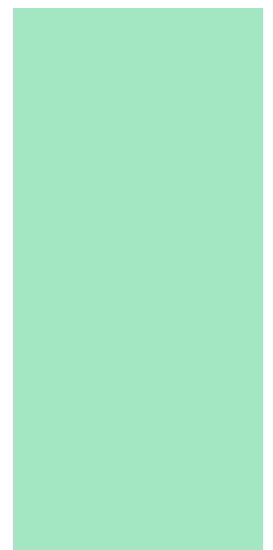
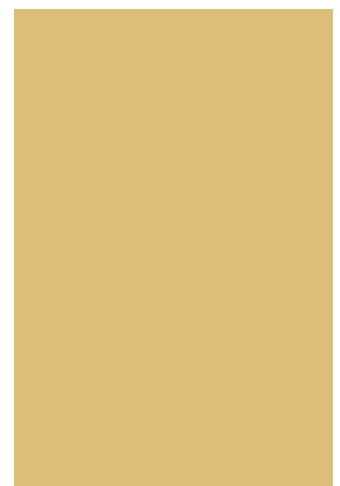
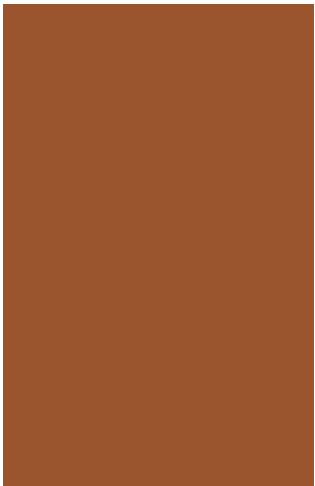
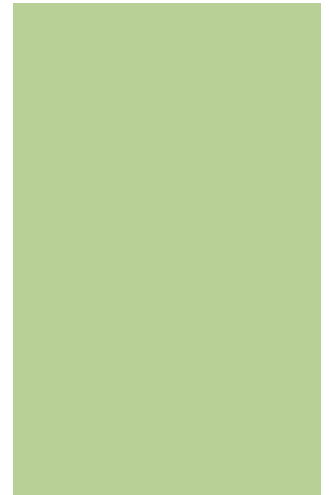
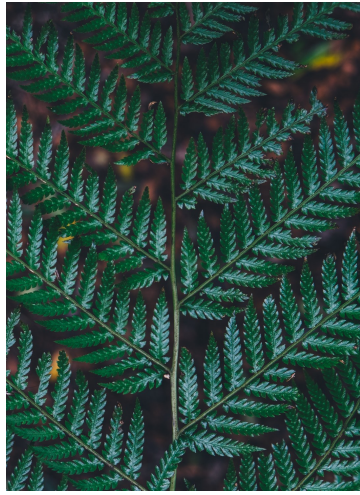


EQUIPPED

BIBLE STUDY



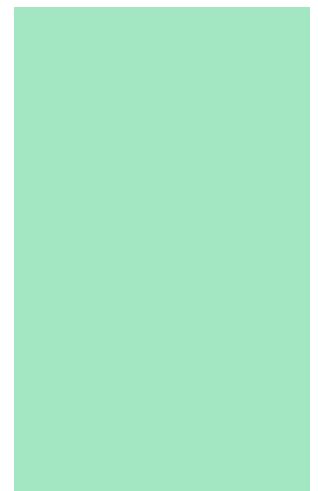


Instructions for Equipped Bible Study

Each page is a day's devotional. Or if you do this as a Bible Study you can break the whole document into sections by pages, such as: 3-5, 6-8, 9-11, 12-14, 15-17, 18 & 19. Making it a six session study. The leader can assign pages, such as; “Complete pages 3-5 by next meeting.”

Follow these three steps as you complete this personally and as a group:

- 1) Read scripture (read the corresponding full chapter as well, to understand it's context).
- 2) Read devotional—if you're in a group, someone should read it aloud.
- 3) If this study is done personally, write you answers down. If in a group, use the questions as a discussion guide.



Now may the God of peace—
who brought up from the dead our
Lord Jesus,
the great Shepherd of the sheep,
and ratified an eternal covenant with
his blood—

²¹ may he equip you with all you need
or doing his will.

May he produce in you,
through the power of Jesus Christ,
every good thing that is pleasing to
him.

All glory to him forever and ever!
Amen.

Hebrews 13: 20-21



Devotional by Cadet Rachel Aren

I grew up to believe that God will give me everything I needed to be successful for whatever He has called me to do, or anything he has called me to be. In my adolescent naivety, though, I always believed that it would just be granted if I simply prayed for it. If I needed to be equipped with more patience, for example, He would simply give it to me. Or if I needed to be granted self-control, I would pray out about it during my nightly prayers and would wake up the next morning and, then, BOOM: I would be more patient. Like Mary Poppins who snaps her fingers and things are magically and strategically assembled or arranged. In my 29 year of life, however, I have learned that that is not always the case. Correction: that is NEVER how it works with Jesus. Jesus and Mary Poppins do not have the same style. Throughout my life, I have come to realize that one particular way that Jesus equips us to better do his will, is to give us opportunities to develop what we need. Sometimes, that is the hard way. (Like when we ask Jesus for patience and then he arranges our day to have a conversation with the 10 most challenging people we know)

Now, instead of being discouraged when God brings hard things into my life, I find encouragement, because now I know it all just a part of the journey; it is all a part of being more and better equipped to do His will. Now, I find JOY in those trails, tribulations and challenges. Now, I know that I will not be equipped to do God's will effectively without them.

"to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"

PROCESS/DISCUSS

In what ways do you treat God like a genie in a bottle?

What part of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control) do you feel you need to respond to God developing in you?

What part of the scripture Hebrews 13:20-21 speaks to you the most?

**His divine power has given us everything
we need for a godly life through our
knowledge of him who called us by his
own glory and goodness.
2 Peter 1:3**



Devotional by Captain Catherine Mount

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life. Stop questioning your ability to do what the Lord has called you to do. And in case you are wondering what He has called you to - it is a calling to a 'godly' life. Remember that this kind of life is possible because of His divine power – the kind of power that creates the moon and the stars, and lands and seas, and creatures and humanity. Dear one. Trust His divine power to equip you for a godly life.

Through our knowledge of him Jen Wilkin, a talented Bible teacher is famous for saying: "Your heart cannot love, what your mind does not know." How well do you know the Lord? Do you spend time in His word letting the words of the Bible transform your mind through study and revelation? Your head knowledge should *fuel* your heart knowledge of the Lord which will reveal His character and His power to you and in you. Wow!

Called us by His own glory and goodness Dear one. He doesn't call us by force or coercion. He does not call us because of our talents or our lineage. The Creator of the Universe calls us because He is glorious and good! He has a mission for humanity and it is to be reconciled to Him. Stop questioning your ability to do what God has called you to do! His divine power has provided everything that we need to fulfill His mission. Get on board with His glory and goodness!

PROCESS/DISCUSS

How have you questioned God lately?

Do you agree with this statement: "Your heart cannot love, what your mind does not know." If so, list the things you know about God and the things you don't.

His glory and goodness is the energy behind our calling, not our glory and goodness. Do you rely on yourself or Him when pursuing God's call on your life?

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God’s law.⁹ For the commandments say, “You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet.” These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.

Romans 13: 8-10



Devotional by: Lt. Betsy Clark

Paul reminds us in Romans 13 that it’s less about our opinions and worldviews, and more about the love we have to offer one another. Instead of focusing on what the government owes us, or the church, or even our friends and family, have we taken the time to consider what we owe them? A familiar quote from John F. Kennedy suggests, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” Do I dare suggest that the best thing we can do for our country is to love each other?

Perhaps the political scene would be less heated if we stopped focusing on what’s wrong with everyone around us and started asking God to equip us with the love we need to fulfill our debt to one another. Remember, “love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). My prayer for all of us is that we would be more concerned with embodying the love of God than making sure “our side” wins the majority vote this November. May God equip us with that love in such a way that we would be united as the Body of Christ.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

When do you feel united to the Body of Christ?

When do you feel excluded from the Body?

What makes others feel excluded or divided?

What are some other verses about unity in the Body?

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

1 Corinthians 12: 4-11



Devotional by Captain Valerie Carr

In verse 7, he says “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

We are each given a gift. Some are grand and cause people to take notice. Some are quiet, and simply get things done without much fanfare. Each gift is given for the same expressed purpose: building each other up. My gift is more about how I can serve someone else! My gift is intended to serve the body of Christ, not make a name for myself. The diversity of the gifts is given for the unity of the body.

What if I stopped worrying about whether people, “*appreciate all I do for this place?*” Or if I gave up complaining to God about how I’m not as “*special as So-and-So?*” God’s call on my life is part of a bigger picture. The gift I have been given is different than yours, but no less integral to the proper functioning of the Body. Each of us is needed in order to accomplish the mission God has given us. There is freedom in relaxing into our call, choosing to be intentional in exercising our gift for the good of the community.

So today as we consider what it means to be ‘equipped’ for this Christian life, I pray that we be mindful of how we fit into the larger context of the Body of Christ. May we find ways to equip others with the gift of the Spirit we have been given. How can your gift equip the rest of us?

PROCESS/DISCUSS

Do you struggle with comparison? If so, describe.

Reflect on a time that you felt fulfilled in what you offered to a ministry.

How can your gift equip others in the church?

⁶And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Philippians 1:6

Devotional by: Lt. Jaclyn Holloway

We are given this promise in Philippians 1:6: “*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*” God does not call us and then leave us to figure it out for ourselves. I had always feared that God would call me to officership and then I would be allowed to fall on my face as I had to figure it out on my own. I had forgotten that God *wants* us to rely on him in those scary moments of calling. And everyone is called to something! God will give us situations that will grow us and equip us for the road ahead. When we rely on him, he shows us his strength and the ability that he alone has to see us through to the end.

Do you really believe that God can and will do a good work in you? It would be a shame to go through your life fearing the next step because you are not *already* equipped. Part of the journey of life is that God sees his children through their callings because they are his good works.



PROCESS/DISCUSS

What part(s) of your life do you rely on God for equipping, support and guidance?

What part(s) do you rely on yourself?

What part(s) do you rely on others?

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.

Galatians 5:22-23



Devotional by: Captain Catherine Mount

*Understand His Word.
Transform our minds.
Demonstrate His Love.*

The Holy Spirit is the key to our transformation. When we let the Holy Spirit into our hearts and our minds, He begins to develop His fruit in our lives. So much so, that there is no room for the garbage and the sin of this world. When we let the Holy Spirit in, we are equipped to combat the worst parts of our own humanity. *The worst parts of our world can be re-deemed by the Holy Spirit.*

- There is no room for hate when we are filled with His love.
- There is no room for despair when we are filled with His joy.
- There is no room for conflict when we are filled with His peace.
- There is no room for haste when we are filled with His patience.
- There is no room for rudeness when we are filled with His kindness.
- There is no room for evil when we are filled with His goodness.
- There is no room for broken promises when we are filled with His faithfulness.
- There is no room for harshness when we are filled with His gentleness.
- There is no room for chaos when we are filled with His self-control.

His presence in your life will equip you for ANYTHING! There is no law against these truths. The world might not understand HOW you can be filled with this fruit, but they will benefit from the work of the Holy Spirit in you. Let Him in, so that you might be FILLED with what is holy, right, and pure. So that it might strengthen your WITNESS to the World and transform your very nature to his image.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

What garbage or sin often finds it's way into your life?

When do you feel at your weakest?

When do you feel at your strongest?

What does this scripture from Galatians teach you about Jesus?

¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12



Devotional by Sarah Micula

I'm studying the book of John right now. The book of John starts, "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." These three statements about the Word, using the same phrases as Genesis 1:1, establish the three-in-one God; The Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Word comes from the Greek word Logos which can mean logic, reason, or wisdom and message. From what I understand that language was helpful to those early Christians in understanding and knowing how to explain who Jesus is. Again, we see the Word in Hebrews 12, *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* Commentaries say it could be the written word as well as the Word as we understand it from John 1:1 – either way being the revelation from God, which includes from Jesus Christ himself. When we look at Hebrews 4:12 and all this in terms of being equipped I hear the question, "Do I have what it takes to handle the real talk that comes from truly knowing Jesus?" Knowing Jesus means acknowledging that he knows our worst and best thoughts about ourselves and others. He knows our hearts and when we mean to be good and when we actually have evil intentions. The message of the Word should convict us of our sin and humble our arrogance as we should now realize our weaknesses, our unholiness and our need for the Savior. The fourth chapter of Hebrews is about a promise from God a promise we can receive or not receive. And Hebrews 4:12 and 13 reminds us and equips us to be self-aware with ourselves and Jesus and truly receive the promises he offers and the opportunity to live a transformed life. Will you let the Word of God enter deeply into your soul and will you personally enter into a self-awareness the shines light in your personal darkness?

PROCESS/DISCUSS

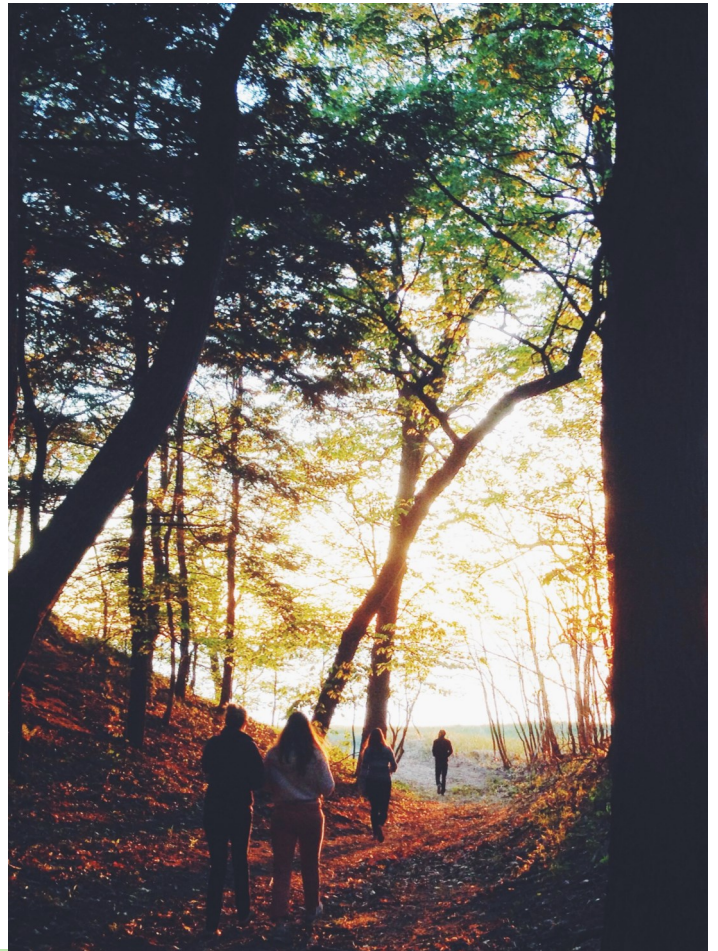
What is the darkness still lingering in my heart?

List other promises you've read in the Bible.

Is it difficult for you to receive a gift that is undeserved?

⁷ Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

1 Peter 5:7



Devotional by: Major Carla Voeller

My dad loved to get up in the wee hours of the morning and go fishing. It was early one morning that my dad taught me how to fish. I held the handle of the rod in my right hand, pushed the button with my thumb, swung it out to the side, and tried to cast that line as far as I could. But every single time, the line would not come out of the rod! I couldn't figure out what I was doing differently than my dad. He showed me that I had to let go of the button. I realized that I was holding onto the button because I was afraid that if I let go of the button, I would throw the entire rod and reel into the water! *My dad taught me to let go.*

Letting go of cares is much like that button on my fishing rod. I find myself holding tightly to my worries, as if by pure human strength I can fix all of my problems on my own. If I just squeeze them tight enough, obsess over them long enough, talk through them with just the right friends, then, I can surely solve them on my own. But Peter's instruction is to cast our anxieties on God – and to let them go. We know we can trust God to handle them because this verse reminds us that, "He cares for us."

Over time I became very good at casting my fishing line. Letting go of my worries is taking a bit longer. But it's okay - He cares for me. And He's still teaching me to let go.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

What thing, person, event, experience do you need to let go of in order to experience what God has in store for you?

What does this scripture teach you about Jesus?

What does it teach you about yourself?



²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

Devotional by: Captain Catherine Mount

“I can’t do it!” Has this phrase ever gone through your mind . . . or consumed your thoughts? “I. can’t. do. it.”

Dear one. Let me remind you today, that what the Lord has promised He will do. In fact, He is doing it right now. He “is with us always, to the very end of the age.” Yes, that’s right. To the very end. You are not doing this thing called LIFE, alone! In fact, you CAN do it!

One of the greatest challenges to doing the Lord’s work can be loneliness. Our own self-talk can convince us that we are alone and UNABLE to do the work that the Lord has for us.

Friends . . . *that idea is a scheme of the devil*, a plot by the evil one. Because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the HELPER, we are not alone. Our confession, repentance, and obedience to Christ creates a BOND, a companionship, that EQUIPS us to serve Him; to teach His commands to others, and to live for Him now and eternally – you are NOT alone.

When the devil tempts you to doubt the Lord’s presence – RESIST and RESPOND with the very promises of God!

When the devil says: “you can’t do it,” go ahead and scream into His face: “the LORD is with me!”

When the devil says: “you aren’t good enough,” go ahead and claim this truth: “the LORD is with me!”

When the devil says: “you are alone, you don’t have the ability to do it,” go ahead and SHOUT the Word of the Lord: “the LORD is with me!”

You are equipped BECAUSE the LORD is with you – let Him use your gifts, your talents, and your will to partner in HIS mission. Dear One. The Lord is with you.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

Where in the Bible has God done something He said He would do?

What else do you learn about God in that story?

List other scriptures that proclaim God’s promises.

⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4: 5-7



Devotional by: Lt. Melissa Sivels

Can I confess something for a moment? I tend to have an anxious personality. I try my best to listen to the words that Paul wrote to the Philippians in these verses but sometimes that is much harder than others. I am a worrier. I am a people pleaser. I am a perfectionist. None of these things make it easy for me to avoid anxiousness.

However, I've started to come to a point in my life that I ask myself why. Why am I feeling so uneasy about things that should not be causing me a lack of sleep at night? Ultimately, whether I want to acknowledge this or not, my moments of uncontrollable anxiousness tell God that I do not trust him. I don't trust him enough to believe that even if things don't go exactly how I want them to that it will all be okay. I don't trust that he has a much bigger and better plan than I do. I don't remember that my corps people are first and foremost his people. He loves them much more than I ever could. I've learned that when I need to pause, take a deep breath, and pray. Nothing fancy. It might just be "God, give me peace." or "God, give me energy to make it through this day." And when I do, when I pause, when I breathe, when I pray; the peace of God is sustaining. It's life giving. It's anxiety stopping. Even if just for a moment.

That's my prayer for you this day. That you would experience the peace of God in a new and fresh way. That your hearts and minds would be guarded and comforted by Christ Jesus. Rest in his peace. Rest in his presence. Find your comfort there.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

Do you have a reoccurring prayer?
What is it?

What do you need to thank God for today?

What does it mean to you to
live in Christ Jesus?

Isaiah 55: 8-9

Hebrews 11



Let the Scripture Equip You by Sarah Micula

Hebrews 11 is a book of the Bible God used to wake me up to what it means to follow Him, to be faithful to Him and to live a life surrendered to Him. Verses 39 and 40 reminded me as said in Isaiah 55: 8-9, “his ways are higher than my ways”:

Read Hebrews 11: 39 & 40

WHAT? So you mean I have to follow and be obedient and I still may not get what God promises?

Moses doesn’t get to go to the Promise land – are you serious? Even further - I may not receive the earthly blessing, but others will!?

Read Hebrews 11: 33-83

Some people receive earthly promises and some people don’t. Some people get to do heroic acts for God and be in the spotlight. Some people humbly serve at corps with five in attendance on a Sunday after years and years of service. Some of us receive our loved ones back from cancer and illness. Some of us don’t have that specific prayer answered and say good bye to a loved one too soon. And yet, we are still called to a life of obedience whatever may come. If this challenging reality doesn’t startle you and push you deeper into faith and deep trust that will equip you for battle in ministry – I’m not sure what will.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

Read the following verses and discuss the call to action in each:

1 Peter 1: 13–15

Psalms 119:6

1 Timothy 4: 16

1 Peter 3: 8–12

Philippians 4: 8

Proverbs 4: 14–15

Romans 12:2

Micah 6:8



Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Devotional by: Captain Dana Bigelow

In the scripture, Ephesians 3:20-21, we are equipped with a blessing, a promise that God is going to do far more for us than we ask or think He can do, according to the power at work in us. Something to observe in this blessing is God is mentioned three times and we as believers are mentioned twice. Being equipped is not about us, it is about Him. Being equipped is not about the tools that we can receive to make us better, more liked, or more qualified. The reason God is blessing us more than we ask or think is because He is equipping us with the power to work through us and in us for His glory and honor. Often times I think we can get hung up on the first portion of this verse and twist the idea that God is going to bless me, God is giving me, or God is going to using me. We get so hung up on this verse we don't realize that it is all for His glory, His honor, and His plan. Not only to make a difference in our personal lives, working within us, around us, but to make a difference throughout all generations. This benediction is not only a blessing for us but to give God the praise and honor He deserves.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

What is God equipping you to do?

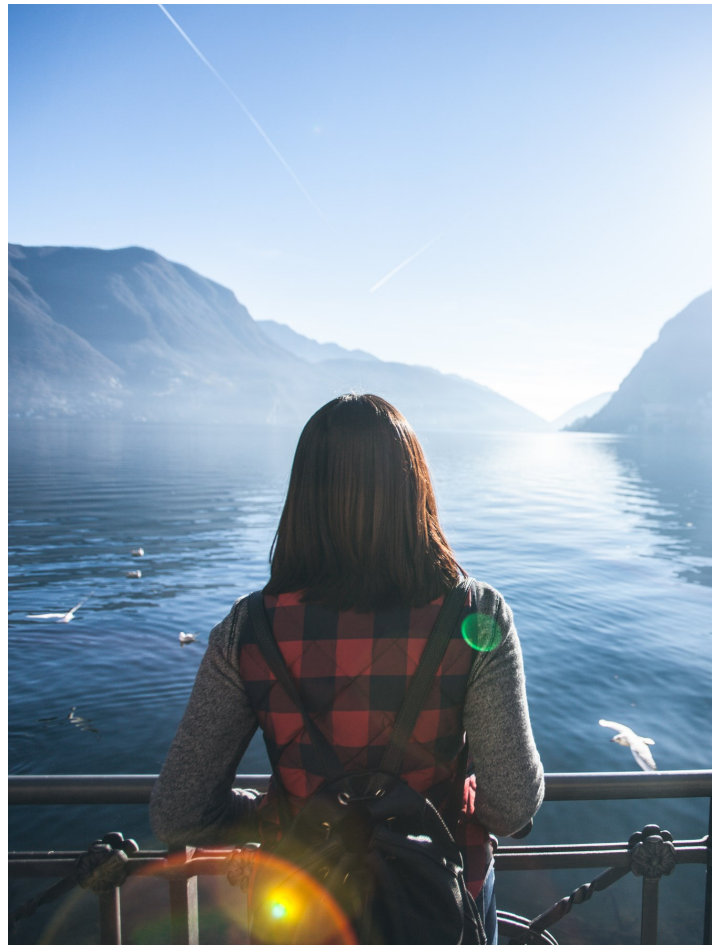
How can you use your blessings to honor Him today?

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,"

What big request could you boldly bring before God today—a request that you've been scared to ask?

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. ¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

Ephesians 4:11-17



Devotional by Major Johanna Pook

As I read over my children's school supply list, I'm always amazed of the extensive list of items. From pencils, note books, binders, dictionaries, erasers, sneakers, to even headphones and computer flash drives. I always wonder, are all of these items truly necessary? The answer is, yes. Each of the supplies on the list has different functions that will help in a variety of ways during the school year. Everything together will help my children be fully equipped and function better for school.

In Ephesians chapter 4 Paul starts off by describing the diversity of gifts in the church and in verses 11-17 he reminds us how God has equipped His people, specifically for ministry and for building the body of Christ. When we remember that Christ is the head of the Church and He has called each of us in a special and diverse way, we have no reason to doubt that He equips his people for each task. All of this so we can be rooted and confident in this world, no matter what comes our way and who tries to shake us.

The truth is, Christ equips people in the church for the primary mission of ministering the Word of God in everything we do. Other than a Bible, we are not going to find supplies for that at a store. All we need to do is to turn to Christ, surrender ourselves, and allow God's Holy Spirit to equip us day after day by being in His Word.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

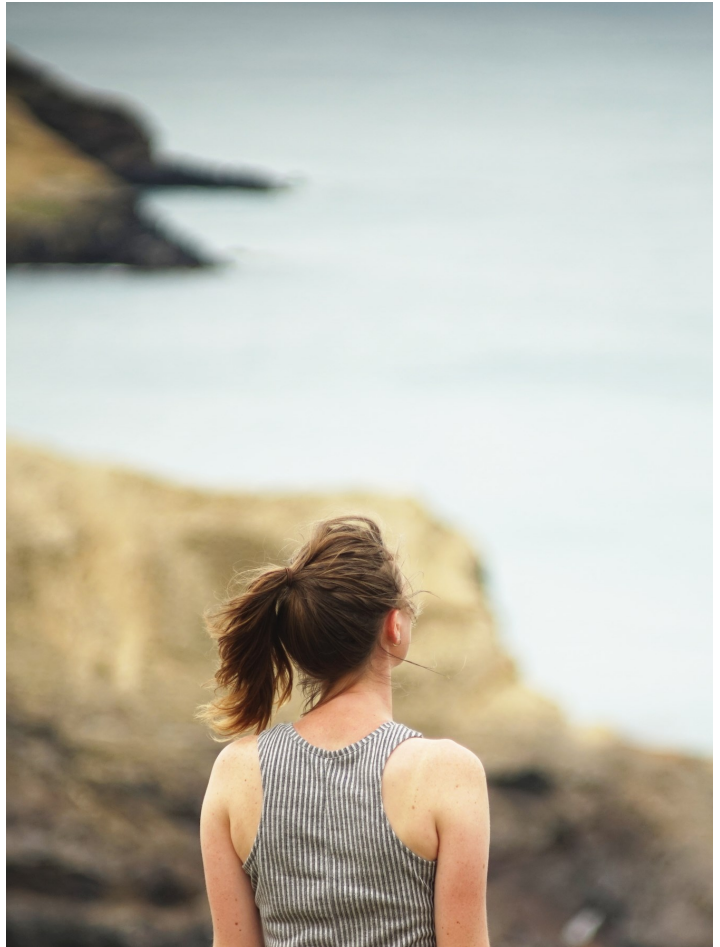
What do you think you are missing to be equipped for ministry?

Do you think that's a real need or a lie from Satan to create doubt in your heart?

What does this scripture teach you about Jesus?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Romans 8: 37



Devotional by: Lt. Melissa Sivels

What do you think of when you hear the word conquer? I have to admit that I think of a roman soldier with all his armor on.

Big, tall, muscular. Ready to go into battle. Fierce looking. So, it's a little funny to think of myself as conqueror with this image in my head. If you don't know me I'm 5'2 on a good day. While I am not out of shape I'm definitely not built for battle. On my own I am not much of a conqueror. I tend to have a timid personality. On my own I would much rather let someone else step up and get things done. I'd prefer to be in the background. In Christ, I have the ability to stand against the forces of darkness and evil. In Christ, I can invite people I barely know to come and worship with me on a Sunday. In Christ, I can preach a sermon on a topic I know my corps people don't necessarily want to hear. In Christ, I can sit with a family who has just lost their loved one and have a source of hope. In Christ, I can have peace when the world is full of nothing but chaos. In the areas that I am weak Christ has an opportunity to empower me in his strength. In Judges 6:12 an angel of the Lord tells Gideon "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." The ironic part is that Gideon was doing everything he could to hide from that responsibility. Gideon did not see himself as a mighty warrior. But he was. Because God was with him. You are a mighty warrior. Own that. Wear it with pride. Every morning when you wake up claim the truth, "I am more than a conqueror." You may be surprised how that changes your perspective and sets the tone for your day.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

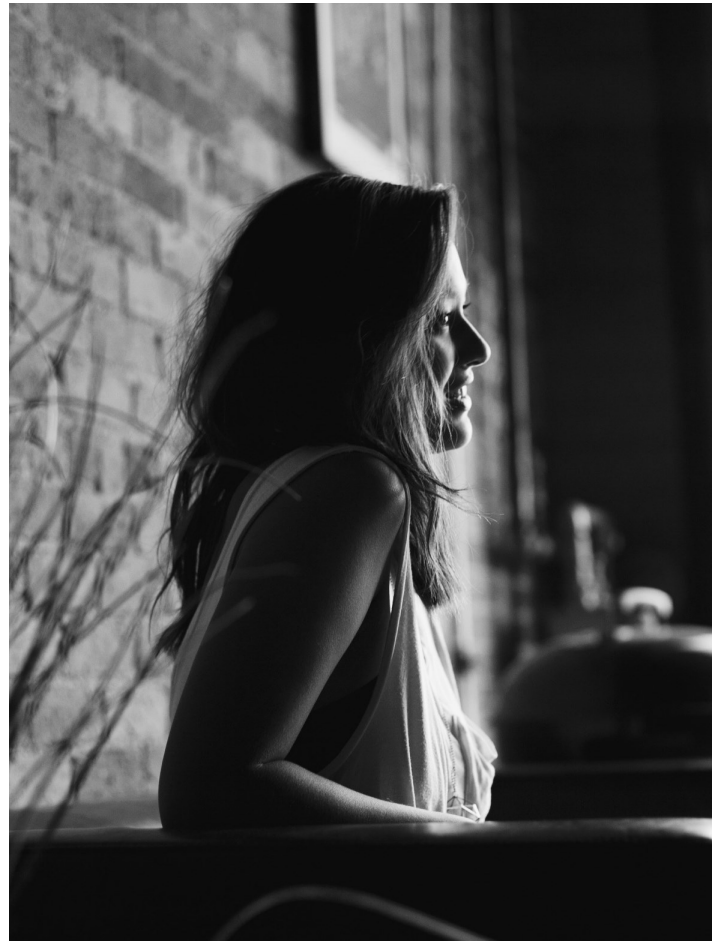
What part of being a Christian scares you?

Read Romans 8: 31– 39.

What do you learn about Jesus in this passage?

What do you learn about yourself?

It had been a very long day. Jesus had been with the priests and ruling Jewish party, those who felt it their right to question and challenge his authority, and as a result of Jesus' teachings were at that very time: "...assembled in the palace of the high priest whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him." Mark 14:1



Devotional by: Colonel Dorothy Smith

It had been a very long day. Jesus had been with the priests and ruling Jewish party, those who felt it their right to question and challenge his authority, and as a result of Jesus' teachings were at that very time: "...assembled in the palace of the high priest whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him." (Mk 14:1)

But finally, Jesus was among friends for dinner in Bethany. Simon, called the Leper, was hosting him and his disciples when a very controversial thing happened: rather than challenging and scheming against Jesus, a woman did the very opposite. She brought a jar of expensive perfume made of pure nard and poured it all on his head. No questioning, only anointing. An impulse of adoration and pure worship of the One worthy of this extravagance. Were you startled at the disciples reaction? "What a waste!" they cried, "the poor could have used this money – it would have gone a long way to advance your mission Jesus!"

But Jesus knew their hearts and he knew the woman's heart: "She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you – and you can help them anytime you want. But you will not always have me. Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." Today let us remember her. She worshipped with her whole being – her heart, her mind, her treasure. Let us not waste our time, resources, our energy on things that don't count. Let us worship in Spirit and in Truth.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

How is the Holy Spirit equipping you to worship?

Consider your commitment to worship Jesus Christ.
Can you write it out in one sentence?

Consider your area of contribution in the Body of Christ. Write out your gifts and how you see yourself using them now and in the future

Are there fears or stumbling blocks that the Holy Spirit needs to overcome for you to fulfill your calling?

Write a prayer of pure worship.

Read
Romans 12
&
John 4



Devotional by Major Gail Aho

To be equipped by God? To be a light to the world? First, present ourselves to Him as willing soldiers. The thing is, as you read through the passage to discover what “holy and acceptable” look like – it becomes clear that this will not be a walk in the park but an intense exercise of faith and sacrifice. That, right there, should (if we are honest) make us pause and think – *do I really want to present myself as a living sacrifice?*

In our last move I came across a small scrap of paper that was sitting in a pile of paper to be sorted and thinned out. On the scrap, in my writing, it had *put the jar down*. A reference from John 4. The Samaritan woman comes to the well and meets a Jewish man. They discuss religion, race, and life. She is bold and unashamed. He is understanding and patient. She confesses that she’s been waiting for the Messiah who will explain everything – and then, Christ tells her the secret. I can just see Him. He hears the disciples approaching, leans in toward her. “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” The disciples arrive, surprised and speechless. **And then, she puts the jar down.**

At last the water is unimportant. The place to worship, race, gender, social standing: unimportant. She puts the jar down and goes to find her friends. This story of Christ with the Samaritan woman, has become something more to me in these last few years. I believe this encounter with Jesus recorded in John 4, teaches us that without understanding the need to put our cultural biases and prejudices aside we cannot truly experience the rest of Romans 12. To willingly offer ourselves as a living sacrifice we have to put our jars down – the first step to becoming equipped by God.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?

What does holy and acceptable look like?

Does the phrase, “put the jar down mean anything to you?”

What do you learn about Jesus in these scriptures?

John 1: 5-7
Hebrews 12:11
1 Corinthians 15:33



Equipped Through Godly Friendships by Sarah Micula

“The One Where Rachel Smokes” is an episode on the 90’s sitcom *Friends* where Rachel’s co-workers are constantly taking smoke breaks and she feels left out and desperate to connect with them. In her desperation not to miss out on crucial work conversations and decisions she starts pretending to smoke in order to be with the women and connect. These relationships comes apart because she’s not being her true self, their new connection is based on a lie. It’s a false connection that doesn’t produce lasting friendships.

This episode comes to mind when I think about friendships that use complaining or other sinful acts as a connection point. It makes me think of friendships that don’t have Christ as the foundation of their friendship. And in order to maintain health in friendship we must first pursue constant health in our relationship with Jesus. *Read John 1:5-7*

If you're desiring connection and community make sure you're first pursuing a righteous relationship with Christ. And second pursue friendships in which the foundation is built on Jesus Christ. Carefully monitoring the health of your friendships will take work, discipline and devotion as mentioned in Hebrews 12: 11 - it's not easy but a harvest of good living is promised for those who live this way. And if you find that there's a pattern of failing friendships or a wave of hurt people in your wake or your friendships are based on unhealthy practices (complaining, gossip, disorderly behavior etc) - then *you* maybe the common denominator in unhealthy friendships. Examine your heart and consider who Jesus is to you and what it means to be transformed.

PROCESS/DISCUSS

Don't settle for false connections like complaining about people at work, church or complaining about family.. “*Bad company corrupts good character.*” 1 Corinthians 15:33 Do you have friendships with false connections that you have let get too close?

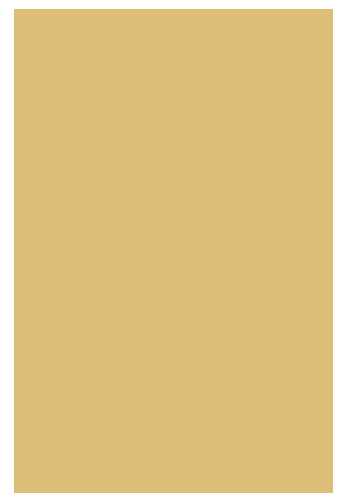
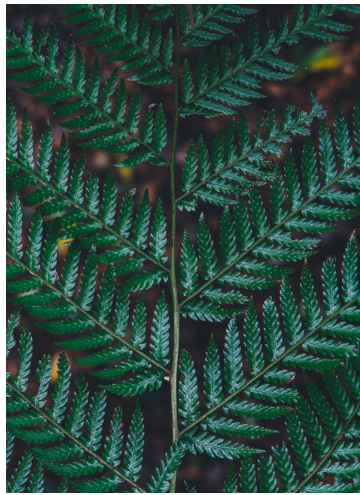
Do your friends speak life into you?

Do your friends actually listen when you talk?

Are these friends personally seeking ways and actively becoming equipped in their own faith?

Are *you* the friend that needs to make changes in order to be a friend that speaks life? Do you listen when your friends talk?

Do you and your friends pray together?



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