But she explained, she didn’t mean to take my clothes off, but to come to God as real as you possibly can.

We are accustomed to putting our best foot forward and sending our representatives to function in the world on a daily basis. We are who other people expect us to be instead of being who we truly are. That is the way of the world. You cover your faults, pretend to be perfect, and keep a smile on your face.

That’s not how God works!

***Ephesians 1:18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called--his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.***

Whatever is revealed, God can heal. He wants you to bare it all in front of Him. You can’t go to the doctor and tell him nothing is wrong but you want the medicine. How will he know what to prescribe if you refuse to tell him your symptoms and where it hurts? The easy answer is that he won’t. God is all-knowing but there is so much power in admitting where you are struggling.

I don’t mean the superficial things but those things that are deep down and buried within your spirit. God can keep a secret; you can trust Him with your innermost parts. Why? Because He already knows. He created you and He has always had His eye on you. So, you might ask “Why do I need to tell Him if He knows everything?” Because it does no good for someone else to know what’s wrong if you cannot admit that it’s wrong in your life.

If you won’t expose it, there is nothing God can do about it. If you truly want to be a better person and want God to change things, you have to hand it over to Him. The only way the pain and struggle can change hands is by you giving permission to God to come and take it away. The fire department or police department don’t know that you have an emergency until you call them and make them aware.

By stripping away all the layers of makeup and reputation, you can get to the root of what is causing you to struggle. You may have an issue with wanting to control everything but until you get bare before God about what is causing it, He can’t heal it. Or you may have a problem with promiscuity; God wants to take that pain and pressure away from you. He is waiting for you to admit what the cause of it is so that He can remove the burden from your hands.

Help is waiting for you but you have to open the door. God is a gentleman and will never force His will on you; He has to be invited into your life. An uninvited guest is one of the most annoying things in the world.

You can trust Him with your heart because He waits until you call upon Him.

Real change happens when you bare your soul in the presence of God. You can pour your heart to Him because He cares for you. So, there is only one thing left to do:

Pray this prayer with me: Lord, help me strip away everything that I'm using to hide from you. Amen.

We pray this devotional is a jump start to your relationship with God.

If you would like to find out more about our ministry and events in your area,  
please click the “WIW Youth” tab at [www.wivesinwaiting.com](http://www.wivesinwaiting.com)