



**DAWSON MEMORIAL
BAPTIST CHURCH**

**DEVOTIONAL
GUIDE**

FAITHFUL TOGETHER



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

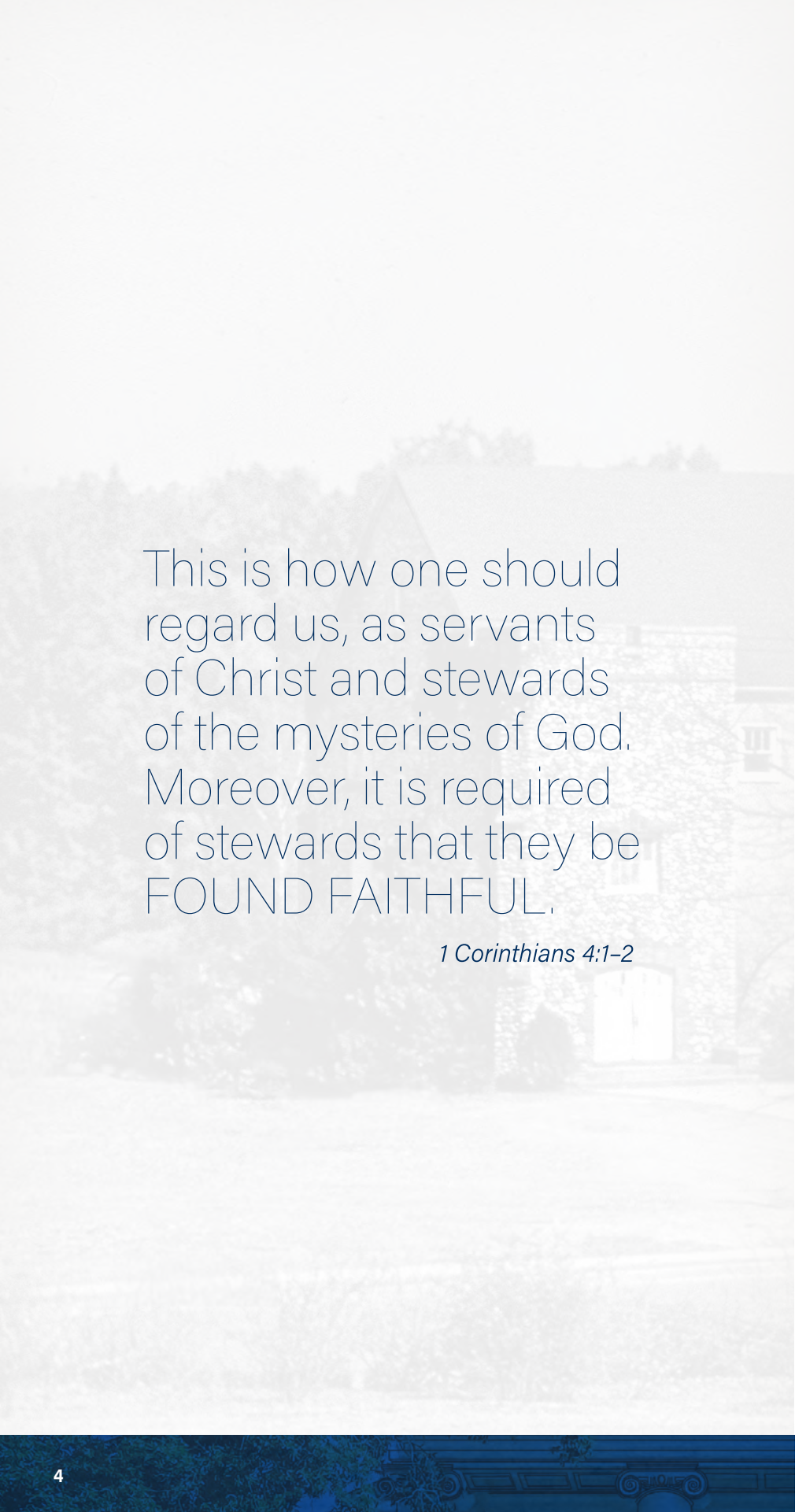
These devotions were prayerfully written and compiled *by* Dawson members *by* Dawson members for this unique season in our church's history. The devotions are intended for use Monday through Friday for three consecutive weeks. The Wednesday devotions are a brief reading for contemplation—a mid-week pause.

The purpose of the devotions is to prepare our hearts, reflect on our personal spiritual journey, and challenge ourselves to grow in personal relationship with our Savior.

As we prepare our church's physical foundation for the next generation, may we seize the opportunity to strengthen our spiritual foundation for where Jesus is calling us in His kingdom and for the generations to come.

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FAITHFUL TOGETHER



This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be FOUND FAITHFUL.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2



DAILY DEVOTIONS

7	Monday, February 24	The Beginning of a Steward
9	Tuesday, February 25	A Steward's Responsibility
11	Wednesday, February 26	My Worth Is Not in What I Own
13	Thursday, February 27	A Steward's Heart
15	Friday, February 28	Faithful in Discipleship
17	Monday, March 3	Faithful with Time
19	Tuesday, March 4	Faithful in Conduct
21	Wednesday, March 5	Speak, O Lord
25	Thursday, March 6	Faithful in Prayer
27	Friday, March 7	Faithful in Worship
29	Monday, March 10	The Reward of Faithfulness
31	Tuesday, March 11	The Risk of Faithfulness
33	Wednesday, March 12	Be Thou My Vision
35	Thursday, March 13	Faithful with Finances
37	Friday, March 14	Faithful for the Future

“There have been times of late when I have had to hold on to one text with all my might. ‘It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.’ Praise God it does not say ‘successful.’”

Amy Carmichael

The Beginning of a Steward

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" **John 3:3-4**

Jesus informed Nicodemus he "must be born again," the same instruction He gives to all who desire to follow Him. Yet the process of this second birth can feel confined sometimes to just our own actions. We ask Jesus to enter into our life. We profess faith publicly, which is followed by our baptism. The new believer acted and salvation resulted. Now, as Christians, we can pursue actions of living as a believer; diligently and with determination until we see Jesus' face. But were our actions all that actually occurred when we professed our need for salvation?

Thankfully, our gracious God explains what happens at salvation through Ezekiel and Jeremiah that transcends our action steps:

"I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." **Ezekiel 36:25-27**

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." **Jeremiah 31:33-34**

Do you see what happened? Do you see the work done and who did it?

I will sprinkle you.

I will cleanse you.

I will give you a new heart.

I will put a new Spirit in you.

I will remove the heart of stone.

I will give you a heart of flesh.

I will cause you to walk in my statutes.

I will write my law on their heart.

Our salvation is not a result of our own actions. It is the blessing that God gives by providing us with a heart transplant. Rest in His salvation. Relish the changes within your heart and mind that could only happen by the hand of the One who created us and calls us to follow Him. In response to God's work within our hearts, embrace the **Faithful Together** journey ahead. We can be found **Faithful Together** not because of our own decisions, but by abiding in the One who transformed our hearts and minds to follow Him and to do His will.

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

John 3:1-21

PRAYER: Lord, it was You—not me—that began this good work in me.

Would You continue it now, please? Would You orient my heart toward this work before us, and would you guide me to understand my role in the **Faithful Together** campaign? If You will speak and lead, I will listen and follow.

“We are not cisterns
made for hoarding,
we are channels
made for sharing.”

Billy Graham

“The world says the
more you take the more
you have. Christ says, the
more you give, the more
you are.”

Frederick Buechner

A Steward's Responsibility

*"And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'" **Matthew 25:20-21***

The Parable of the Talents is part of a longer discourse by Jesus just days before His crucifixion. It seems to have begun in the previous chapter of Matthew on the Mount of Olives when the disciples came to Him privately, saying, *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"* (**Matthew 24:3**). The context helps us understand the parable. Clearly, the master in question is Jesus, and His returning "after a long time" is about His second coming and how He will evaluate His servants' work.

Interestingly, Jesus didn't use the word we see in 1 Corinthians 4 that's translated "steward" and suggests a higher-level servant or possibly even a paid employee. Rather, He used the word for a common slave. And yet, the master in the story grants these common slaves enormous latitude. He even leaves town after entrusting talents to them. This was a high and uncommon level of responsibility having granted them stewardship over his assets.

We quickly see the master's expectations in that responsibility when he expresses his pleasure with the first servant—accountability, productivity, and prudence. This "good" and "faithful" servant had labored in the master's absence and produced a return on the talents entrusted to him. These expectations are reiterated when the master addresses the third slave who had buried and left idle the entrusted talent. Certainly the master expected his servants to protect the talents, but he also wanted more. He wanted them deployed and multiplied.

We should all identify with the Apostle Paul when he refers to himself as a "slave of Christ." Yes, we are slaves of the Master, and as His stewards, we have been entrusted with a responsibility for which we would be completely unqualified except for the Holy Spirit working in and through us. Are we faithful? Are we laboring? Are we deploying everything we have—time, gifts, resources, attention—for His honor and pleasure?

Consider today how you will be found by your Master. Put away any thoughts of using a shovel and instead, consider how to invest what He has given you.

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

The Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14–30

PRAYER: Lord, I desire that same word from You: To be found a good and faithful servant. I do realize that everything I possess is Yours and that I'm merely stewarding it until You bring me home to You or when You return for me. As we all seek Your will for the **Faithful Together** campaign, please speak and impress on me my responsibility.

Thus says the LORD:
“Let not the wise man
boast in his wisdom, let not
the mighty man boast in
his might, let not the rich
man boast in his riches, but
let him who boasts boast
in this, that he understands
and knows me, that I am
the LORD who practices
steadfast love, justice, and
righteousness in the earth.”

Jeremiah 9:23-24

But whatever gain I had,
I counted as loss for the
sake of Christ. Indeed,
I count everything as loss
because of the surpassing
worth of knowing Christ
Jesus my Lord.

Philippians 3:7-8

My Worth Is Not In What I Own

Lyrics by Keith and Kristyn Getty

My worth is not in what I own, not in the strength of flesh and bone
But in the costly wounds of love at the cross.

My worth is not in skill or name, in win or lose, in pride or shame
But in the blood of Christ that flowed at the cross.

I rejoice in my redeemer, greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul
And I will trust in him, no other, my soul is satisfied in him alone.

As summer flowers we fade and die, fame, youth and beauty hurry by
But life eternal calls to us at the cross.

I will not boast in wealth or might or human wisdom's fleeting light
But I will boast in knowing Christ at the cross.

Two wonders here that I confess, my worth and my unworthiness
My value fixed, my ransom paid at the cross.

And I rejoice in my redeemer, greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul
I will trust in him, no other, my soul is satisfied in him alone.



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“Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to Him as a love gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to Him in a deliberate act of worship. With Christ, it is not how much we give, but what we do not give that is the real test.”

Oswald Chambers

A Steward's Heart

"Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt."

Matthew 18:32-34

We can learn the heart of a good steward by examining the heart of a bad one. Similar to the parable we examined Tuesday in Matthew 25, this servant had been given the responsibility of stewarding his master's assets. Unfortunately he had suffered dramatic setbacks in his tending of these assets and lost them. So as both the law and standard practice would have prescribed, his master was about to sell both him and his family to pay the debt, a move that may seem harsh but was completely within the rights of the master. After all, the servant had undeniably failed in his responsibilities. It would have been *just* to destroy the servant and his family according to the rules of that day.

Now the most interesting part of this story is that this debt of 10,000 talents is a completely contrived number, because it's so enormous that it couldn't have been paid in multiple lifetimes. So selling the servant and his family wouldn't have come close to compensating his master for the servant's failure. It was unpayable. It was an unfixable loss. And yet, the master didn't just extend the deadline or reduce the interest rate; rather, he forgave the debt. What was irreparable became instantly repaired.

It's important to note from the beginning of the passage that Jesus told this parable in response to a question from Peter. Essentially, Peter asked, "Lord, should there be any limit to what I am willing to forgive someone?" So Jesus begins the story with an example of unparalleled, unprecedented, immeasurable forgiveness on the part of the master, and this evil servant is sternly condemned when he fails to show forgiveness to someone else in a similar situation. Clearly, the forgiveness he had received from the master had not transformed him into someone willing to forgive.

Good stewards recognize that the Master has forgiven them a debt too large to comprehend, and that recognition motivates them to forgive others. We give grace because of the grace we've been given. We show mercy because of the mercy we've been shown. We're hospitable to others because we were outsiders who were brought near. We show kindness because of the kindness we've been shown. And yes, we give because of how much—really everything—we've been given. The heart of a faithful steward is one that overflows toward others and toward the work of the kingdom.

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, Matthew 18:21-35

PRAYER: Lord, I acknowledge today that I've been forgiven a debt I could never pay. In Your great generosity, would You please provide such overflow in my life that I can bless others and bless Your kingdom? Would You teach me generosity, please? Would You give me joy in giving generously? Show me and everyone at Dawson what You desire from the **Faithful Together** campaign.

“I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man may be nourished. I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation of it.”

George Mueller

Faithful in Discipleship

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."
John 17:3

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a spiritual journey of learning from Him, following His teachings, and striving to be obedient to Him. It is also about making other disciples and helping them grow in their faith, but let's talk about our own personal discipleship. True discipleship is having a personal relationship with Jesus. It is how the soul fulfills its deepest longing—to be with the One who created us in His image. Through this relationship, all of our earthly hours have kingdom impact. Our pain has purpose, and our problems have hope. By spending time with Jesus through prayer, and learning from Him by studying His Word, we are able to become more like Him, more Christlike, each day. In John 17, Jesus prays His deeply personal prayer before He and His disciples proceed to the Garden of Gethsemane. His prayer changes our perspective on eternal life. Eternal life is not achieved the moment we draw our last earthly breath. It is something that can be experienced in the present through knowing God and knowing Jesus.

Evangelical theologian and cleric J.I. Packer wrote, "knowing God is a relationship calculated to thrill a person's heart." (*Knowing God*, p. 36) Pastor David reminded us in the "Theological Foundations" sermon series that believers are called to follow Jesus so closely that we speak, act, and think like Him. We are not to be just a fan who knows about Jesus, but to be a follower who reflects intimate knowledge of Him. With that in mind, how can we truly know Jesus? Here are three steps to personal discipleship:

- 1) Choose a **PLACE** and time. Establish a place of private worship where you schedule to meet with the Lord daily.
- 2) Follow a **PLAN**. Hearing bits of a conversation cannot provide the whole story nor can randomly selected passages yield knowledge or Christ-likeness. Find a method. Pastor David has often suggested *H.E.A.R.* (Highlight, Explain, Apply, Respond). Ask any minister at Dawson to suggest a plan that's right for you.
- 3) Exercise **PATIENCE**. Slowing down to meditate, ponder, and rest our minds on God's Word is how we begin to know Christ personally and be transformed. Author and Bible teacher Jen Wilkin wrote, "The formational profit of spending time in the Word is more likely to emerge over 15 years than 15 minutes. It is meant to be not merely informational or inspirational, but relational. It is God inviting us into conversation for the purpose of relationship."

The **Faithful Together** capital campaign is more than strengthening buildings for the next generation; it is about the people of Dawson strengthening their souls and practicing a faith that influences the next generation. Will you pursue a closer relationship with Jesus through personal discipleship?

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION: John 17, Psalm 119

PRAYER: Lord, a faithful disciple inevitably becomes like his or her Master. Would you please shape me, mold me, and conform me to Your image so that I speak, act, and think like You? Give me a heart for Your kingdom and vision for what You wish to do at Dawson as we are **Faithful Together**.

“The clock and the dollar are such substantial factors in so many parts of life that their role must be considered in any serious discussion of Godly living. Godliness is the result of a disciplined spiritual life. But at the heart of a disciplined spiritual life is the discipline of time.

If we are going to be like Jesus, we must see the use of our time as a Spiritual Discipline. Having so perfectly ordered His moment and His days, at the end of His earthly life Jesus was able to pray to the Father, ‘I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do’ (John 17:4). As with Jesus, God gives us both the gift of time and work to do during that time. The more we are like Jesus, the more we will understand why the disciplined use of the time God gives us is so important.”

Donald S. Whitney

Faithful with Time

The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Luke 8:38-39

An encounter with Jesus changed this hopeless man forever. He went from being controlled by the demons that possessed him, causing him to be kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, to sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. Naturally, the man wanted to follow Jesus and accompany Him wherever He went. Isn't that what Jesus calls us to do? "Come. Follow me." In order to serve Jesus, perhaps we should be like the disciples who left their occupations, to pursue full-time service to Jesus. Yet here, this man is told to return to his home and to share his changed life with his own community. Jesus called this man to serve at home. How can we serve faithfully in our own home?

Dawson members have many opportunities to serve outside, as well as inside, the walls of our church. As a church family, we support church plants in our own country and we also support missionaries who are serving full-time in places around the globe. The Apostle Paul spent his career planting churches and then encouraging and teaching them. This work outside the church is very important. But did you know that serving within the church is also Kingdom-building? One of the main purposes of the local church is to make and grow disciples of Jesus. Growing disciples takes community and commitment at every age and life stage. In what ways can you serve in or through Dawson ministries?

Perhaps one of the greatest opportunities for using our time for ministry is in the marketplace. Lutheran leader and businessman William Diehl writes, "If lay-people cannot find any spiritual meaning in their work, they are condemned to living a certain dual life; not connecting what they do on Sunday morning with what they do the rest of the week."

It is in the workplace that we can seek the lost, serve the discouraged, disciple the searching, and cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. Wouldn't it be great if those who are not called to "full-time" Christian ministry would see that ministry is also needed within the walls of business and commerce, within the walls of a home with young children, and within the walls of the declining and aged? These are places where God is calling us to redeem our time. The only training required is to share the Good News of Jesus just like the man in the country of the Gerasenes or like the woman at the well in John 4. Just tell others what Jesus is doing in your life. How are you building God's kingdom in your marketplace?

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

Luke 8:19-56, Psalm 90

PRAYER: Lord, if I'm honest with You, my time is what I guard most zealously. You know how little time I seem to have and how I am pulled in so many directions. That, I suppose, is what makes giving it all to You such a costly and holy sacrifice. Please use it for Your pleasure and glory. Help us see the Kingdom-building that will be accomplished as we're **Faithful Together**.

“Don’t let your life give evidence against your tongue. Sing with your voices, sing also with your conduct.”

Saint Augustine

Faithful in Conduct

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. **1 Peter 1:13-15**

"I'm a good person. Really, I am." If you've picked up this devotional booklet and made it to day seven, then you are trying to make good choices—to do the right thing. The struggle is "all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6). We may be good by the standards of our community, but believers are called to be holy. Until we appear before our Creator clothed in the gleaming righteousness of our Savior, our conduct will have room for improvement.

Any of us can be ensnared in glaring sin, or in habits that can be hazardous to our relationship with God and with others. May we be a church family that encourages and equips those who are struggling to find their way back to the pursuit of holiness—a family that extends grace yet stands in the truth of God's Word.

A believer's conduct is not a list of obligations, but a soul's quest for Christ-likeness. To be like Christ is impossible without a heart that has been changed by knowing Jesus through interacting with Him in prayer and learning of Him through Scripture. To pursue Christ-likeness, we must examine our own conduct. Consider practicing one of these methods of self-examination today:

Prayerfully begin the day by pondering these verses from **Galatians 5:19-23**. Read the passage two or three times. What do you see happening in your life today? What needs to be confessed to God and made right with others?

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The Examen is useful at day's end. Authored by St. Ignatius, it is a method of reviewing your day in the presence of God. A time set aside for thankful reflection on where God is in your everyday life. Take a few minutes to reflect as follows:

1. **GRATITUDE** - Recall blessings of this day and thank God for them.
2. **GRACE** - Ask to see your day through God's eyes with any shortcomings.
3. **REVIEW** - Recall significant events of the day. What were your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions in those moments?
4. **REPENT** - Ask God to forgive your sins and heal those you've hurt.
5. **RESOLVE** - Make tomorrow better by asking God for grace to make it so.

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION: Colossians 3:5-10, Exodus 20

PRAYER: Lord, I know it's true that my righteous deeds aren't righteous at all. I have nothing of real value to offer You except for my praise, my worship, and my gratitude. Would You work in me through Your Spirit to yield fruit worthy of being gifted back to You? Help me be a clean vessel suitable to use for your Kingdom, in my community, and in this **Faithful Together** campaign.

Speak, for your servant is listening.

1 Samuel 3:10 (NASB)

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Psalm 119:18

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

Speak, O Lord

by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy Word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace, we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith, we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.



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“O begin! Fix some part of everyday for private exercises. Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way: else you will be a trifler all your days. Do justice to your own soul. Give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer.”

John Wesley

Faithful in Prayer

"Lord, teach us to pray."

Luke 11:1

Prayer is a key component as we seek to be wise and faithful stewards of all God has given us. The proper and best use of our time, talent, and treasure is made plain to us only as we spend time in prayer and self-examination. But how does this type of prayer become part of our life? It is comforting to know that even Jesus' disciples asked to be taught to pray. As followers of Jesus, we have entered into a lifelong apprenticeship in the school of prayer. We don't automatically know the best way to pray or even if we are praying correctly. But we can definitely learn. As writer and theologian Thomas Merton has said, "You start where you already are and you deepen what you already have." When we ask God to help us grow deeper in our prayer life, we discover that He is more than willing to teach us and help us.

One prayer practice that can be meaningful as we examine our faithfulness is writing out our prayers in a journal. One author has written: "Journal keeping serves as a wonderful tool for withdrawing and communing with the Father. When I write, it is as if I am in direct conversation with Him." By addressing our journal page to God, everything we write about becomes a prayer. It's as if He is sitting with us asking, "How are you? Tell me what is in your heart."

As we write, our communication with God becomes communion with Him. He meets us there to form and shape us. He may bring Scripture to mind or begin changing or softening our feelings and opinions. He may prompt us to ask Him for forgiveness, wisdom, or assistance. One helpful way to begin this time with the Lord is by praying **Psalm 139:23-24**: *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

This time spent in prayer helps clear our vision, and we see ourselves more honestly. Here we can examine our motives, desires, and actions to see where we fall short of faithfully stewarding our resources for God's glory. We can ask God to forgive us and help us grow in grace and commitment. Through prayer we are taught to see things from His perspective, to reorder our loves, and as we experience more of God, we are changed.

Tim Keller writes, "Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change in the reordering of our loves. Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things He has for us. It is the way we know God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life."

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

Matthew 6:5-8

PRAYER: Lord, I desire to grow in the discipline of prayer. Yes, I'm encouraged that the disciples also felt inadequate. I'm also encouraged by the words of other saints that urge me on toward a greater prayer life. I see all of the Scripture that calls me to Your feet in prayer! And yet I feel inadequate when I arrive at Your feet. Please help me to know Your will. Please speak to me so I may be obedient to Your will for this **Faithful Together** campaign.

“It’s easy: You simply follow the trail of your time, your affection, your energy, your money, and your allegiance. At the end of that trail you’ll find a throne; and whatever, or whoever, is on that throne is what’s of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship.”

Louie Giglio

Faithful in Worship

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

Psalm 95:6

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

Hebrews 12:28

It has often been stated: “There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.” This statement is true. We worship what we love most, whatever has the greatest pull on our hearts. The things that have captured our deepest affection become the focus of our attention. Whatever consumes all of our energies, our passions, and our money is what we become like. God made us in His image, and He wants us to bear His image as we encounter the world. He is calling us to worship Him because He knows that when we do we will experience joy, have renewed purpose, and flourish as human beings.

As His faithful stewards we are called to worship the greatness of our God. One definition of worship is “communication with God in which believers, by grace, center their minds’ attention and hearts’ affection on the Lord, humbly glorifying God in response to His greatness and His word.” (Bruce Leafblad, Distinguished Seminary Professor of Church Music and Worship)

Just focus our mind’s attention and our heart’s affection on God? How exactly are we supposed to do that when most of us are so easily distracted—like the hamster wheel in our brain just keeps spinning out of control. It seems that much of our world is designed to keep us away from focusing. But we can ask God to help us be faithful when it comes to Him. As we spend time in the Word and in prayer, and in private worship each day, when we meet together on Sundays as a congregation, our worship becomes an overflow of what we have been experiencing with Him all week.

“It’s God’s will that we become true worshippers. And when something is God’s will, He will move heaven and earth to help us do that thing. He wants us as close to Him as we can possibly be. He longs to open the windows of heaven and pour out more and more of His love on us. Our only job is to surrender to Him on a daily basis so that He can daily give us more of Himself.” (CeCe Winans, American Gospel Singer and Grammy Award Winner)

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

Romans 12:1

PRAYER: Lord, I come to You now in another act of worship: to bend my knee and bow my head to You in prayer. I want my work to be an act of worship, my thoughts to be worshipful, and my very steps this day to be taken in an attitude of worship. As we prepare ourselves to make commitments to the **Faithful Together** campaign, help us see You high and lifted up as we lay those commitments at Your feet as a personal act of worship.

“When we have God as our possession, we have an exceeding great reward. And the reward seems to grow all the greater as, in the course of years, God’s infinite mercy has transformed us, at least in part, into His likeness. God is so fully ours that we enter into fellowship with Him, and receive of His sacred influences till we are changed into His image, even by the Lord the Spirit.”

C. H. Spurgeon

The Reward of Faithfulness

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." **Genesis 15:1 (NIV)**

As believers, our great God has given Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. He has blessed us with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3), given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3), brought us into His family (1 John 3:1), and promised us that He will be with us to the end (Matthew 28:20.) Yet, what do we typically do? We still find ourselves asking for lesser things. It may be a new job, a different house, or a host of other things, none of which are bad in and of themselves. However, our greatest joy comes when we see Him as enough to satisfy us. As John Piper said, "When God Himself is treasured as the reward, He is more glorified than when He is only trusted as the rewarder."

HIMSELF

by A.B. Simpson

Once it was the blessing, Now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, Now it is His Word.
Once His gifts I wanted, Now the Giver own;
Once I sought for healing, Now Himself alone.

The best gift God can give us is more of Himself. It is a blessing that can never be taken away or lost and only grows richer with time. Our treasures and dreams in this world can disintegrate in the blink of an eye. We long for something more lasting. It is there we find Jesus. When our relationship with God is our greatest reward and treasure, everything else is put into perspective. We no longer cling to the things of this world as though they will bring ultimate joy and meaning to our lives. We are free to walk through life with generous and open hands. The more of God we have, the more we can be changed into His likeness, thinking His thoughts, doing His will, and loving with His heart. This transformation happens when we surrender our lives to Him, asking that He give us more of Himself as He increases and we decrease.

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

Psalm 73

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
High King of Heaven, my treasure Thou art.

PRAYER: Lord, it's true that You are all I need. I so often desire other things, but they never satisfy me. In those moments of true intimacy with You when I'm able to set aside everything else that invades my thoughts and attentions, I experience true satisfaction. Pull me closer, please. Don't just speak once but rather continue to whisper in my ear. As we all ponder this **Faithful Together** campaign, come closer to each of us in a way that only You can satisfy.

“He is no fool who
gives what he cannot
keep to gain that which
he cannot lose.”

Jim Elliot

The Risk of Faithfulness

"I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant. Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."
Joshua 24:13-14

One of the more beautiful things to observe in this life is the generosity of a small child who hasn't yet learned the selfishness or self-centeredness of those terrible twos. They'll offer a sip from their bottle, let you share their blanket, and care less about a handful of shiny change than they do about a handful of goldfish crackers. To such a child, everything comes in unlimited supply—including time. They have no concept of earning or saving; they merely receive everything they need from watchful parents and have never known any differently. Unfortunately, they will soon learn the reality, won't they?

Nothing teaches us more about the value of money than working to earn our own. Time becomes precious when there isn't as much available as we wish. Interruptions and roadblocks become all the more troublesome when we've strategized and planned and labored carefully. It would seem that this passion to determine and control our own paths is part of the human condition. It requires no overt training in order to embrace it fully.

Perhaps this is why submitting ourselves fully to God feels risky. "What if He disrupts the plans I already have for my life? Or what if He calls me to the mission field? I know that everything is His, but am I supposed to give away all of my savings?" Our tendency is to hold back just enough of our hearts, minds, and money to feel safe and in control. In his last recorded address to the people of Israel before his death, Joshua speaks to the Israelites on this particular topic. What did they have that wasn't provided miraculously to them by Yahweh? Was there another source of good gifts of which he was unaware? Did the idols that their forefathers worshipped seem more promising to them? Joshua told them plainly that there really was NO OTHER place for them to turn besides the LORD.

If we can embrace the idea that our lives aren't our own and that our possessions were never really ours to begin with, and that all of our ideas of being in control of our future have been illusions all along, then there actually is no risk at all to being faithful to whatever God asks of us. We, too, live in cities we did not build and eat from orchards that we did not plant. At best, we are tending them until the true Owner returns for an accounting of them. Will He find us faithful?

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

Joshua 24

PRAYER: Lord, here it all is! It is still Yours. Your generosity so overwhelms me that I sometimes wonder if You even know how undeserving I am of Your love and Your abundant gifts. And yet I know that nobody knows me more intimately than You. As I look toward the **Faithful Together** campaign with the rest of my Dawson family, remind us of how tightly and safely You hold us.

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

Psalm 36:9

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

Romans 11:33 (NIV)

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Luke 12:34

Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:13

Be Thou My Vision

Traditional Irish Poem
translated by Eleanor H. Hull.

Be Thou my vision, oh Lord of my heart,
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true word,
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son,
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle shield, sword for the fight,
Be Thou my armor, and be Thou my light.
Thou my soul's shelter, and Thou my high tower,
Raise Thou me Heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always.
Thou and Thou only first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, oh, bright heaven's sun.
Heart of my own heart whatever befall,
Still be my vision, oh Ruler of all.



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“To me, one of the few experiences comparable to the joy of leading someone to Christ is the joy of making wise and generous choices with my money and possessions. Both are supreme acts of worship. Both are exhilarating. Both are what we were made for.”

Randy Alcorn

Faithful with Finances

"Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."
Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (NASB)

The Bible contains over 2300 verses regarding money; more than prayer, sin, or even heaven. God knew that the obtaining and use of financial resources would be significant in our spiritual journey. In our culture, we take pride and even measure success by what we own and what we have accumulated to create the lifestyle we desire. But the Deuteronomy passage above prompts us to re-evaluate our ownership through the lens of Scripture.

"Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it" (Deuteronomy 10:14). "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine" (Psalm 50:10-12). "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:8).

What do we own? Nothing. God owns everything.

God provides us with more to steward than we could ever imagine when we act on faith with our financial resources even when the cost seems too great. Practicing financial faith comes when we recognize that it is not our ability, our education, our connections, or professional prowess that has enabled us to have finances to manage.

GOD GAVE ABILITY - *Nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything* **(Acts 17:25).**

GOD GAVE EDUCATION - *And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place* **(Acts 17:26).**

GOD GAVE SKILLS - *"And I have filled him [man] with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship" (Exodus 31:3).*

Everything we have is because of God, and everything belongs to Him. Every financial consideration impacts God's kingdom because it is either a tool used for His kingdom or one used for building our own earthly kingdom. Is it possible that we trust our dearest earthly interests to our weak and failing fellow creatures and not trust God? How can we reorient our financial management from striving and controlling to resting and surrendering all of our financial decisions to the One who has given us the power to create, manage, and use wealth?

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION: Deuteronomy 8

PRAYER: Lord, I praise You for being the God who provides. As I enter into this day, establish the work of my hands. Soften my heart. Open my mind.

Help me see You as ruler and owner of absolutely everything in my life.

Please focus my attention on being **Faithful Together** with my church family and speak to me, your servant. I am listening.

"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them."

C.S. Lewis

Faithful for the Future

*Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. And Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever." **Joshua 4:4-7***

The attractions, souvenir shops, and museums that are sprinkled across the United States suggest that we are a peculiar culture. We have a museum of potatoes in Idaho, a museum of funeral history in Texas, and a SPAM museum in Minnesota, just to name a few. We not only have historic markers in seemingly random places along highways, but there are also state-installed markers a mile prior that notify us of the approaching historic marker. We are people that like and need to be reminded.

Joshua's orders initially sound like he wanted to create a random historic marker in a random place in the wilderness. After all, God had just parted the waters again so that the Israelites could pass through a body of water on dry ground. But we quickly see that his intention wasn't to build a marker for his own great leadership or a trophy around which the Israelites would celebrate. Rather, he wanted a memorial—a memorial that would remind all of the people of this awesome display of God's power and serve as a marker for the next generation. Joshua wanted it to provoke questions from their children, and he wanted them to ponder this marker from their past and use it to better understand the meaning and purpose for their future. Joshua wasn't trying to mark the spot so much as he was trying to mark the people.

Consider the possibility that this is a similar time and opportunity in the life of our church. Whatever God chooses to do on this relatively small patch of land in Homewood, AL, won't be a trophy noting our fine accomplishments on 1114 Oxmoor Road, nor lauding someone's stellar leadership. At best, the people of Dawson are all just instruments that God will use in the process. However, the end results of the Sanctuary renovation will be a memorial to God's 100 years of faithfulness to this local body. And one day, the story of God's faithfulness through His people at Dawson will need to be shared with the next generation. Imagine how some of those conversations might go. "Oh, I remember that exciting time in Dawson's history. We obeyed the Lord and we were found faithful. We even carried a few rocks, but He has done this great work."

ADDITIONAL MEDITATION:

Joshua 4

PRAYER: Lord, it is now time for us to commit our gifts to you in this work of the **Faithful Together** capital campaign. I have been saturated with your Word.

I have been encouraged by other believers. I have pondered. I have prayed. Now, I desire to act, and I ask you to mark this sacred place, your Sanctuary.

Mark all of us so that we will remember what You alone have done here.

These devotionals and prayers have hopefully led each of us to renew our commitment to be faithful stewards in every aspect of our lives. **Faithful Together** is much more than giving money for a building. It is about our total commitment to be all that God has called us to be.

Billy Graham said, "Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook, and I will tell you where their heart is." Probably the most tangible evidence of our commitment is in our finances. Your decision is not about a building or a budget. It is not about a commitment to Dawson. It is about your full commitment to God and His work, especially as it relates to your finances. Yes, Dawson needs to know how much you will give over the next five years so we can proceed with the project, but your commitment is really to God. Through our collective giving, many people in future generations will come to know Christ and grow in Him, and His kingdom will increase.

This **Sunday, March 16**, make your bold, sacrificial commitment of how much you will give over the next five years, over and above your normal tithes and offerings, to help pay for the cost of the construction project. Today and tomorrow, continue to pray for God's financial direction.

This Sunday, come to worship prepared to celebrate Dawson's kingdom building future.

Commitments can be made by completing a commitment card and placing it in one of the offering receptacles during any worship service, or you can commit online at **dawsonchurch.org/FaithfulTogether**.





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