

A SERIES OF DAILY DEVOTIONALS AND CHALLENGES TO LIVE OUT JUSTICE WRITTEN BY WOMEN FROM AROUND THE SALVATION ARMY WORLD

We're better together

SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:9-16

'Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves... Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.' (Romans 12:9-10, 13)

Additional reading: Romans 12:1-2; I Corinthians 3:8-11

REFLECT: Romans 12:9-16 calls us to live well with others. In this letter, the apostle Paul was urging the church in Rome to become 'living sacrifices', to offer their whole lives as worship to God.

His instructions to the Early Church – to bless, to rejoice, to mourn and to be in harmony with one another – highlight how we, too, can honour God through our relationships with others. This countercultural way of living and loving stems from a renewed mind, which translates inner faith into outward actions that reflect the light of Jesus.

Not only did Jesus preach with words, but his daily interactions teach us so much about how to love God and to love others. As followers of Christ, we have a responsibility to cultivate this love, to transform communities burdened with darkness and to glorify God through our service.

This love-in-action lifestyle is the natural overflow of a deep spiritual life.

DAILY ACTION: Over the next weeks, this devotional will invite the demonstration of God's love through daily challenges and choices to consider. You may find it helpful to think of it as more of an action plan than a reading plan!

We are not meant to walk this path alone. In fact, we are stronger together! Jesus himself partnered in ministry with his disciples, showing us the power of community, and Paul's letter is clear in its ideal of togetherness. Your first challenge is to reach out to a friend or colleague. Invite them to join you on this justice-seeking journey.

Hold one another accountable, pray together, act responsibly and seek God's wisdom. Allow the Lord to guide your steps and decisions, knowing that he partners with us as his co-workers in service. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. An ever-present helper, God equips us to act justly and live faithfully.

PRAYER: This devotional provides daily opportunities to pray. As you embody justice-seeking response, engage in the spiritual practice of breath prayers, cultivating an awareness of God's continued presence that moves and goes with us. Breath prayers are simple, short prayers that can be repeated rhythmically with breathing, at any time and in any place.

INHALE: God, injustice feels so heavy. **EXHALE:** Help me as I walk your way.

Breathe in God's heart for justice and breathe out your commitment to making a positive difference.

DAY 2 God's plan for redemption

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:1-17

"...and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.' (Matthew 1:16)

Additional reading: Luke 1:46-56

REFLECT: Genealogies in Scripture may seem repetitive, but they reveal profound truths. Matthew I bears witness to God's divine plan of redemption through lesus, from generation to generation.

Unusually, five women are listed: Mary the mother of Jesus, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba (who is commonly referred to as the wife of Uriah). Just like the men listed, they were flawed. They endured hardship and mistreatment. Yet God chose them not for their accomplishments but for what he would accomplish through them.

In Luke 1:46-56 we read that, learning of the coming Messiah, Mary praised a merciful God who 'has lifted up the humble' and 'filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty'.

This subversive grace reveals itself in the complexities of Tamar's betrayal, Rahab's history, Ruth's status as an outsider, the sorrowful circumstances of Bathsheba, and Mary's obedience. These women symbolise the profound story of God's big plan for redemption through Jesus, showing that atonement reaches beyond the limits of Israel to include the whole world. Now, their names are recorded in the account for the Name above all names.

DAILY ACTION: The stories of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary highlight that our past does not determine our future and that only God can save us.

Regardless of a person's background, every individual holds a unique significance and should be treated with kindness and fairness. We can work at building healthy communities that embrace all people wholeheartedly.

One way to build a stronger, more inclusive community is to host a gathering or discussion group where people of different backgrounds can share their stories and experiences. In your interactions, prioritise understanding and kindness, creating an environment where everyone feels valued.

Identify individuals in your community who are prone to being overlooked. Show support through acts of kindness — whether with a gift of baked goods, an offer of help, an invitation to socialise or a longer-than-usual conversation. Be intentional about reminding others of their significance and value.

PRAYER: Lord, you have woven redemption into the lives of the broken and the overlooked. Teach us to trust in your plan, knowing that our past does not define our future. May we extend grace to others, just as you have done for us through Jesus.

INHALE: Lord, thank you for your redeeming love. **EXHALE:** Help me to generously share it with others.

The God who sees the vulnerable

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 16

'She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." (Genesis 16:13)

Additional reading: Psalm 34:17-18

REFLECT: Hagar's story is a reminder of God's attentiveness to the marginalised. A slave woman, mistreated and discarded by her masters, Hagar had no social status, no voice and no rights.

In her moment of desperation, as she fled into the wilderness, God intervened. He found her, spoke to her and showed her mercy, revealing himself as El Roi – the God who sees.

For Hagar, this interaction with God was an unexpected, personal, compassionate recognition of her pain and worth. He goes above and beyond for Hagar, empowering her to name him based on her experience and truth: 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'

Her social standing, her present pain and her limited choices could not diminish his regard for her. In a world that often overlooks the vulnerable, this story affirms that God sees, cares for and addresses the needs of those who are forgotten by society.

DAILY ACTION: Feeling marginalised in some way is something most people deal with at some point in life. It is worth spending some time with God in prayer; consider if there are areas in your life where you feel marginalised and then bring those areas to God. If we are to help others, we need to know that God loves us.



People can be marginalised on a broad spectrum, and we can look for ways to be present in these situations. Maybe you've noticed someone at church having a hard time finding a social circle. You could give them a call or invite them for coffee. Maybe there's a programme for at-risk youth in your neighbourhood. Ask if they need mentors. Maybe you know about a nearby shelter for women. Sign up as a volunteer or enquire about their donation needs.

No matter the severity of the situation, we serve a God who sees the marginalised and empowers us to share his love with them!

PRAYER: God, you see me in my moments of struggle and remind me that I am known and loved. Make me aware of those who feel invisible so that I may extend your mercy and reflect your unwavering love.

INHALE: God, your heart is for the vulnerable. **EXHALE**: Open my eyes in compassion.

Steadfast devotion

SCRIPTURE: Ruth I

'But Ruth replied, ''Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.' (Ruth 1:16)

Additional reading: Proverbs 17:17

REFLECT: We see a young widow, Ruth, determined to stay with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth could have returned to her homeland and started afresh – can you imagine what led her to such devotion?

She had witnessed Naomi's deep faith in God, even through bitterness, and perhaps felt inspired by her selfless care for Orpah and Ruth. Or maybe Ruth felt that she couldn't bear any further loss. There were undoubtedly many reasons for Ruth's loyalty, but one of those reasons must have been the way that Naomi lived out her faith. Ruth was certain that she could make Naomi's God her God.

Many of us will know Naomis – people who deeply know and serve the Lord, whose faith is so evident that it shapes the way they think, talk and act. People who listen closely to God, seeking his wisdom and discernment, and listen to people with care and attentiveness. Their faith shapes those around them, just as Naomi's shaped Ruth.

Ruth's decisive and steadfast devotion displays great courage and compassion. She refuses to let loss define her and chooses to uplift Naomi, playing her part in changing her story from bad to better.

DAILY ACTION: We are all leaders in some sense.

Like Naomi, there will always be people who look to us, regardless of whether we notice. It is important to have good people to look up to, someone who can provide one-to-one guidance and advice with genuine care. If you don't already have a mentor, ask God to show you who might be a good fit for you. Remember that Ruth had lived very closely with Naomi and seen all parts of her life. It may be that you need to allow people to draw closer, so that they can learn from you.

Like Ruth, we can play our part in looking out for others. Consider how you can be more intentionally present and caring in your relationships. How can you continue to develop yourself, your skills and your knowledge, so that you can give back to your community? For example, if you're looking to gain more wisdom in God's Word, you could join a Bible study group.

We all need Naomis. We all need Ruths. People to care for us, to search for potential in us and to stick by us in all seasons. How can you show up for others, as a Ruth or a Naomi?

PRAYER: Lord, give me the heart of Ruth, steadfast in devotion and courageous in love, that I may walk in faith even when the path is uncertain. Help me to be a Naomi to others, living out my faith with sincerity, so that those around me may see you through me.

INHALE: God, you are constant through the good and the bitter days.

EXHALE: May my love remain steadfast.

"We are all leaders..."

DAY 5 Embracing the foreigner

SCRIPTURE: Ruth 2

'As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her. Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her." (Ruth 2:15-16)

Additional reading: Leviticus 19:9-10

REFLECT: The story of Ruth beautifully demonstrates God's boundless love and inclusion, highlighting his embrace of the outsider.

Ruth, a Moabite woman, chose to follow Naomi and adopt Naomi's God as her own, despite being a foreigner in Israel – a land where Moabites were often looked upon with suspicion. Ruth's faith, loyalty and courage set her apart, and through her we see how God can weave anyone into his divine plan.

Through Boaz, God provided for Ruth and Naomi. Ruth's ability to glean in the fields was a result of God's laws protecting the marginalised, including foreigners (Leviticus 19:9-10). Boaz's compassion didn't take the form of grand gestures, although his generosity did go above and beyond what was expected.

Gleaning in Ruth's day was labour-intensive work. Boaz didn't remove the hardship from her task by providing her with a neat bundle of harvested barley, but rather he ensured her safety, allowing her to work with dignity. This beautifully reflects God's care for the vulnerable and his desire for his people to reflect his heart by supporting, welcoming and protecting those in need.

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Ruth, a foreigner, became part of the lineage of King David and ultimately Jesus Christ. This demonstrates God's intention to include all nations in his plan of salvation, foreshadowing the inclusive message of Jesus.

DAILY ACTION: The Book of Ruth challenges us to emulate God's love for the outsider. It encourages us to welcome and support foreigners in our communities, treating them with dignity and compassion as God does. Below are some ways you can do that in your daily life:

- 1. Pray for immigrants, refugees and those who feel like outsiders. Ask God to bless and guide them as they navigate life in a new place.
- 2. Extend hospitality. Invite a neighbour or co-worker from a different culture to share a meal. Genuine connection can break down barriers and build understanding.
- 3. Volunteer with refugee or immigrant organisations. Offer your time or resources to support groups that work with newcomers, such as helping with language classes, resettlement or providing mentorship.

PRAYER: God, help me to see others as you see them – valued, loved and filled with purpose. Open my heart to those who feel like strangers, to extend kindness to foreigners, and to embody your justice and mercy in my actions.

INHALE: God, there is no such thing as a foreigner to you. **EXHALE**: Help me to extend my hand and my heart.



Compassionate provision

SCRIPTURE: Ruth 3 and 4

'Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, ''Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelek, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife...'" (Ruth 4:9-10)

Additional reading: Deuteronomy 10:17-18

REFLECT: The conclusion of the Book of Ruth shows a happy ending that is a far cry from the bitter reality of Naomi and Ruth's position in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 3, we witness a plan – carried out by Naomi and Ruth – to ensure that Boaz would notice their position. No longer in her grieving clothes, Ruth visited Boaz to indicate her availability for marriage.

Just as Boaz saw Ruth as a woman of 'noble character', he is a man of honour. He guaranteed Ruth the protection and provision she was seeking and ensured that all was done properly, insisting on her dignity despite her vulnerable position.

Through purchasing Naomi's land and choosing to marry Ruth, Boaz stepped into a future far greater than he could have imagined. Their son, Obed, became the grandfather of King David and an ancestor of Jesus Christ. The compassionate actions of Boaz remind us that an act of kindness has ripples, like the continued impact of a stone thrown into water. The ripples of Boaz's kindness lasted for centuries, shaping many lives beyond Ruth and Naomi.

The Book of Ruth sees a total reversal of tragedy, an image of the transformative power of God's loving-kindness. Naomi's belief that God had turned his face away from her becomes just a chapter in his story of redemption through Jesus.



DAILY ACTION: Boaz's kindness towards Ruth and Naomi was not just an act of generosity, but it is a lesson in compassionate provision and treating others with dignity. When we have the chance to help others, do we pause to consider not just the need, but the dignity of the person?

Consider creating a 'Community Care Box' for a local church, workplace or school, where people can anonymously donate essential items for those in need. Items should cover diverse needs depending on your community – from hygiene products to gift cards, winter clothing to school supplies.

Ensure the items are presented well, with thought and care, and not treated as someone else's leftovers. This may mean taking additional time to clean, check and mend donated items. Prioritise the recipient's right to discretion – don't make a spectacle of your good deeds. Instead, provide a quiet and calming space to receive.

If you can personally distribute items – whether through a drop-in or delivery service – engage in conversation with genuine interest. Offer choices instead of assuming needs and seek to empower rather than to simply provide.

PRAYER: Lord, in loving-kindness you rewrite our stories and turn sorrow into joy. Teach me to walk in generosity and grace. May I reflect your heart in all I do, and may my actions ripple beyond what I can see.

INHALE: Lord, in love, you give us good things.

EXHALE: May I never underestimate the gift of kindness.

"May I reflect your heart in all I do..."

Blessed are the poor in spirit



"'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 5:3)

Additional reading: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

DEVOTION: This verse, from the well-known Beatitudes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, diagnoses humanity with a spiritual poverty.

The words can be confronting as, for many of us, to be known as poor is to be financially lacking and to be physically vulnerable. This verse isn't concerned with our material wealth, but our spiritual health.

It points to a shared reality: we are deeply in need of Jesus. We are completely dependent on his guidance and his grace in every aspect of our lives. To identify this spiritual poverty within ourselves, and, in response, to seek the infinite riches of Jesus, is a blessed position because he is ready to offer us strength and direction.

The truth is that without his presence, our well-intended efforts fall short. But those who lean on the power of Jesus are equipped beyond their own abilities to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. His empowerment does not simply elevate our abilities; it renews our hearts, emboldens our faith and enables us to speak up with the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

REFLECT: When we confess our spiritual poverty, we position ourselves to receive the fullness of God's Kingdom: "'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

- Have there been moments when you felt spiritually empty, yet discovered God's presence in a new way?
- In what ways do you rely on your own strength rather than surrender to God's guidance? Where could surrender lead you?
- Is there an area of your life where God is calling you to embrace spiritual humility so that you may receive more fully from him? Take time to pray about this.

REST: 'Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life in our day,' writes Dallas Willard, the American philosopher.

Today, take a break from activity. Acknowledge within yourself the desire to do – and evaluate its importance. If you can, put your to-do items aside and rest for more than a few minutes at a time. Consider whether you have been seeking productivity over presence.

Be unhurried. Recognise your deep need of God. Enjoy time spent with him.

PRAYER: Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to reflect and rest. Please help me to make time to be in your presence, relying on your guidance as I seek to make a difference where I am.

Teach me to embrace my spiritual poverty so that I may receive the riches of your grace. May my words and actions be a reflection of your love, and my life a testimony to your power at work within me. Amen.

WEEKLY CHECK-IN OUESTIONS:

Reflect on the various ways you've lived out justice in the last week. Think about each day and the different experiences in which you have been invited to participate.

- Can you remember the people you interacted with? Spend time recollecting their reactions and their stories.
- How did these interactions shape, change or challenge you?
- Could any of these actions become part of your day-to-day life?

DAY 8 Wisdom, faith and trust

SCRIPTURE: Judges 4

'Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time...and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.' (ludges 4:4-5)

Additional reading: Isaiah 41:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

REFLECT: Deborah, the prophet and judge in Judges 4, exemplified wisdom and faith. She was trusted as a renowned leader of her people.

Amid Israel's oppression by the Canaanites, she responded to God's call with unwavering confidence, guiding the nation towards justice and victory. In her wisdom, Deborah summoned the military commander, Barak, and urged him to lead the charge against the enemy. With confidence, she assured him of God's promise; it is this faith in God that served as the foundation for her leadership.

So well regarded was Deborah that Barak refused to go into battle without her. In this way, her story demonstrates the costliness of leadership and action. It is not something to aspire to as much as it is a responsibility to bear in mature faith. We must adopt the posture of a servant first, and be willing to embrace challenging situations with God's help.

Deborah's story models how God equips us and offers strength not only for ourselves but for those around us. We are called to be bold, wise and faithful, trusting God's promises in every circumstance.

DAILY ACTION: How much do you expect from the leaders around you? How often do you pray for them?

Leadership is more than standing at the front. It's about faithfully showing up to serve, often in trying and tiring circumstances. In I Thessalonians 5, it is clear that we are to honour our leaders and to never stop praying.

Organise a prayer meeting for community figures, educators and local decision-makers, covering them in prayer as they lead and make critical decisions. If you are unable to share with them in person, write to them and express your care and your desire to pray for them, asking for requests.

As you meet, pray for wisdom, peace, courage, integrity, encouragement, strength and perseverance, hope, fresh energy and creativity, health, family life, patience, humility and servant leadership. If you would like to follow these prayer points, make use of our <u>Praying for Leaders guide</u>.

Just as Deborah empowered Barak to fight for the victory that she knew was secure, step into roles where you can uplift and stand alongside others in servant-hearted posture.

PRAYER: God, grant me the wisdom and courage of Deborah. May my heart trust your promises and may I lead with confidence, grace and humility.

INHALE: God, you equip me with wisdom. **EXHALE**: Help me to lead and serve by faith.

Empowerment and encouragement

SCRIPTURE: Esther 4

"'For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

Additional reading: Psalm 27

REFLECT: God isn't mentioned in the Book of Esther, yet his presence may be seen through a series of unlikely events in the narrative.

The story follows two Jews, Esther and her uncle Mordecai, living in socially tense times under an impulsive king and his corrupt advisors. Unexpectedly, Esther is elevated to a position of influence with potential for action.

'Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?' is the famous question put to Esther by Mordecai. In this moment, she needed to be encouraged and reminded of her purpose. His question of 'who knows?' points us to the omniscience and omnipotence of God, situating Esther as not just royal by earthly status but also by divine appointment. Her response proved her to be a woman empowered to confront evil: 'I will go to the king... And if I perish, I perish.'

Esther had a heroic task ahead of her, but Mordecai's role as encourager and ally was of equal importance. His words made her brave. Mordecai modelled partnership with Esther, showing how diverse voices working together can achieve righteousness and justice in God's Kingdom.

DAILY ACTION: The wisdom of 'With great power comes great responsibility', shared by Uncle Ben, gave Peter Parker the courage to become Spider-Man.



Comic-book heroes often face moments of doubt and fragility, and there is often a mentor figure who sits beside them, reminding them of their strength and their unique position to make a difference.

The same could be said for Esther. Her position as queen gave her a unique opportunity to save her people from death, and it was a wise and encouraging word from Mordecai that gave her the motivation she needed.

We may not have the ear of people with the same power or responsibility as Esther, but we are all surrounded by people who might need our words of wisdom. Reflecting Mordecai's role, could you mentor someone who may need encouragement and guidance? Explore mentoring opportunities in your local community and take up the opportunity to support others to recognise their potential and step into their calling.

PRAYER: Lord, you position us for a purpose, calling us to step out with courage. Strengthen my voice to speak up for what is right. May I be an instrument of your justice.

INHALE: God, your love makes me brave. **EXHALE**: Help me empower others well.

Courageous obedience

SCRIPTURE: Esther 5, 7 and 8

'Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favour with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life – this is my petition. And spare my people – this is my request." (Esther 7:3)

REFLECT: Esther's story is one of courageous obedience. She faced an unimaginable decision: risk her life by approaching the king or stay silent while her people face extermination. We see her transformation from a passive queen into a leader willing to put her life on the line for others.

In Chapter 5, Esther demonstrates strategic bravery. She approaches King Xerxes uninvited, a move that could result in her death. She acted with grace and wisdom, requesting that the king and Haman attend a banquet she prepared. This calculated approach shows her courage is not reckless but thoughtful, aligning with her reliance on God's timing.

Through divine providence – the unseen hand of God in her story – justice prevailed, and a decree was issued to protect the Jewish people. As a result, Mordecai was elevated to unlikely levels of influence. This displays God's ability to redeem and reverse situations for his purposes.

Esther's story reminds us to stand boldly for justice, even when the stakes are high. Her courage shows that bravery often requires careful planning, patience and trust in God's guidance.

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DAILY ACTION: Esther's story encourages boldness and courage in the face of injustice. Below are some practical ways you can do this in your daily life.

- I. Speak up for justice. Like Esther, look for opportunities to stand up for others, especially those who cannot defend themselves. This could mean supporting a friend, raising awareness for a cause or petitioning for fairness in public, such as at town-hall events or community forums.
- 2. Prepare with intentionality. In community, Esther fasted and sought God's guidance before acting (Esther 4:16). Practise preparation in your decisions by seeking God's direction through prayer or reflection before important tasks or conversations.
- 3. Be a light in your sphere of influence. Recognise your current position at work, home or in your community and seek to be a positive influence, knowing you're placed there for a purpose.

PRAYER: Lord, grant me the wisdom and courage to stand for justice, trusting in your divine guidance. Lead me to live boldly in faith and love, even in the face of fear.

INHALE: God, who gives courage and boldness for every moment. **EXHALE**: I need not be afraid.



DAY 11 Radical generosity

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 2:1-16

'So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. She said to them, "Go to the hills so that the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way." (Joshua 2:15-16)

Additional reading: Psalm 46

REFLECT: In Joshua 2:1-16, we are introduced to Rahab. A prostitute in Jericho, she made for an unlikely hero – but this story reminds us that God is a God of surprises.

Rahab's heroic act? Hiding the spies that Joshua sent to view the land. She was not an Israelite, so her radical act of support was certainly not assumed. We learn that she had heard stories about their God and something in those stories had made an impact on her. Consequently, she lied to the king about the whereabouts of the Israelites and told him they had left the city.

To defy the king and to hide unknown spies required great bravery on Rahab's part, but this was not an act undertaken solely in personal courage. It was an act of radical generosity, carried out in faith. She stepped outside of her comfort zone in order to live boldly and do what was right. She had been so moved by the stories of Joshua's God – her heart had turned towards him – that she declared him as the Lord of Heaven and earth.

DAILY ACTION: In our church community, there was a woman who often came just to socialise. She would talk, laugh and share about life. One day she came in bruised, disclosing that her husband had hit her while he was drunk.

On this particular day, she didn't need the usual talk and refreshment, she needed immediate action. Someone to help her stand and act in courage. Together, we secured her and her children's safety. Later, as we journeyed with the family, we were able to see the husband enter a rehabilitation centre.

The path is not easy. There can be danger and pain, but our radical faith, in response to the radical love of Jesus, must compel us to act with radical generosity. Ask yourself: Where is my courageous faith leading me? Which paths must I walk to find the broken-hearted? In a society that prizes self-love and inner peace, am I still serving boldly?

Consider what steps you can take to serve a community or an individual that thirsts for love, peace and understanding, particularly in a culture that values personal comfort above most things.

PRAYER: Lord, give me a faith that moves beyond fear and into action. May my heart be open to opportunities to serve others with courage and compassion, even when it costs me.

INHALE: Lord of refuge, make my faith bold. **EXHALE**: Let me act with courage and love.

"Where is my courageous faith leading me?"

Protecting the vulnerable

SCRIPTURE: Joshua 6:22-25

'So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.' (Joshua 6:23)

Additional reading: Matthew 1:1-6

REFLECT: Rahab's story is a powerful testament to the transformative nature of faith-driven protection. She risked everything to shield the vulnerable and, repaying her kindness, Joshua secures the future of her family when Jericho was taken by the Israelites.

Her transition from protector to being protected reminds us that when we extend care to others, we often find that grace returned to us in unexpected ways. The kindness she showed became the kindness she received, and her faith opened doors not just for survival but for restoration and honour.

In today's world, protecting the vulnerable may look different, but the heart of Rahab's story remains the same. Who are the people in your community who need shelter physically, emotionally or spiritually? How can your faith compel you to step out in courage for someone else's well-being?

Rahab's legacy of courageous kindness continues to be emphasised in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew I, which points to her as the mother of Boaz, a man known for his own acts of kindness in the Book of Ruth. Her story shows that when God is respected and honoured in our lives, great transformation is possible!

DAILY ACTION: At one time, I was ministering to homeless families living under bridges. These families lacked food, jobs and security, especially for their children who were at high risk of being kidnapped. My role was to teach them basic languages and numbers, and to equip them to manage personal hygiene.

Each day, I would begin by washing their faces and hands. Sitting on mats, we would start the day in conversation. The children would share in a morning devotion with me and one day I taught them a simple chorus: 'Praise and homage goes up, and these bring blessings from above. Our God is great, and he loves us a lot.' That day, I considered what 'blessings' mean to those without necessities, without safety, without protection. How can we assist in providing blessings from positions of security and privilege?

You could offer support to emergency shelters. In many communities, systems are in place to care for those who need urgent protection. Connect with existing shelters and refuges to learn how you can support their efforts through the provision of supplies or by volunteering in-person assistance.

You could also create a safe space for individuals who are in need of emotional care, due to feeling low, lonely or isolated. As you meet, consider engaging in a shared activity, like reading or exercising or making music, as this helps to build connection and trust. Provide opportunities to go deeper than surface-level conversation and be prepared to speak encouragement over those who gather.

PRAYER: God, may I remember the vulnerable. May I remember and give thanks for the many blessings you have given to me. Help me to protect those who need shelter and to love those who need friendship.

INHALE: Lord, make me a refuge for others. **EXHALE**: Let your love flow through me.

DAY 13 United and organised for good

SCRIPTURE: Numbers 27:1-11

'So Moses brought their case before the LORD, and the LORD said to him, "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and give their father's inheritance to them." (Numbers 27:5-7)

Additional reading: Psalm 67

REFLECT: At this time in Israel, women were seen as property of their father or husband and, as such, had no right to own land. The five daughters of Zelophehad dared to challenge the status quo.

With humility and wisdom, the sisters united to counter the cultural norms of the day as they approached Moses, seeking to inherit their father's land after he had died with no male heirs. Their request was bold and unprecedented. When Moses brought it to the Lord, he declared their plea as just and established a new law allowing women to own land.

This moment, set on the cusp of the Israelites entering the Promised Land, was revolutionary – and not just for women. The women spoke out against and successfully repealed unjust land laws and, in the process, revealed an image of a God who stands alongside women and supports their cause. Their story shows God as fair and just, mindful of the overlooked and disadvantaged.

DAILY ACTION: In Zelophehad's daughters, we learn the value of pursuing justice and equality in local community. They considered their situation and challenged injustice. They spoke up and stood up for what was right. Their efforts remind us that faith necessitates action against injustice, no matter how challenging or painful the task seems.

Their courage in advocating for the marginalised, their belief in God's justice and their partnership is inspiring. The sisters' story motivates us to speak up in our communities, workplaces and places of worship.

Consider whether you know of a situation where you could act or speak out for change. There may be an injustice that has become ingrained in the culture that it often goes unnoticed. Perhaps you, too, are in the margins, or you're aware of someone in your community in need of an advocate. First, think carefully about the situation and any desired outcomes. Secondly, do not attempt this alone — think about who you can work with in response.

In the words of Catherine Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army: 'You are not here in the world for yourself. You have been sent here for others. The world is waiting for you!'

PRAYER: God, thank you for reminding me to unite with others in Kingdom work. I seek your wisdom and pray that your Holy Spirit will guide me to the places where I can partner in bringing justice to the women in the world.

INHALE: God, you are wise and just.

EXHALE: May my life display your wisdom and justice.



Blessed are the pure in heart

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:7-12

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.' (Matthew 5:8)

Additional reading: Psalm 51; Philippians 4:8

DEVOTION: In Psalm 51:10, David earnestly prayed, 'Create in me a pure heart, O God.' His plea reflects deep longing for renewal and holiness. In Philippians 4:8, Paul urged contemplation on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable. In Matthew 5:8, Jesus said that those who are pure in heart are blessed.

This blessing is part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' famous teaching on a way of living, radically rooted in compassion, humility and faith. To be pure in heart means to have sincerity, integrity and an undivided devotion to God. It looks past outward actions and appearances, straight to a heart that is free from deceit, bitterness and notions of self-importance. A pure heart is one that seeks God honestly and loves others selflessly.

The promise attached to this blessing – 'for they will see God' – is profound. This means experiencing God's presence more clearly in this life – through his guidance, love and truth – as well as the ultimate fulfilment of seeing him in eternity.

Purity of heart is not about perfection, but about a continual pursuit of God's holiness. It's an invitation to grow closer to him, letting him refine our hearts and shape our thoughts.

REFLECT: Take time today to think and reflect on what the benefits of purity are. As David prayed: 'Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.' (Psalm 51:10)

How do you feel about being pure? Do you feel it is attainable in today's world?

How can you embrace purity in your daily life? How could purity change your relationships with others?

Where do you feel most in need of God's renewal, restoration and sustenance?

REST: As you rest today, meditate on the instruction of Philippians 4:8.

Notice the things that are pure, lovely, praiseworthy. Settle your mind on God's goodness, filtering distractions and anxieties that cloud your thinking. You may want to turn off your phone or mute digital notifications. Take a walk or sit in a space where there is plenty of God's creation to observe and enjoy.

As you reflect, remember that purity of heart is not found in striving but in surrender. Are there heavy thoughts or emotions weighing you down? Lay them before God and trust that he will renew and restore you.

PRAYER: Thank you, Father, for the joy and purity in the things I see when I slow down, for the opportunity to enjoy the world you created and for the time to make today different to my normal days. Amen.

WEEKLY CHECK-IN QUESTIONS: Reflect on the various ways you've lived out justice in the last week. Think about each day and the different experiences you have been invited to participate in.

- Can you remember the people you interacted with? Spend some time recollecting their reactions and their stories.
- How did these interactions shape, change or challenge you?
- Could any of these actions become part of your day-to-day life?

Having faith in someone else's ability

SCRIPTURE: John 2:1-11

'His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5)

Additional reading: Proverbs 3:5-6

REFLECT: Have you ever had someone believe in you before you fully believed in yourself? Encouragement from others can propel us into confidence and action.

Mary believed in Jesus before he was even born. She knew he was the Son of God and she believed in his ability even before he had revealed it. Demonstrating her prophetic faith in his yet-unseen power, she instructed the servants: 'Do whatever he tells you.'

This passage reminds us that faith in someone else's ability can be more than simple encouragement. It can be an act of belief that helps them to become who God has created them to be.

The servants obeyed without knowing what would happen. Through their trust, they witnessed the miraculous: water became wine – at least 120 gallons of it! – and faith turned into action. Just as Mary and the servants stepped forward in faith, we, too, can place trust in others, encouraging them to step into their God-given calling.

DAILY ACTION: Think about a person in your life who sees the potential in you and encourages you to further develop your capacity. How does this experience impact and inform your life and faith perspective? You may want to pause and thank the Lord for his presence with you during this journey. You may want to pray for such a relationship to come about in your life.

Think about people of influence in your community – executive boards, leadership teams, local government or committees – and consider whether there are any gaps in these groups. Who is not being represented? Are there any groups who do not have a seat at the table?

"Help me, Lord, to be an encourager..."

Consider the needs of your community – your church, your workplace, your friendships – that are not currently being met. Observe which people are actively seeking and serving. Pay close attention to those who are overlooked or systemically undervalued.

Ask the Lord to:

- send his workers for the plentiful harvest
- open your eyes to see who in your community is called to fulfil his purpose and to build the body of Christ
- help you dare to believe on others' behalf, even if they are reluctant at first or lack certain skills.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to be an encourager, someone who can see the potential in others and have faith in their ability. May I speak words of encouragement that awaken faith and boldly affirm.

INHALE: Lord, open my eyes to potential. **EXHALE**: May my faith in their ability reflect your love.

Acting justly and sharing the gospel

SCRIPTURE: John 4:1-30

"Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could this be the Messiah?"" (John 4:29)

Additional reading: Psalm 139:1-18

REFLECT: How do you feel about the Lord knowing everything you've ever done?

On the one hand, it makes confession less daunting. On the other hand, it is incredibly humbling. Maybe we feel like there is some safety in the shadows.

In John 4, Jesus shared with a woman who was weighed down by shame. As Jesus revealed his divine and intimate knowledge of her past and present circumstances, she slowly understood that he was embracing her in love and faith. Before the disciples returned, Jesus explained that he is the One that people had been looking for. This news filled her with enthusiasm: leaving her water jar, she ran back to her village to tell everyone to come and meet the Messiah!

Once confined to life in the margins, one transformative encounter with Jesus meant that she was no longer ashamed.

We imagine that the story was far from finished for the woman, but, in Scripture, the narrative stops here. We are left with a number of questions, such as did the villagers get to speak with Jesus and how did the village change because of this woman's encounter?





DAILY ACTION: Shame is a powerful, debilitating force. It can prevent people from seeking help and from being who God created them to be.

Millions of people around the world have learnt to manage their addictions through recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. For people who have been previously bound by shame, these groups provide spaces where people can be open, honest and vulnerable, sharing their stories without fear of judgement.

Is this not what church should be?

Jesus wants to be in a relationship with each of us. He wants us to bring our authentic selves to him. Drawing close to Jesus sets us free and, like the Samaritan woman, we are compelled to share this goodness with those around us.

Jesus didn't dismiss the Samaritan woman's experiences or shame her. He acknowledged her past with grace and shared the truth of who he was. Could you and your church be that place of shameless love and acceptance in your community?

PRAYER: Lord, I am so amazed that you are in my life and that you know me completely. Thank you for your love that covers all shame. Help me to share this love and communicate my passion for you with all I meet.

INHALE: Lord, let me share your goodness. **EXHALE**: May it bring others joy and freedom.

DAY 17 Merciful intervention

SCRIPTURE: John 8:1-11

'Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman... Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:10-11)

Additional reading: Micah 6:8

REFLECT: In John 8:1-11, we are drawn into an extraordinary moment of grace and challenge. Jesus was being confronted by the religious elite eager to test him, but he didn't rise to meet their arrogance. Instead, he lowered himself. He stooped to the dusty ground, embodying a disarming humility, and spoke profound wisdom that shattered their lofty authority.

They demanded judgement on the woman caught in sin, but Jesus – still bending towards the earth – pointed to self-reflection: 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone...' (John 8:7). His words cut through their self-righteousness, inverting the scrutiny of the accusers. One by one, they left.

In this act, Jesus did more than defend the woman. He demonstrated the power of mercy for the suffering and modelled integrity. He didn't dismiss sin, but addressed the situation with grace: 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'

The posture of Jesus in this scene is incredibly subversive, speaking to the upside-down, last-become-first values of the Kingdom of God. By humbling himself, he upheld what is right in a way no earthly power can. This passage challenges us to love mercy, to stand for what is just, even when it defies societal norms, and to recognise our humility is God's strength.

DAILY ACTION: In this story, Jesus exemplifies the transformative power of compassion and advocacy for those facing injustice. The story resonates with many women, locally and globally, who endure prejudice and policies that obstruct their progress.

In this passage, we see a life literally grounded in humility, abounding with mercy and the courage to stand for what is right. As Jesus stooped, we are called to humble ourselves from positions of pride or judgement so that we may approach others with compassion. The challenge here is twofold: first, to reflect on our own hearts. Are we quick to point fingers, or do we recognise our own flaws and need for grace? Take time to examine your attitudes and seek God's guidance in letting go of self-righteousness.

Second, this passage calls us to act. Where in your life is mercy needed? Perhaps it's extending forgiveness to someone who has wronged you, speaking up for someone facing unjust criticism or simply to consciously choose grace over harsh judgement. In standing for what is just, we embody the Kingdom's values: humility becomes strength, and mercy triumphs over condemnation. The invitation is clear: love boldly, act humbly and reflect God's grace in all you do.

PRAYER: God, you are the strength for the weak. I seek your wisdom and pray that you show me how I can stand alongside those who cannot defend themselves. Give me the courage to stand for justice and let your mercy flow through me.

INHALE: Lord of mercy, you do not condemn. **EXHALE**: I am secure in your grace.

DAY 18 The tension of being and doing

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:38-42

"'Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42)

Additional reading: I Corinthians 13:1-3

REFLECT: This story of Jesus visiting the home of Mary and Martha highlights the tension between being and doing. Martha, consumed by service, had lost sight of its purpose, while Mary chose the stillness of sitting at Jesus' feet.

Jesus' pointing to the better thing raises questions about our priorities as Christians. What good is our service without a heart of worship? How effective is our mission if we are not, first and foremost, disciples?

Catherine Booth, co-founder of The Salvation Army, wrote that: '[God] wants us just to be and to do. He wants us to be like His Son and then do as His Son did; and when we come to that He will shake the world through us!'

It is not that 'doing' is bad – or even worse than 'being' – but we must be aware of its order and place in our spiritual lives. In I Corinthians I3:3, we read of a similar tension as the apostle Paul writes that even the most radical and costly acts of service are worth nothing if they are void of love.

Likewise, our good deeds are only meaningful if they flow from time spent with Jesus. Martha's actions were good, but Mary chose what was better in that moment — deepening her relationship with Jesus. Discipleship balances service with presence, and focusing on the eternal brings clarity and peace, transforming our work into our worship.

DAILY ACTION: This story prompts us to ask: 'Why am I doing what I am doing?'

Pick out a specific way you regularly serve others – whether it is caring for elderly relatives, mentoring a young person, doing hospital visitations or picking up supplies for those who cannot get to the shops. Spend some time reflecting on your motivation for doing it. Take your time and, like Mary, sit at the feet of Jesus. If you need to, ask him to bring order to your service or to realign your focus. The next time you carry out this activity, take notice of how you feel. Has your perspective changed?

The story also reminds us to connect with others. Ask a friend to share what they receive from time spent with Jesus. Be open to learning from one another. How do you prioritise this time? What do you learn about Jesus? How does it make a difference in the way you use your time? Has it changed how you connect with people? Do you feel the tension between 'being' and 'doing'? Do you need to start putting your insights into action?

PRAYER: Lord, quiet my anxious mind and remind me to sit awhile at your feet. Here, in your presence, may I find the peace, the focus and the clarity that my spirit craves.

INHALE: Lord, calm my restless heart and stop my busy hands.

EXHALE: Help me to choose the better thing.

"Be open to learning from one another."

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DAY 19 Costly service and lavish devotion

SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:1-9

'While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the p2erfume on his head.

'Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. (Mark 14:3-5)

Additional reading: John 12:1-8

REFLECT: Mark 14:1-9 and John 12:1-8 capture the beauty of devotion as Mary (or 'the woman' in Mark 14) anointed Jesus with perfume. This act, both intimate and extravagant, symbolises the costliness of true service and heartfelt worship.

At this point in the account of Jesus' life, it was becoming clearer that his story would involve confrontation and conflict that would likely cost him his life. Sensing this, Mary unexpectedly broke open a jar of pure nard and covered Jesus in this lavish gift.

The people looking on argued that Mary's perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. But Jesus silenced them, defended Mary's actions and promised her a legacy of faithfulness that would extend as far as the gospel.





Imagine this moment. The breaking of the jar. The oil remnant in Mary's hair. The fragrance that filled the room. The far-reaching impact of love on a community. Later that week, when Jesus was imprisoned, beaten and stripped of all he had, this moment would have remained with him as the perfume clung to his skin. As Jesus carried the cross, he carried with him a scent memory of Mary's devotion.

DAILY ACTION: This scene is mutually honouring. Mary honoured her friend and teacher, Jesus, and he honoured her in return when he defended her against harsh rebuking: 'Leave her alone... She has done a beautiful thing to me.'

In Mark 14:6-9, Jesus' response reminds us that no expression of love is ever wasted. Like Jesus, consider how you can stand up in righteous defence for those who are marginalised or misunderstood. Like Mary, reflect on how you can love without abandon and give without counting the cost.

Re-read the account in Mark 14, and reflect on the following questions:

- I. What does this passage reveal about the value of worship?
- 2. Are you extravagant in your love for Jesus? How about in your giving time, finances, service? Are you willing to give up what is costly to you?
- 3. How do you respond when others criticise or misunderstand your acts done in good faith?
- 4. The woman is known for her faithfulness and devotion. What legacy do you want to leave?

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to love you and others without hesitation, offering all I have in devotion to you. May my worship be pure and my heart wholly surrendered in extravagant praise, unconcerned by the opinions of others.

INHALE: Jesus, you are worthy.

EXHALE: I pour out all I have in love for you.

Our faith inheritance: how do we fit into this story?

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11 and 12:1-3

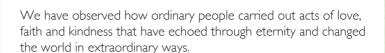
'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.' (Hebrews 12:1-2)

REFLECT: In Hebrews II, we read of the great story of God's redeeming love as told through the narratives of Old Testament figures who walked a path of faith and trusted God in uncertainty. Sarah laughed at the promise of a son, yet through her came the lineage of nations. Hagar wandered in the wilderness and encountered the God who sees. Rahab, an outsider, was drawn into the family of God's people.

These women form part of the great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12. Their stories remind us that faith is not about perfection but about trust, perseverance and surrender. As followers of Jesus, this is our faith inheritance. We stand upon the testimonies of those who have gone before us.

The exciting part? God's redemptive story is still unfolding, and he invites us to participate in it! Just as Rahab sheltered the spies and received protection, just as Hagar found refuge in God's presence, just as Sarah saw the fulfilment of God's promise, we are called to live by faith.

DAILY ACTION: Over the course of this devotional, we have read stories of women and men whose lives were divinely touched. We have journeyed, generation to generation, to the life of Jesus whose resurrected life changes everything.



Today, reflect on the faith stories that have shaped your own journey. Consider the people who have supported and paved the way for you personally. Write to them and extend your gratitude and appreciation.

Ask yourself these questions. What might it look like for you to take hold of your place in this story? Who is looking to you as a witness to God's faithfulness? What steps of trust and surrender is God inviting you into today?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to run the race before me with perseverance, fixing my eyes on you, the perfecter of my faith. May I walk in the footsteps of those who trusted you, carrying their legacy forward in love and obedience.

INHALE: God, I am surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. **EXHALE:** Strengthen me to take my place in your unfolding story.

"...we are called to live by faith."

Shine before others

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:13-16

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Additional reading: Matthew 6:1-4

DEVOTION: Over the past three weeks, we have focused on living out justice. We have been challenged to consider perspectives that are different from our own, to selflessly serve our neighbour and to make a positive impact in our communities.

Now, on the final day of this devotional series, we read the instruction of Matthew 5:16. The light within us comes from the Lord and, as his followers, this is what we were created to do. Eugene H. Peterson, in *The Message* paraphrase, puts it like this: 'You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? ... You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world.' (Matthew 5:13-14, *The Message*)

REFLECT: At the heart of this Scripture, and into Matthew 6:1-4, is an opportunity to look at our motives. Are you striving for people's praise and commendation, or the reward of your heavenly Father? Are you doing good for personal glory or so that God can be glorified and his righteousness revealed?

When we see with eyes of compassion, all glory goes to God. When we offer a helping hand, all glory goes to God. When we serve our neighbour in love, all glory goes to God.

REST: As you rest in God's presence today, consider the opportunities you have had to bear witness to God as you have served others by love.

Reflect on moments where you may have received a word of thanks or a grateful smile for your actions. In an act of worship and reverence, return each moment of appreciation and reciprocated kindness to the Lord: 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.' (Psalm 16:2)

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As you do so, you may want to listen to worship music and exalt your own song of praise to God. Read Matthew 5:1-16 in full. Be filled with joy in God's presence. Let your light shine.

PRAYER: Lord, may your light shine through me so that my actions reflect your love and bring glory to your holy name. Help me to serve others with compassion and confidence, honouring you in all I do. Amen.

WEEKLY CHECK-IN QUESTIONS:

Reflect on the various ways you've lived out justice in the last week. Think about each day and the different experiences you have been invited to participate in.

- Can you remember the people you interacted with? Spend some time recollecting their reactions and their stories.
- How did these interactions shape, change or challenge you?
- Could any of these actions become part of your day-to-day life?



