



## JANUARY CHALLENGE

# *Creating a Devotional Lifestyle with God*

## DAY 1: *Creating a Devotional Lifestyle with God*

*As we all start out this fresh year together, we are in a season of resolution. Many people have made their “New Year’s Resolutions”... these firm decisions to do or not do certain things in hopes of producing change for the better this year.*

*In addition to setting goals for things like better health, productivity, financial freedom, many have set spiritual resolutions because they desire to be “better Christians.”*

*Some of these goals involve...Bible reading plans...structured quiet times...dedication to more times of prayer...*

*But what if instead of settling for devotional moments this year, you created a devotional lifestyle with God?*

*What if instead of striving to be a better Christian, you put on your new self...your true identity in Christ and lived in His fullness every single day.*

*God’s primary purpose is to engage with your true identity in Christ so you can become like Him. His desire is to transform the way you see and think about yourself and about Him, until it is as marvelous as the way He sees and thinks.*

*What we mean when we talk about a “devotional lifestyle” is being in rhythm with God all throughout your day by turning your heart towards Him and aligning your heart and your mind with Christ.*

*During the next 3 days, we are going to explore 3 keys that unlock the end of struggling to be a new creation in Christ and empower you to rest in your newness of life.*

## Message

### **Key #1: There's only one Law: the Law of Love.**

In Matthew 22 Jesus is asked a question by the Pharisees, "What is the greatest commandment in the law?"

The Jewish people were living under hundreds of laws that dominated their lives.

And this was Jesus's answer...in verse 37, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Hundreds of laws reduced to two: Love God... love people.

This is such a powerful moment... so let's not miss this! "Love God, love people" is not just a nice saying to put on a bumper sticker or a t-shirt.

In this moment, Jesus was breaking people free from soul crushing legalism.

When we think of life with God from the perspective of legalism... of trying to have acceptable behavior so we will be acceptable to God... then we live with the massive weight of performance on our shoulders.

When we carry on in the self-achievement of performance, we have something coming between us and God's desire for relational transformation through Jesus.

## Notes

Legalism causes us to live limited lives. It causes us to live suspicious of the truth.

It's not uncommon for people to believe that it's hard to live as a new creation in Christ. But what if it's not? What if the simplicity of the law of love, and God's empowering grace to live in that law can offer us a new perspective and a way of thinking that could restore the joy of our salvation?

People in the Old Testament had a love of the law, so they had a visitational relationship with God.

They lived as though they were the initiators of their relationship with God, as if it was up to them to get to God by their own effort, their own works, their own rituals.

But, Beloved, you are not the initiator of being with God.

There's no place to "get to" in Him. That's an old mindset that robs us of the relationship with Him that HE promised us.

It's an old covenant lens for how God is with us... that He will visit us in a tabernacle or in particular moments of time when we've proven ourselves worthy.

Because of Jesus, we are new covenant people, and it's God's desire that we have a love of the Law of Love and we understand that the Law of Love replaces everything.

We now have a habitational relationship with God...we abide in Him and He abides in us (John 15:4).

Ephesians 2:19-22 tells us the dwelling place of God is no longer in brick and mortar...a place we can only visit. It's in flesh and blood! He dwells in us. It's a relationship that God initiated with us... and that we now respond to...receiving His love for us, loving Him in return... and loving everyone we encounter with His love.

A devotional lifestyle is not about perfectly performing rules and rituals, it is all about peacefully practicing and trusting the truth, living in our true identities in Christ, being alive to God, and walking in His fullness. God delights in our practice because practice makes permanent.

Remember, we are being made in His image and likeness, so we are becoming as constant and consistent in love as He is.

We are empowered to love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

**Key #2: God has a singular focus, and so can you!**

A great thought to have every morning is that no matter how you travel through the day... brilliant or... not-so-brilliant...God is absolutely unchanging in how He loves you.

He is going to smile when He looks at you...He's going to be joyful when He thinks of you... because He only has one reality. All He can ever see... all day... every day...is the beauty of who you are in Jesus.

That is His singular focus. God is not frustrated, exasperated or disappointed

with you because He is confident that He replaced your old man with Jesus.

Listen to this beautiful truth in Romans 6:3-11:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

When Jesus died, so did you. He did not just die for you, He died as you.

When Jesus was buried He took your old man with Him, and when He was raised from the dead He left your old man behind. The old you cannot ever be resurrected. It is gone. Finished. Forever. You died in Him, and then a new you was raised from the dead through the Holy Spirit's glorious workings.

So God is not double-minded about you. He's not seeing you as your old self one day and then your new self the next day based on however you're behaving. He can only see you in Jesus and therefore, He can only respond to you with the same love, gentleness and kindness that He shows towards Jesus.

He sees you in Christ. His focus is on your identity becoming real in Jesus.

No matter what your previous life experiences may have been with parents, or teachers or friends...you are free from ever feeling anything less than His absolute acceptance and joy in who you are and who you are becoming.

When we do not see ourselves accurately...as Kingdom people, as new creations in Christ...then we spend all our focus constantly worrying that we do not measure up. And we falsely believe that God must be focused on that too.

But the Three (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are constantly reassuring us of who we are in Jesus.

God does not call you out on what you are not. He calls you up to Who Christ is in you.

Let me ask you some questions...What would your day be like today if you became aware of His smile toward you? If you became aware of His single focus of love and acceptance when He looks at you?

You've been empowered to live with this constant awareness. You've been empowered to be singularly focused on your new life in Christ every day.

When you sense negativity rising up in your thoughts, allow the Holy Spirit, your Helper, to guide you in the truth of who you are in Jesus (John 16:13).

Self-control allows us to stop and respond from our new man rather than react from the old. That kind of a response disarms the enemy.

For too long, satan has enjoyed tossing people around in their double-mindedness.

He deeply fears that you'll discover the single-focused nature of God and become as single focused as God is on your new life in Christ.

So satan tries to convince you that in order to change you must focus on your negatives and spend your life trying to fix your old self.

But, Beloved, you can't turn a negative into a positive by focusing on it. You'll just become more negative.

Instead, lean into your devotional lifestyle and be joyfully intentional in turning your focus towards His delight in you.

No matter what's happening, hear His voice saying, "Yes... but THIS is who you are in Me."

When you are tempted to focus on what you are not, hear Him say, "Beloved...THIS is who you are."

When you want to condemn yourself, hear Him say, "This is how I see you in Spirit and in Truth."

When you feel overwhelmed, hear Him say, "This is Who I AM for you in Christ."

And as you continue to see yourself from His perspective... from His singular focus on your true identity in Christ ... allow it to calm you... to restore your soul and renew your mind.

**Key #3: You can't get to the new you from the old you.**

A sure sign of legalism is that it wants to improve the old. This is what all self-help culture and performance Christianity is based on...trying to make the old better.

But you can't get to the new you from the old you! You can't upgrade death... So you're free from needing to try.

God made an end of your old life, so instead of striving to change the old you, you are completely free to EXCHANGE old for new.

Ephesians 4:20-24 speaks about this strategic life exchange:

But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

God isn't trying to fix you or mend you together so you'll be acceptable to Him.

God has something so much better. He has a new you in Christ for you to receive... to RECEIVE, not renovate or rebuild from the old.



This receiving is an ongoing process. It's part of our devotional lifestyle with God.

This strategic life exchange with the Lord always renews our thinking to the Mind of Christ. In this process, we abandon the old practices and put on the new.

Every situation in our lives is an opportunity to practice... putting off the old... putting on the new.

The Holy Spirit is our Helper in this exchange. He will often put His finger on an area in our lives to show us what's missing and His Light on the beauty of His peace... of His joy... of His gentleness... whatever will replace the old that area He's put His finger on.

Understand that one of the marvelous ways of God is that He never withholds the new until we've released the old. That's another form of legalism.

God isn't withholding anything from us. He doesn't make us feel guilty or ashamed of the old so we'll get rid of our old man habits and behavior.

He comes and shows you the rich life in Christ that He's already deposited in you. It's got your name on it so He's not going to take it back!

But there's a lot of it that we have yet to experience.

As we receive the new, the old slips away. He declares to you how He sees you in this particular situation.

He proclaims your newness and creates a key moment of exchange!

We lay aside the old to take up the new.  
Every situation in life is about renewal  
and transformation.

What part of the old you is the Holy Spirit  
putting His finger on today? And what is  
He holding out to you to receive?

When we think of a “devotional time”  
with God... most of us have a history of  
coming just as we are... with all of our  
issues, problems and dire circumstances.

But He comes to us just as HE is:  
unchanging in His true nature, with HIS  
perspectives, how HE sees us, what He  
loves about us and His purpose for today.

You come to God as HE is, not as you are.

Devotional life is about you connecting  
with Him and allowing His beauty and  
His nature to overwhelm you with  
Goodness and Kindness.

It's so good to relax in Him and let His  
love wash away all the negatives, all the  
stress and all the weariness of trying to  
be someone for God... rather than letting  
Him be Someone in you!

A lifestyle of devotion is where He happily  
takes the initiative ...and we have the joy  
of response.

Beloved, It's not all about you trying to  
get it right. It's about knowing God is  
right with you and for you. That He will  
never leave you, nor forsake you. He is  
with you always... to do you good.

It's about leaving behind the concept of  
trying to have a quiet time and  
exchanging

that for a relational walk, that empowers  
your joy and peace in believing...every  
day, all day... with Him.

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