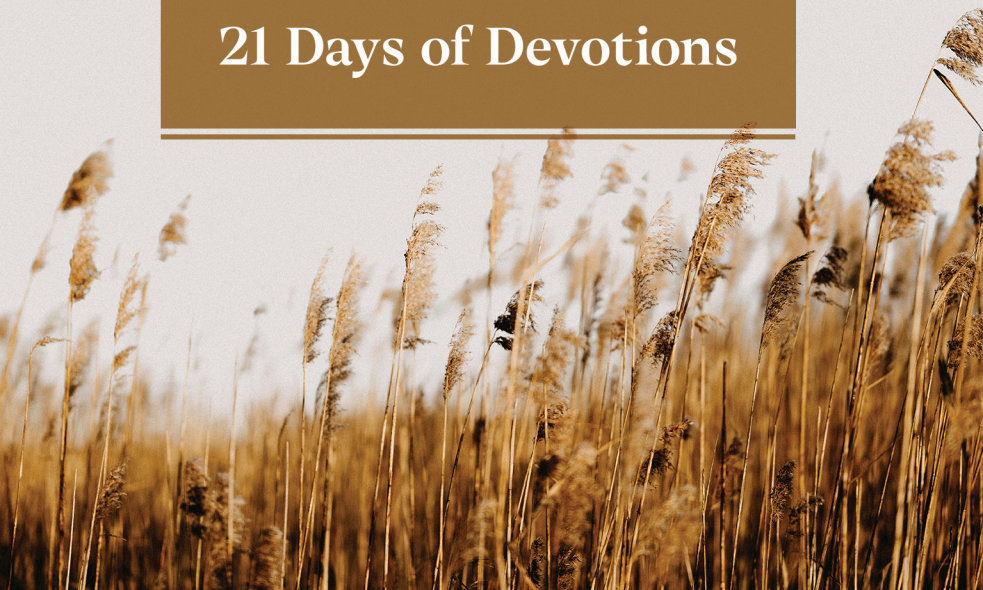




# A MORE GENEROUS LIFE

21 Days of Devotions



*A More Generous Life*

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**WEEK TWO**

October 18-24

**Prayer**

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**DAY 8-** October 18

## **On Earth as It Is in Heaven (Matthew 6:9–13)**

*Written by Craig Finnestad*

*This, then, is how you should pray:*

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Matthew 6:9–10 NIV*

In Matthew 6, Jesus was delivering his greatest teaching: the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon, he shares expectations for giving, praying, and fasting. Jesus teaches that giving should be done without fanfare, fasting should be done in private, and praying should be done simply.

He teaches the people listening how to be generous and explains the blessings of sharing out of abundance. He immediately follows with some of his most well-known words—the Lord’s Prayer. Praying those profound words, “on earth as in heaven,” restores us to God’s image. Praying doesn’t change God; it changes the one who prays. The objective of living the Christian life is not to benefit from what Jesus can give us but to aspire to be like him.

God is compassionate, loving, and extravagantly generous. Counter to our cultural norms of comparison, envy, scarcity, and greed, the values of God’s kingdom are generosity and abundance.

The day before he died, Jesus talked about giving once more: “The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them” (John 15:13 GNT). Generosity wasn’t just something Jesus talked about—it was something he practiced. And it wasn’t just something he practiced—it was something he embodied. Our lives are best lived when we think, speak, and act like Jesus, and prayer moves us to such places.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for teaching me how to pray. Help me to align my heart with yours, seeking heaven to come here on earth. May my life reflect your generosity, kindness, and love, not for recognition but for the sake of your glory. Transform me as I pray, drawing me closer to your heart each day. Amen.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. In what ways have you experienced God’s abundance and generosity, and how can you reflect that to others?
2. How does the idea that “prayer doesn’t change God; it changes the one who prays” impact your approach to prayer?
3. What steps can you take this week to bring the values of God’s kingdom—generosity, forgiveness, and compassion—into your interactions with others?

**DAY 9-** October 19

## **Answering God's Call (Isaiah 6:1–13)**

*Written by Cesie Delve Scheuermann*

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”*

*Isaiah 6:8 NRSVUE*

There have been many times when I've been in worship when—sometimes with tears streaming down my face—the familiar chorus rings out:

*Here I am, Lord.*

*Is it I, Lord?*

*I have heard you calling in the night.*

*I will go, Lord,*

*if you lead me.*

*I will hold your people in my heart.\**

When I sing it, I mean it wholeheartedly. “Yes, Lord! Here I am; send me!”

But it seems the outside world has a way of chipping away at my resolve. Once I've left the safety of my church sanctuary and face the outside world, I find myself distracted and less enthusiastic. Family drama. Work commitments. Bad news. Suffering throughout the world. All of this gets in the way of my commitment to go into the world on God's behalf.

However, when I make “Here I am, Lord; send me” my prayer, I quickly re-center myself.

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\* Daniel Schutte, “Here I Am, Lord” (OCP Publications, 1981).

*Here I am, Lord, send me to be a messenger of peace.*

*Here I am, Lord, send me to work for justice for all people.*

*Here I am, Lord, send me to reflect your love to those around me.*

*Here I am, Lord, send me to show what your generosity looks like.*

*Here I am, Lord, send me to be the bearer of good news.*

God asks the question, “Whom shall I send?” In our lives as disciples, this is one of the most difficult challenges from God. It becomes the question you and I need to answer each and every day.

Whether the answer is loud and full-throated or barely a whispered, “Yes! Here I am, Lord; send me!”, God can and will do incredible things through you and in your heart.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for calling me to be your hands and feet in the world. Give me courage to say yes to your call. When the world distracts or discourages me, remind me of your presence and strengthen my resolve. Guide me to live with an open heart, ready to answer, “Here I am, Lord; send me.” Amen.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. In what ways can you actively reflect God’s love, justice, and peace to others?
2. When life feels overwhelming, what practices can help you stay focused on saying yes to God’s call?
3. How is God calling you to serve or make a difference today? This week? This month?

**DAY 10-** October 20

## Trusting in God—Our Rock and Refuge (2 Samuel 22:2–3)

*Written by Joel Mikell*

*He said:*

*“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;  
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield and the horn of my salvation.  
He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior—  
from violent people you save me.”*

*2 Samuel 22:2–3 NIV*

In this beautiful and vulnerable prayer, we find King David *singing*—yes, singing—heartfelt expressions *about* God before he asks anything *from* God. Could it be that David was simply reminding himself whom he was praying to by first recalling God’s faithfulness in the past? For David, the starting place for this prayer was acknowledging his previous experiences with the faithfulness of God.

David then goes on to describe his current situation and holds nothing back. He writes that he is overwhelmed with fear and in great distress because of his enemies. I know I’ve experienced these feelings in my own life, and I am guessing that at some time you have as well. First Peter 5:7 (NLT) reminds us to “give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.”

God wants to hear from us and invites us to come to God in prayer with our requests, needs, and concerns, holding nothing back!

Later in 2 Samuel, David describes in detail how God responded to and answered his prayer. The chapter ends with expressions of praise and adoration.

As you journey through this devotional book and as you are seeking God's presence and wisdom through your prayers, consider following David's example. First, begin with naming what is true about God. Second, share with God your current needs; God wants to hear our requests and petitions. Lastly, conclude with expressions of praise and adoration.

**Prayer:** Lord, you are my rock, my refuge, my fortress, and my deliverer. Thank you for being a steady presence in times of fear and distress. Remind me of your past faithfulness and help me trust that you are near in my struggles today. I bring my worries and burdens before you, holding nothing back, knowing you care for me deeply. Fill my heart with peace and strength, and let my prayers be filled with gratitude and praise for who you are. Amen.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How has God been a rock and refuge for you in times of difficulty or fear?
2. Are there worries or burdens you need to bring before God, trusting God to be your shield and deliverer?
3. How can you incorporate praise and gratitude into your prayers, remembering God's presence in your life?

## DAY 11- October 21

### Bless the Mess (1 Chronicles 4:9–10)

*Written by Brad Kalajainen*

*Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request.*

*1 Chronicles 4:10 NIV*

How many times have you thought, “I want to be more generous, but I cannot right now. When I get things together then, I’ll give”?

In an obscure part of the Bible are two verses about a man who had a painful life. In fact, his mom named him Jabez, which means “painful.”

But Jabez did not let his circumstances define him. In fact, he prayed a prayer worth imitating in your own prayer life, with three encouragements for us to consider.

#### **Trust God above your circumstances.**

Frequently we ask God to bless us by getting us out of the mess we are in. But often God chooses to bless us in the midst of our mess. No matter where you are in your “mess,” God will meet you there.

#### **Ask God for a better life.**

We’ve been conditioned *not* to pray for blessings. It feels selfish. But notice how Jabez asks God to bless him and enlarge his territory.

God wants to “enlarge your territory” and increase your capacity to serve God. You might pray for more influence, a better job, more money, or a family that loves each other. If those things happen, be generous with God’s blessings.

### **Draw close to God.**

Jabez did not want the blessing of God without God!

Jabez understood that the relationship with God is the true prize. Jabez wanted to partner with God and use his blessings to further God’s kingdom. When you realize the importance of your relationship with God and how your blessings deepen that relationship, your generosity is set free to do God’s work in the world.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for hearing my prayers and meeting me in the middle of life’s messes. Help me trust that you can use even my struggles for good. Teach me to ask boldly for blessings and to stay close to you, knowing that you are my strength and guide. Enlarge my capacity to serve and give to others. Amen.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Are there areas of your life where you feel defined by painful circumstances or limitations? How can you invite God to meet you there?
2. Do you feel comfortable asking God for blessings or a better life? What might God be inviting you to believe about God’s goodness and desire to bless you?
3. How can you use your relationship with God and your blessings to impact others for God’s kingdom?

## DAY 12- October 22

### Called to the Harvest: Partnering in God's Kingdom Work (Luke 10:2)

*Written by Rhodes Logan*

*He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

*Luke 10:2 NIV*

In Jesus' day, there was no existing structure for his new movement. He had to rely heavily on his followers, who traveled to unfamiliar and sometimes hostile places to spread his message. Jesus was dependent upon the willingness of people to open up their homes and share their food and shelter with those who had been called to spread the word. Because so few "inns" existed during this time, people were more accustomed to counting on the hospitality of others when they were away from their villages.

When Jesus sent his followers out into the nearby villages, his success was dependent on the willingness of his followers to go and the hospitality of families to receive strangers who shared strange tales of miracles and blessings from a man they did not know.

Our call today is the same as it was in Jesus' day—to go forth and spread God's message to the world. We have opportunities not only to share what we have with strangers but to support missionaries and others who go to cities around the world sharing Jesus' message.

Spreading God's word includes providing financial support for missionaries, homeless shelters, recent immigrants, treatment centers, and the international ministries your church supports. Giving generously to these vital ministries enables you to partner with God to build God's kingdom.

**Prayer:** Lord of the harvest, thank you for inviting me to be part of your mission in the world. Open my eyes to the needs around me and show me how I can serve, give, and welcome others. Give me a heart that is generous and ready to respond to your call. Give me strength and courage to be a witness to your love. Give me joy as I partner with you in building your kingdom. Amen.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What are the ways your local church is building the kingdom of God in places around the world?
2. How can your local church accommodate and welcome visitors or newcomers to your town?
3. How can you personally demonstrate the joy that comes from sharing God in your community and around the world?

**DAY 13**- October 23

## Praying Meaningful Prayers (Colossians 1:9–12)

*Written by David Whiting*

*We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.*

*Colossians 1:9b–10a NIV*

There is a famous quote often credited to Eleanor Roosevelt: “Great minds talk about ideas, average minds talk about events, and small minds talk about people.” Who and what we talk most about is an indication of our emotional maturity. Perhaps it is also true that who and what we pray about is an indication of our spiritual maturity.

What does it mean to grow in spiritual maturity? A person at the beginning of their Christian journey may pray for personal blessings such as acceptance to a preferred university or a job promotion. As we mature, the focus of our prayers shifts from our personal needs to the needs of others (a friend’s conflict with a boss, results from medical tests, etc.) and, eventually, to a desire to grow in spiritual maturity.

In Paul’s letter to the people of Colossae, he prays for their spiritual health and maturity. Paul provides a list of the deep and meaningful measures of spiritual growth—to know God’s will, to live a life worthy of and pleasing

to the Lord, to bear fruit in every good work, to increase knowledge of God, strength, endurance, and patience, and to give joyful thanks to God.

As you read through the New Testament epistles, you will notice that a vast majority of prayers ask for spiritual growth. As we grow in Christ and our prayer habits, we learn to focus more on our spiritual growth than our physical needs. Our prayers focus on a deeper relationship with God and the manifestation of all God longs to do in our lives.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the gift of prayer. Fill me with the knowledge of your will, and help me to seek your wisdom above all else. Strengthen me with patience and endurance, that my life will be pleasing to you. Grow in my heart a deeper understanding of who you are and accept my gratitude as praise for your unending and limitless grace. Amen.

### Reflection Questions:

1. Who are you praying for most intentionally these days? What are you asking God to do in their lives?
2. As you pray for yourself, in what ways are you seeking spiritual growth?
3. How can you focus your prayers on growing in wisdom, patience, and joy as you follow Christ?

**DAY 14**- October 24

**Expanding Our Vision: A  
Church Powered by Christ  
(Ephesians 1:15–23)**

*Written by Tom Norwood*

*That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority.*

*Ephesians 1:19b–21a NIV*

*Your God Is Too Small*\* by J. B. Phillips has remained a favorite of Christians since its publication in 2004. Phillips argued that we needed a God big enough to understand the complexities of our lives and also to guide and guard us on our journey of faith.

But the writer of Ephesians goes even further with this admonition: your view of the church is too small. In one sense, the church is just another human institution, made up of fallen people who are too often divided by theology and politics. And this flawed church exists in a world filled with wars, hunger, and inhumanity. This passage, however, challenges us to see the bigger picture.

Christ and the church, Phillips argues, are bound together. They are inseparable. Christ remains the “head” of the church, of course, but the church is an integral part of the body that carries out God’s purposes in the world.

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\* J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small*, (Touchstone Publishing, 2004).

The power that God gave to Jesus Christ is the same power given to the unique community called the body of Christ. That good news is both an affirmation and a challenge to use God's transforming power to transform the broken world in which we live.

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the gift of your church, which you have called to bring hope and transformation to the world. Open the eyes of my heart to see the greatness of your power at work in me, the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Help me to look beyond my limitations and recognize the role you want me to play in your vision for the world. Guide me in your church to be bold, compassionate, and willing to reach out in your name. May I always remember that with you, I have the strength to transform the brokenness around me. Amen.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. As you read through Ephesians 1:15–23, how does it change your view of what God intends for the church?
2. In what ways might God be calling your church to broaden its reach and embrace its role in transforming the world?
3. How are you personally called to be a part of God's transforming work in your community?