

The background of the entire image is a dark, textured green. Overlaid on this is a photograph of a green plant stem with several long, narrow leaves. The stem and leaves are slightly out of focus, creating a soft, ethereal feel. The leaves are arranged in a fan-like pattern, with one leaf pointing towards the top right corner.

# *Life Change*

The first step to change  
is and will always be to  
draw near to God.

Starla Smith

STUDY

LIFE CHANGE

*Writings compiled from  
the social media and  
Sunday2Monday.blog  
of Starla Smith*

*SUNDAY*  
*2Monday*  
**.blog**

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*Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations  
are taken from the ESV Bible. All quotations from  
other writers are marked as such.*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTES

*The scriptures are rich and full of truth and understanding for how God has set this life up for good and for lasting transformation. This 7-day devotional, if you will heed the truths within it, will walk you through the process of life change. Now, don't get me wrong, I am not presumptuous enough to think that if you just read this devotional over 7 days that you will be changed. But you could be! Based on what I know in my own experience, if God is in it, and He has brought you to it, there is jam packed power and opportunity to be changed by Him as His power works in and through us.*

*I wrote this little series during a prayer initiative in my church. We were simply praying at 7:14 every day for 40 days about particular topics. But I went an extra step as the Lord led and found myself writing little teachings along the way. These are some of those teachings. I believe that knowledge is power. Not just because knowing things makes you smarter but because knowing things, understanding what they mean, how they work, and applying truth to our lives changes everyday real world ways we live. It's easy to stay the way that we are and just coast along. It takes fortitude and endurance to keep walking the paths God gives, trusting that as He is teaching us along the way that He is also changing us with the truth from the inside out.*

*I hope you find not just knowledge and understanding but that you find wisdom as you read for real life change.*

*- Starla*



## THE VALUE OF WISDOM

- Proverbs 2:1 *My son, if you receive my words  
and treasure up my commandments with you,  
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom  
and inclining your heart to understanding;  
3 yes, if you call out for insight  
and raise your voice for understanding,  
4 if you seek it like silver  
and search for it as for hidden treasures,  
5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord  
and find the knowledge of God.  
6 For the Lord gives wisdom;  
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;  
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;  
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,  
8 guarding the paths of justice  
and watching over the way of his saints.  
9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice  
and equity, every good path;  
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,  
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;  
11 discretion will watch over you,  
understanding will guard you,  
12 delivering you from the way of evil,  
from men of perverted speech,  
13 who forsake the paths of uprightness  
to walk in the ways of darkness,  
14 who rejoice in doing evil  
and delight in the perverseness of evil,  
15 men whose paths are crooked,  
and who are devious in their ways.*

# DAY 1 DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

**Matthew 16:24-25 - Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."**

A disciple of Christ, as my pastor says it, is simply, one who follows Jesus, is transformed by Jesus, and joins the mission of Jesus.

**Follow** - to follow is to move in the same direction as; follow after, pursue, move behind in the same direction.

When we follow Jesus - we are going the way He is going. Not our own way. We are pursuing, seeking out to find - JESUS. Not other things. We are moving behind in the same direction, asking the Lord this way Lord? This way? Not being reliant on our own faculties to decide what we will do and where we will go but rather keeping our eyes on Him.

**Transformed** - change of form, nature, or appearance  
As we follow Jesus, He changes us from the inside out. We become more and more like Him. Jesus didn't hold onto His own way. He went the way of the Father. He didn't do what He wanted to do. He did what He saw the Father doing.

**John 5:19-20** Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

As we do this, as we deny ourselves, that old flesh nature, we take up a cross, like a burden we willingly bear. That burden is only to do what we see Jesus doing and following Him. As we go, the power of the Spirit transforms us to become more and more like Jesus. We are changed as we follow.

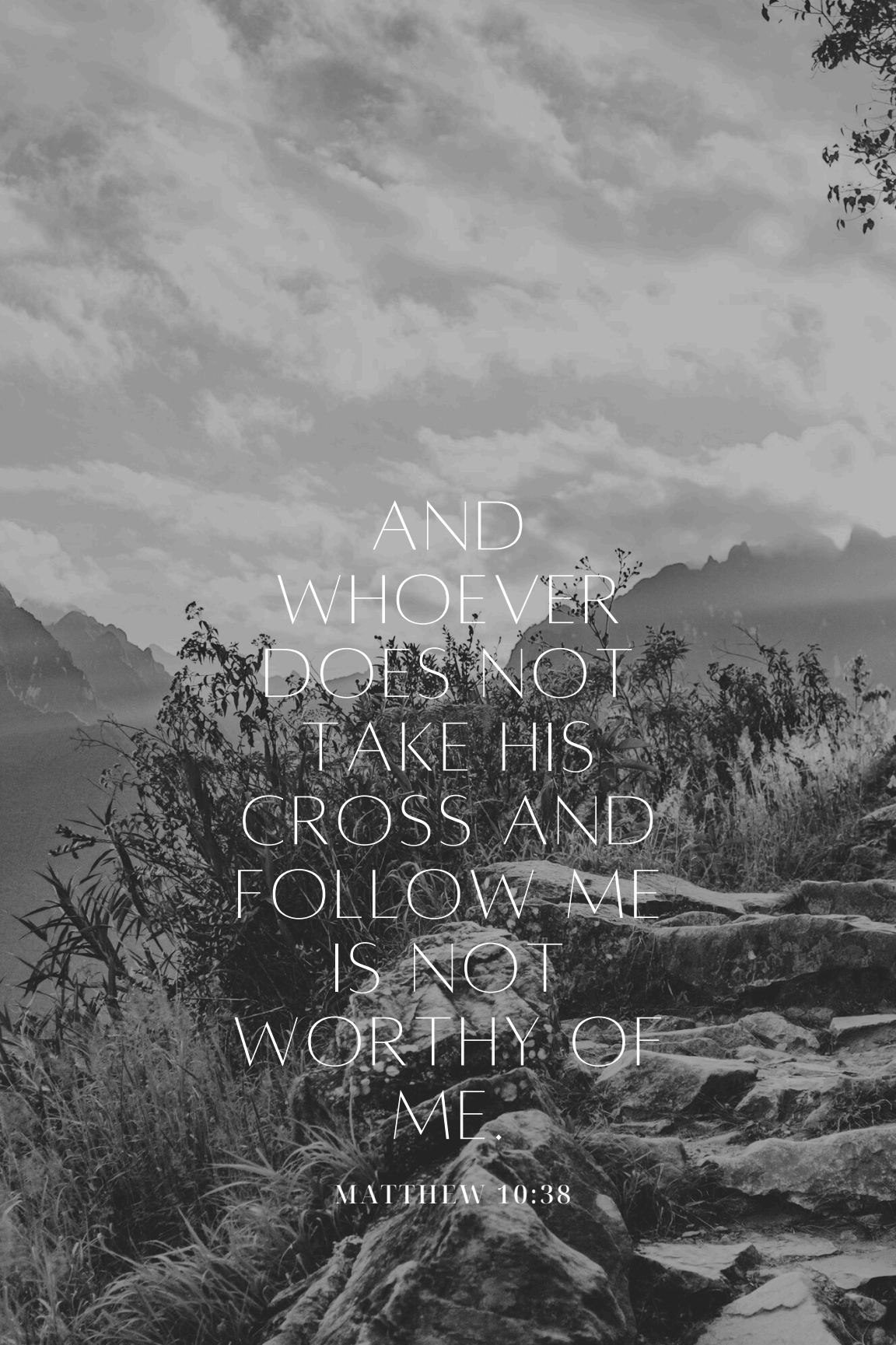
**Join** - connect, unite

I think it is interesting that it also says the word join, because to join means you give up autonomy. The rugged individualism we often become as we fight and claw our way through this life. But in Christ, as followers of Jesus. We joined a mission. We don't try to save our life, as in being our own saviors and do it our way but we lose our lives by becoming part of the army of God and going to share the good news with others. We risk rejection, hatred, persecution, to save the lost as Jesus did.

**PRAY:**

*Father, help us. As we enter into this process with You. Help us to hear Your voice. Your Word says that Your sheep hear Your voice because they know their Shepherd. Deepen our knowing of You. Help us to have ears to hear and hearts that understand. If there is any way in our walk that we are going our own way or not following You. We repent and ask for you to reveal it and correct it. We are willing to be corrected. Father, as you transform us to become more and more like Your Son Jesus - help us to carry the cross of burden You give us to bear. May we be prayerful about what you give us to bear. May we be diligent to hear and move as You move. Keep us in Your living water so that we can shine like bright lights in the dark world. And help us Lord, and we need a lot of help in this. Help us not to be about ourselves, but to join in with those You have connected us too, our fellow believers, to do*

*life together as we join together in the mission of sharing Christ with others. Jesus you are committed to our life being changed and we pray for those we care for and disciple to find that life change too. In Jesus name, Amen.*

A black and white photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, there is a rocky path or clearing with some low-lying plants and grass. The middle ground shows a dense thicket of bushes and trees. In the background, there are jagged mountain peaks under a sky filled with soft, textured clouds. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

AND  
WHOEVER  
DOES NOT  
TAKE HIS  
CROSS AND  
FOLLOW ME  
IS NOT  
WORTHY OF  
ME.

MATTHEW 10:38



## DAY 2 COMMIT YOUR WAY

**Psalm 37:5** says, “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act”

**Commit** in the Hebrew means to roll away. We literally roll away from ourselves our own way and give our way to the Lord.

**Trust** means to put your confidence in the Lord.

As we commit to follow Christ it seems that in order to do this we must commit or roll away from ourselves the desire to drive and determine what or where or how we will go and instead trust or put our confidence in the Lord to lead us where He wills. The promise to us is that if we do this, the Lord Himself will act on our behalf.

Did you catch that? He will act on our behalf. The God of heaven and earth will act on your behalf. That's humbling and a reason to give great thanks.

**In Psalms 145:17-21** it says of the Lord that, "The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them."

He will bring us justice and kindness in all His doings. He will be near us when we call, He will fulfill desires, hear our cries, and save us. I will take my God's kind of promises any day.

### PRAY

*Lord, I commit my way to you today. I will roll all my worries, fears, hopes, dreams, and even things I think I must be responsible*

*for - right over into your hands. I declare that I will trust you, no matter what will come my way. Your sovereign hands will guide me, and I will make it through because you will act on my behalf. Thank you for your justice, for your kindness, for hearing me when I call. Thank you for fulfilling my heart's desires - even those little silly things that make me smile. Thank you for hearing my cries for help and saving me when I've been dumb. I want to follow you wherever you go. In Jesus name, Amen.*

# DAY 3 LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE

**Romans 12:1-2** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.  
**2** 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.

I love how practical the Bible is.

Here in Romans 12:1-2 we see very clear instruction:

- Present your bodies

- Do not be conformed

- Be transformed

For a purpose: That by testing you may discern.

Discernment is huge! To **discern** is the word *dokimázō* and it means to test, to approve, examine, to try. When we discern, we check something out to find, or to recognize the difference or distinction between. Between what? What does that mean?

Discernment has to do with how we see. Can we see the difference between good and evil? Are we able to rightly make distinction between what is of God and what is not of God? Can we tell the difference between the voice of the Lord and the voice of another?

And how are we able to discern? We present our bodies in a particular fashion: As a Living Sacrifice. This goes back to our first day of prayer where the scriptures say, "to deny yourself and pick up your cross and follow Jesus." When we present our bodies as living sacrifices, we live life like we are laying

our life down. Jesus, you live through me, not me, my, or I but YOU live in me today. That is a living sacrifice. Willing again, to go where He says go, do what He says do, and say what we hear Him saying. When we do this, it is holy, it is acceptable to God, it is worship.

Then it says, do not be conformed. To what? To this world. This world has a way it wants you to go, a way it wants you to speak, a way that it wants you to be. This world wants you to become unholy, unacceptable and for you to worship anything but the living God.

And finally, it says to be transformed. How? By the renewing of your mind. As I am pondering, I thought of my phone and how it constantly alerts me that there's an update available. And if I don't do it by a certain date, it will do it for me. *(It's annoying but for the sake of use of metaphor let's roll with it.)* If your mind is a software program, then the Bible is the update that you must schedule. But there is one difference between your phone and your mind. It won't be automatically done for you. You must daily update and install new software to renew your mind. Because all day long the world is sending you spyware and spam and the Lord is sending incoming messages and downloads that you have to discern between. And this discernment is meant to help you know what is; the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

PRAY:

*Father, thank You for Your practicality in teaching. Your Word is perfect. Thank You that I can know the way to live and how to be in constant connection with You. Lord, help me to be a discerning person. I desire to treasure Your Word in my heart, and to gain understanding of Your way and will. I present my body as a living*

*sacrifice to You today. Come and live Lord Jesus in me, through me,  
and do Your will. Transform me God to be more and more like the  
image of Jesus. I turn away from the world and I run to You!  
Thank You for this time to read and understand Your Word and to  
pray. In Jesus name. AMEN.*



## DAY 4 DRAW NEAR TO GOD

**James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

Real life change never comes without hardship. Even if making change is deliberate it will still require dedication, deep reflection, and the turning away from what is not good, healthy, or helpful. Mostly, we don't like the fact that we go through hard times or struggle to make change but without them honestly, would we change or see the need to do so?

The first step to change is and will always be to draw near to God who is the Father of Lights. We need light to see what needs changing. We need Him to be near to us to be truly helped. Next comes the part we must choose to be responsible for, it's our own selves and our behaviors and attitudes. As those who are prone to sin and need constant returning to God we must do 2 things regularly:

**Cleanse our hands** - what are the motivations for what we do?

**Purify our hearts** - what are the motivations for how we act?

These things if they are not regularly cared for will make us double minded. **James 1:8** says “**A double minded man is unstable in all ways.**” Sin separates us from the heart of God and God is where we get wisdom. Without wisdom we do lots of things without thinking and for reasons we don't even understand, until they have destroyed us. So, there are

times when we are going to have to stop, evaluate and look at our lives, see the wretchedness that is there and mourn and weep over it. We have to stop trying to live the high life of “*being happy all the time*” and “*only wanting to feel good*” and instead mourn and weep over our sin and what we have become, so that God can make us clean and pure. And there is a promise, because as we have seen when we do what God says, when we do things His way, there is always blessing in it. The promise given is if we will be humble this way, He will exalt us. He will raise us up! He will grow us and mature us. We will become more like His Son Jesus.

PRAY:

*Father, reveal to me how I am not pleasing in Your sight. How I do things that do not line up with Your Word, Your heart, or Your ways. Show me Father where the darkness resides in my heart, that I may repent and be cleanse and purified by You.*

Take inventory today:

What's right?

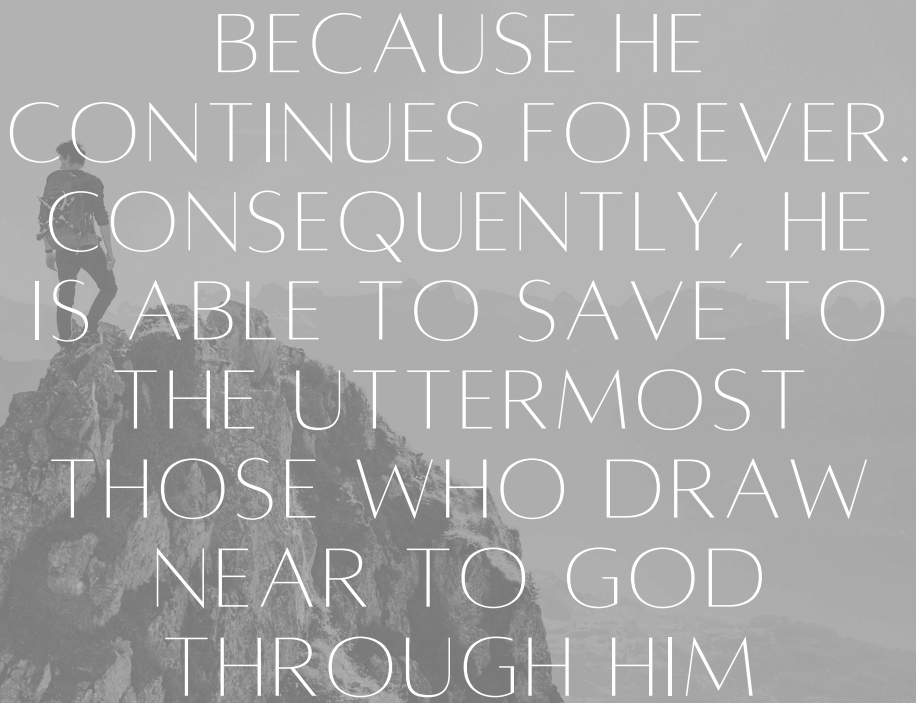
What's wrong?

What's missing?

What's confusing?

Name the challenges you are facing?

Give thanks, repent, and ask for God's help in any of those areas.

A grayscale photograph of a person standing on a rocky mountain peak. The person is wearing a backpack and is looking out over a vast, hazy landscape. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, white, serif font.

BECAUSE HE  
CONTINUES FOREVER.  
CONSEQUENTLY, HE  
IS ABLE TO SAVE TO  
THE UTTERMOST  
THOSE WHO DRAW  
NEAR TO GOD  
THROUGH HIM

HEBREWS 7: 24b-25a

# DAY 5 CONTEND FOR FREEDOM

**Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.**

As we have now taken inventory and offloaded what is not needed and mourned over our sin of trying to live life on our own terms. (*If you haven't done that go back to previous devo's - lots of groundwork is laid*) As we do the work of aligning with what and how God does things we will see that He is breaking the bondages that hold us. This is why Christ came! To set us free.

My mother and I love to take road trips and for a few we have gone for 10 days. That is long enough to break every cycle of habit that I had been living. Road tripping can be beautiful, but I also lived out of my suitcase for all those days. So, all the normal goings, and doings, in my normal everyday life were stopped. The way I ordered my mornings was different. The way I went about my day was changed. All the little routines within the day that applied back home were broken. When I'd returned home, I recognized that I was able to reorganize my life to what is helpful, healthy, and good for me - much like being given the blessing of a clean slate.

We don't have to “*leave*” our lives to make real change. We can place ourselves in a position for change when we draw near to God and ask Him to cleanse and purify us. We all have sin habits, mouth habits, and automatic attitude habits. As we have pondered this week, how has God highlighted these areas for change? The scripture says, “stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” On what are you standing? In **2 Timothy 4:2-5**, Paul writes to Timothy about *being ready with the Word of God in season and*

*out of season, to stand on the truth no matter what, even if something else might sound better.* When the Bible says to “*stand on the Word*” what does that mean?

It is to take what you see and hear God leading you into - for example - maybe He has highlighted the way you are using your mouth. So, standing on the Word would look like finding scriptures about the mouth and applying them in your daily life. Or if you find that you can't stop being angry, maybe grab the scripture that says, “**Be angry and sin not, commune with your own heart and be still**” from **Psalms 4:4**. (*Paraphrase*) When you become aware of your anger, stop, speak the truth of God's Word out loud in the moment and be still. Letting the moment pass so that you can respond differently.

Doing this is how you and I actively "*do not submit again to a yoke of slavery!*" Because you and I are actively participating with the Spirit of God in us, contending for the freedom that is already paid for and is already ours!

PRAY:

*Father, You are the great emancipator. You sent Your Son to die so that we could be free. We are free from sin, and free from all bondage. Help us Lord, as we walk with You, to participate in that freedom that You have given us by putting Your Word in our hearts and in our mouths. Lord, come do the work of change and growth in us as we submit to Your way and Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.*



# DAY 6 THE FRUIT OF LIFE

**Romans 6: 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

What is fruit? It is the outcome of a seed that has grown fully. This verse tells us there is two kinds:

Fruit that ends in death.

Fruit that ends in eternal life.

So how do we know what is what? Well again, the practicality of scripture is amazing. Fruit that ends in death carries with it shame. Fruit that ends in eternal life carries with it sanctification. So, let's take some time to break down those words:

- **Shame** is a painful feeling of guilt or disgrace, dishonor, loss of esteem or reputation.

- **Sanctification** is the act or fact of being made holy; state of being made holy.

What is made clear here, is that shame is what we can accomplish trying to do much of the things we do in our own strength and in our own way, and the other is all that God can accomplish in His goodness. That is why we must receive God's grace because in our own sin nature, if we are not alive to God - we cannot ever produce holiness on our own. You need a Holy God to give a holy attribute. Let's look at what the scripture says in Romans.

**Romans 5:8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Jesus Himself died to give us that eternal life. The fruit that ends in eternal life for us started as the seed (*Jesus Christ*) that died on the cross for us. He is the beginning and the end. We are no longer held in bondage.

**Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Have you received that free gift? If you have, thank Him today!

**PRAY:**

*Father, thank You for sending the Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to die for my sins. You have done everything that was needed to take me from shame full and filled to full of eternal life. I accept that great gift. Your life for mine. I thank You for it. In Jesus name, Amen.*

Write a remembrance of how you came alive to God.

## DAY 7 YEILD

**Romans 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.**

Yesterday we saw how the natural outcome to sin and shame is death but the natural outcome to sanctification through Christ is eternal life. Today we see that while we really don't have any control over those outcomes because they are God ordained or ordered. That is just the way that it is. Here we see something that we can do. It is the action or should we say the position of yielding.

The word yield is an interesting word because this word has two kinds of meaning and for help in understanding I am going to explain them like they are two kinds of pictures for our study today.

**Yield** - is to present ourselves as standing by or alongside.

**Yield** - is also, as we know from living here in Iowa, a term that we understand - a crop will yield a harvest. It is the amount of goodness that can come from the seed.

This scripture says don't yield this way, rather yield that way. We are given very clearly how we position ourselves. Don't stand by or come alongside this way of living and become an instrument of unrighteousness that can only grow a crop of death. Rather, present yourself or come alongside Jesus, (*sidenote: I like to think of this as standing beside Christ before God*) by specifically acknowledging, "*I know I am alive from the dead*" in Christ, so that you may grow a crop of righteousness. Did you know that there is

something incredibly powerful about acknowledgement.

**Acknowledgement** is to accept as truth or the existence of.

When we acknowledge a truth or understanding, we accept it and basically, we are allowing it. It's like the spiritual way of disciplining ourselves so that we submit our wills to what God is saying and doing. It's humility in action.

**Proverbs 3:5-7** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. 7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

PRAY:

*Father, I acknowledge Your sovereignty over my life. I acknowledged that you are God, and I am not. Holy Spirit, I present myself, every member, today as your instruments. Let my eyes see as You want them to see. Let me hear, as you want me to hear. Let my hands work as you want them to work. Let my mouth speak as You want it to speak. Plant in me a good vineyard and bring every seed to harvest in Your goodness. For the Glory of Jesus and In His name, Amen*

—WE DECLARE TODAY IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH  
THAT WE ARE CHANGED FOREVER IN CHRIST!

FOR THE MOMENT  
ALL DISCIPLINE SEEMS  
PAINFUL RATHER  
THAN PLEASANT, BUT  
LATER IT YIELDS THE  
PEACEFUL FRUIT OF  
RIGHTEOUSNESS TO  
THOSE WHO HAVE  
BEEN TRAINED BY IT.

HEBREWS 12:11



# AUTHOR'S NOTES

*Thank you for reading and studying along with me.*

*- Starla*

WILL POWER DOES NOT CHANGE  
MEN. TIME DOES NOT CHANGE MEN.  
CHRIST DOES.

~HENRY DRUMMOND~

*Writings from*  
**SUNDAY**  
*2 Monday*  
**.blog**  
*Starla Smith*



*Thanks for Listening..*  
*Starla*