

30 DAYS OF HEARTWORK

A JOURNEY TO SPEND YOURSELF



DAY 1: SPEND YOURSELF

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/83796305>

Isaiah 58:10 "...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."

Heart //

If you will SPEND YOURSELF, good things will happen. Hope will become available for others, and hope will fill you.

Our mission at Heartwork is to help us all learn to experience this promise in Isaiah, written centuries ago. We are a community who believe that the self-focus which is so common in our generation leads to darkness rather than fulfillment. In the deep places of our hearts where we seek entertainment, popularity, and new stuff, we all *really* desire God's light to rise. We, like many, had found ourselves frustrated, even within our Christian culture, asking the question, "Is this all there is to being a Christian?"

We found an answer to that question. There is more than what we had been experiencing. Learning to spend *ourselves*, not just our money, is a big part of that answer. When we begin to invest the resources of our lives into others, the way God has invested himself for us, the light that we crave begins to shine! Yes, it shines into the dark places of our hearts that we'd rather keep hidden, but in the end, that beautiful light is the only way to see clearly so we can live the way we were meant to.

During these 30 days together, we will spend time on four big ideas that will help us understand how we can "spend ourselves" well. As we learn about Letting Go, Identity, Compassion, and Mission, we will also be challenged to take on several simple activities that may be outside of our normal routine. These challenges are designed to help us try to imagine and even *feel* for the issues that others who are less privileged than ourselves might be experiencing.

The reality is that Jesus cared a whole lot about the lonely, the poor, and the outcast. We live in a culture that tells us to "climb higher" and while we do, we tend to isolate ourselves from the weak and vulnerable. As we give God room to open our eyes, we will see that there are people in the world who need us to care about more than just our own comfort. And just as importantly, we will see some areas in our own lives that need rescuing as well.

This is a short but sweet journey that we want to walk with you. We want to start by asking the right questions... What if living differently for just 30 days would make a shift that could affect the rest of our lives? What could our story look like if we weren't fearful or selfish? Is it really possible to love others more than ourselves?

When we spend ourselves, we experience freedom and we humbly participate in bringing freedom to others. We call this "destiny rescuing destiny." As you hear the "Heart" and do some of the "Work" of Heartwork over the next 30 days, may your prayers be deep, your heart be open, and may your light rise in the dark places of your world.

Work //

Ask God to show you some areas of your life that are dark and to bring light, to open your eyes. **Spend at least 5 minutes praying for people** in your school, neighborhood, or around the world who may be hungry (literally or figuratively) or oppressed.



WEEK ONE: LETTING GO

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/83794419>



DAY 2: HE LET GO, WE LET GO

1 John 3:16-18 "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

Heart //

When God wanted to change the world, what did He do? He let go. The Father let go of Jesus. Jesus let go of any position or power and became the most vulnerable of creatures - a baby. The greatest example we can follow is the one that God displayed for us. As He looked at the world that He created, He saw a society that was filled with pain, sin, and brokenness. Jesus chose to SPEND HIMSELF on us. He let go of His very life so that we could be free! *"This is how we know what love is..."* That's a line we might want to pay attention to. If we want to love the way Jesus loves, we must let go of our grasp on self-focused attitudes.

The Lord is asking us to follow in His way. We can look to a Father who understands the difficulty of letting go, and respond to His call. We can look to Jesus who knows what it is to spend Himself and lean on Him for strength. Isn't our goal to be like Him? He asks us to open our eyes to others who are in need and to *"love them with actions and truth."* It seems that to God, loving others and letting go are inseparable. We attempt to love others and still have ALL of the comforts and conveniences that our hearts desire. What if there is an aspect of true freedom and happiness that can only come by letting go of things that hold a position in our hearts that God wants to hold Himself? It is unbelievable love that asks something so great of us, and then gives us more than we ever could have imagined in return.

We will spend the rest of the week exploring what this means in our lives. We can be encouraged that as God is calling us to let go of some things, we are not alone... we are serving Someone who understands, Someone who has walked this road of letting go long before us.

Work //

Jesus spent Himself for us. Think about how God spent Himself on your behalf. Ask Him to begin to expose the areas in your life that you are holding too tightly. **Make a list of a few ways that your time, energy, and money may be being spent on things that hinder you from laying your life down for others.** Ask God to change your mind and heart in those areas.



DAY 3: KILLING OUR COMFORT ZONE

1 John 2:15-17- "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. For everything in the world- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."

Heart //

When we care a whole lot about things that we can touch, it often impacts the things we can't touch. "Stuff" is not bad. The scripture of the day is clear that *loving* our stuff is bad. Author and church planter Jeff Christopherson puts it well in saying, "Jesus is against whatever we will not leave behind to follow Him." How many things do we see around us every day that are screaming, "Buy me! This would make you happy! This would make your life better!" Hearing those messages over and over makes it hard not to begin to believe them! But if our possessions are satisfying us and making us feel "comfortable enough," they can become dangerous to us. When our strong desire for feeling secure or happy drives us to acquire more and more belongings, we are at risk of falling into a trap... "I need to be happy, so I need more stuff..." And that cycle *never* ends. God has called us to deny our "self" (Luke 9:23), in other words, to be willing to let go of that strong desire to focus our time, energy, and money on accumulating possessions.

This week we are going to practice letting go of some things that make us feel "comfortable." By letting go of our tight grip on our own conveniences, we can empathize with those around the world who don't have an option of "comfort." And who knows, letting go of your grip on some things in your life may just make you more available to hold on tight to God instead!

Work //

To empathize means to put yourself in a position where you'll have a better understanding of how someone else feels. You feel *with* them. To empathize with those around the world in need, **take cold showers for the next few days and pick several nights this week to sleep on the floor instead of your bed.** As you do this, think about those around the world that have never had the opportunity to take a warm shower or sleep in a bed. Pray that God would help you empathize and begin asking Him for ideas to help those in need.



HEARTWORK
HOPE FOR OTHERS. HOPE FOR YOU.

DAY 4: BACKWARDS KINGDOM

Matthew 5:3-10 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Heart //

The world's system tells people that the way to be "successful" is to exalt yourself. You need to learn the most, look the best, make the most, and simply excel the most in order to be successful.

But what if our definition of success is backwards?

The Kingdom of God has a much different way of defining success. In the Kingdom, we draw close to our destiny and purpose by sacrificing and serving, not by walking over people. The Bible says that in order to be "successful" we are to live our lives for others. Because we grow up with these worldly messages of success, it is easy to believe that life is about serving ourselves and working our way to the top. In reality the poor, the weak, and the hungry will truly taste of the Kingdom of God. This does not mean that we have to be hungry and thirsty to see God, but it comes back to dependency. Those who let go of their dependency in the things of this world will discover the blessing of knowing God.

Life is much more simple than we make it. As Pastor Rick Warren says in the first sentence of his international best-seller, *The Purpose Driven Life*, "it's not about you." When we understand that true life is found in living for Christ and others, we discover the true blessings that this life has to offer. When we begin to know God in His mercy for the poor, we see His mercy in a new way for us. When we begin to love who He loves, we will make decisions for our future that will be a blessing to His Kingdom rather than building our own. He is our example and our guide.

Work //

The way of Jesus is so opposite of the ways that surround us. Ask Him to reveal the ways you are seeking after worldly success. Pray that as you learn about who God is, you would begin to pursue success in His Kingdom. Read Mark 10:43 and ask God to help you understand what it means to be a servant. Then **serve one person today** without expecting the favor to be returned.



DAY 5: WHY GENEROSITY?

Luke 9:23-25 "Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

Heart //

What in the world does it mean to daily take up our cross and to lose our life for Him? What does it mean to forfeit our very selves? In today's time and culture, how do we know if we're being a true disciple? These are important questions, and if we're asking them honestly, then we're on the right path! One of the very first steps in learning to spend ourselves is to be open to asking difficult questions.

Every culture has its idols, which are the most common things that distract and take the place of God in people's hearts. In our culture, one idol we must face if we want to consider "denying ourselves" is the *need for more*. In our effort as a society to achieve success (popularity and wealth), most of us own more than our fair share of stuff. We've all heard stories of rich and famous people who are very unhappy, but somehow most of us keep reaching for that same "success" anyway! Even though Jesus talked so much about money and materialism in the Scriptures we read, many Christians never realize that this is an idol in our culture. We want more, but our hearts may truly need less.

If we start by letting go of this idol, we will go a long way toward following Jesus into a life that contributes to His Kingdom. As you watch this short video from Francis Chan, think about the reason that sacrificial giving is one of the most important things to learn as we spend ourselves.

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/32093170>

Work //

Think about what God has blessed you with and ask Him how He would like you to use those blessings to be a blessing. Today, **choose one thing to give away** to someone who needs it more than you do. Let this be a practical sign telling God that you want what He desires for your life. As you **take cold showers this week**, let go of the comfort of warm water, pray for those who do not have warm showers, showers at all, or even clean water to drink.



DAY 6: UNLEARNING OUR CULTURE

Matt 13:22 "The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful."

Heart //

Friar Richard Rohr says, "The Spiritual life is more about unlearning than learning, because the deepest you already knows." Often we need to spend more time letting things go than adding things on. As believers in God, our spirits are in love with Jesus our Creator and long to be like Him, but we get lost in all of the thorns... the "needs" that our culture has placed on us. As today's verse tells us, wealth is deceitful and brings with it so many worries about life. When we find ourselves striving for more and more wealth, success, and security, we realize (sadly, for some, after a lifetime of chasing) that *there is never "enough."* It's like an itch that can never be scratched.

We need to allow God to pull up the thorny weeds in our hearts so that we can feel His love for us and for those suffering in our world. We can receive the seed of truth and give it room to grow in us. He has made a way! We must learn to hear His voice above that of our society. We must choose Him. As C.S. Lewis said, "There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"

So, how do we *unlearn* the materialism and self-focus that so easily grow in the soil of our human hearts when our society keeps the thorny weeds very well-watered? We must be willing to let go of finding our identity, our purpose, and our joy in worldly things and find it in God--the only true source of life. Yes, it is scary, but it's one brave step at a time reading His Word, asking honest questions, and making small changes in our daily lives. Wanting less, giving more, spending with intentionality, and learning about vulnerable people in our communities are all small but meaningful steps toward letting go of "self". As we learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, He will show us what things need to be pulled up out of the soil of our hearts... to make room for the seeds of truth to grow!

Work //

Go back and **read the entire chapter of Matthew 13**. We are not the first generation to experience hard hearts and closed eyes. Jesus describes this amazing Kingdom that *He has made available to us* by His sacrifice. Ask God to show you what things distract you from Him and consume your focus. How is it going not sleeping in your bed? Is it hard to get a good night of sleep? Think about if you had no choice, no bed, perhaps no roof over your head in the cold, in the rain... Spend a few moments writing down your thoughts on your cold showers and less-than-cozy nights. Pray for a child who lives with those conditions daily.



HEARTWORK
HOPE FOR OTHERS. HOPE FOR YOU.

DAY 7: LETTING GO OF GUILT

Proverbs 28:13 "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Heart //

Today we're going to look at letting go of shame over past mistakes, which is necessary in moving toward the free life where we can spend ourselves on behalf of others. When we are weighed down by our messy or painful past, often we are building up walls to hide or protect ourselves. Whether we realize it or not, we are allowing our past to determine how we are living in the present. God's desire is not to shun us, but to heal us. He cannot strengthen and sustain us from a distance. We have to let Him come close. By building these walls, we are keeping the very Life we need from coming in. We need to be willing to let go of our walls, to let go of our fear, and allow the Lord to come in and heal us.

The thing about shame is that it makes us feel like we're not good enough to do anything important. Professor and author Brené Brown explains in her book *Daring Greatly* that there is a major problem with "scarcity," in our culture today. Scarcity is the underlying feeling that there is *never enough* (money or success, but also love, security or peace), which leads us to believe the lie that "I am not enough." It's what drives us to perfectionism. It's what reminds us of shame from our pasts and causes us to strive to be more, do more, and have more. She says that overcoming these driving forces in our lives "takes awareness, commitment, and work... every single day. The larger culture is always applying pressure, and unless we're willing to push back and fight for what we believe in, the default becomes a state of scarcity."

We have to be aware of the pitfalls of our culture, and we have to be committed to fighting against the default of believing those lies. The Truth is, God's love is enough to cover all of our past failures. If we can tear down that wall of "never enough," we will see that God is right there waiting. He is for us. There is no need to prove that we are worthy of love or to protect ourselves from failure... We will all fail sometimes. Even in learning through those failures, He will make us strong, and He will be our fortress.

Work //

Meditate on these things... God is strong, good, and wise. He knows more than we do. He is enough. Ask Him to download these truths into your heart and replace any feelings of guilt and shame with the truth that you are enough in Him. Think about the areas that you feel inadequate, ashamed, or worthless and **pray that God would begin to show you how His mercy and grace make you more than enough.**



DAY 8: EXPOSURE

Hebrews 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. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Heart //

Imagine you are at a track meet getting ready to race when some teammates come up to give you final words of encouragement. They tell you to take off your running shoes and give you a pair of brand new snow boots to put on. They offer you a high-quality coat and designer jeans. Every product they're giving you is great, but completely unnecessary for the race that you are getting ready to run.

Some of the things in our life are not necessarily bad, they are just not appropriate for the race that God has called us to run. As a loving Father, He looks at us as we prepare for our race and sees that we often prepare by clothing ourselves in non-essentials that make us feel good, look good, and even cover up what we think are our imperfections. We look to those around us, wanting what they've got rather than using the gifts God gives when asking us to run the race. He desires for us to be free of distractions so we can run our best race.

As we let go of all the things that we have held onto or clothed ourselves with, we may feel exposed, and even a little inadequate. It's like we've been running in a winter coat, and now we're running in a lightweight shirt. It feels right, but different than what we've become used to. We feel exposed because we were finding our identity and definition by what we are holding onto instead of who Christ made us to be. When we are challenged by our culture or circumstances, it's easy to just cover back up, hide, or revert to what we've always been comfortable with. Instead, be encouraged to consider Jesus and take heart. Jesus let go and asks us to do the same, to learn that it's alright to feel exposed and vulnerable before the Lord. Although it may be painful and different, our Father desires what is best for us. He desires for us to run the race without hindrances.

Work //

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/43463138>

Watch this beautiful story of a woman who threw off some things that were hindering her race. She heard the voice of her Father, she risked, she went against the grain of culture, and she is now running in a newfound freedom. As we move into learning about identity tomorrow, may you be inspired by this woman's courage to trust God, even if it meant changing her story to align with His plan for her life.



WEEK TWO: IDENTITY

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/83794418>



DAY 9: MADE TO LOVE

Ephesians 5:1-2 "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Heart //

We were created for a purpose--to follow God's example and walk in the way of love as sons and daughters of God. As we walk in this way, God grows us in wisdom. Just like children who start out making a lot of mistakes, we will fumble and fail, but as we stick by Him, He tunes our minds and spirits to His very own. As we learn more of how God works, we learn how to do our work in His strength. His strength endures the hardest times and produces joy and thanksgiving. When we allow Him to work through us, we have new eyes to see His beautiful Kingdom and to love deeper. Saint Augustine once said, "a Christian is: a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps." When we trust God, we allow His Spirit to think, love, speak, and help *through* us. And as Christians, that's where we learn who we really are. We learn as a child learns, day after day with our loving Father.

Wouldn't it be great if we experienced that beautiful picture of growing in the Lord and never ran into bumps in the road? But, like kids do, we fall down. Getting hurt or not getting our way sometimes seems like the end of the world. But even when we're down on the ground crying (figuratively, or literally!), the truth is still true... we are children of the King, destined for great power and great responsibility. We have the honor of "walking in the way of love" with Love Himself. As we learn more about who we are in Christ this week, let's keep this reminder of hope before us.

Work //

We are dearly loved children because Christ gave Himself up for us. God gives us His Spirit to help us walk in the way of love... a perfect way that we can only walk when we allow God to be the strength of our lives. In the past week you have begun to let go of distractions but when we let go of something negative, we must replace it with something positive. **In the areas that you have let go, ask God to fill your heart with His perfect love and to make you aware of any opportunities to see that love in action this week.**



DAY 10: HEALING GRACE

Ephesians 1:3-10 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. He chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ."

Heart //

We were born with sin and darkness in our hearts and in great need of healing. Overwhelmed by our mistakes and destined to repeat them, we have all experienced shame and guilt. The world around us offers quick-fixes and magic solutions that crumble quickly under any real pressure. We search desperately for answers and meaning, but the search leaves us more deeply broken.

God loves us so much that He sees and loves us even in our brokenness. Not only does He see us but He made a way for His strength to overcome our weakness... by giving His very Son, coming to earth as a man, and dying the death that we deserve. It is God's grace that pardoned all our sins and makes us new (Romans 5:8).

He then cleanses and heals our brokenness. His grace replaces our shame and we are changed from masters of sin to sons and daughters in His Kingdom. 2 Corinthians 8:9 explains that it was by the grace of Jesus that all of this is possible... "that though He was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, so that we, through His poverty might become rich." When we receive God's love, we embrace the fact that we are weak and let His power be the strength of our lives. We live in the realization of our imperfection and welcome Him to fill our lives to overflowing.

Work //

As you reflect on your adoption as a son or daughter of God, think about those without a family, without rights, and without dignity. It is estimated that almost 21 million people worldwide are victims of forced labor (think: slavery) right now* and these slave trades significantly impact every economy on earth, including our own. Choose some time this week to **spend in silence and without touching anyone** (these can be done together or separately) to empathize with children who have no one speaking up for them or comforting them. Beforehand, let your friends and family know what you will be doing and why. Pray for those around the world who experience that same loneliness everyday.

* Statistic from ilo.org (International Labor Organization, an agency of the United Nations)



DAY 11: WHO I AM

1 John 4:16 "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

Heart //

First, we need to know the love that God has for us, and then we've got to learn to rely on it. When we do life with anyone for a significant amount of time, we begin to talk in the same ways, share the same values, and even dream about things together. Consider our families or best friends... we spend a lot of time together and talk about the deepest parts of ourselves that we do not share with others. If our best friends tend to make poor decisions, it begins to rub off on us. If our parents tend to be kind and loving, we tend to be the same way. This is because the things and people that will influence us the most are the things and people we spend the most time with.

With the understanding that we are children of God, we will want to spend more time with our Father. Talking and interacting with God makes us more like Him. God is love! The identity we are given as His children is love. *Love defines us.* When we live knowing that one fact, we believe that we are loved, we are worth loving, and we will overflow with love into the world around us.

Watch this short video and consider where your source of identity has been coming from. Be encouraged that if you've been finding your identity in the wrong places, you can change! You can live in God's love and with that you can't help but be a good influence on the people you spend time with! There are untold stories that will unfold, people whose lives you will touch as you realize who you are and walk in that truth. The world is waiting... Who will you know and rely on? Who will you believe?

watch this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsDQEb-qlyM>

Work //

Spend a few minutes **writing down how you have defined your identity, who others say you are, and who God says you are.** If these lists are very different, think about which kind of person you were created to be. Ask the Lord to remind you throughout this week who you are in Him and **pray for those who do not know the love of their Father.** Maybe you'll have a chance to show love to someone who really needs it!



DAY 12: ABBA, FATHER

Galatians 4:4-7 "But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir."

Heart //

In her book called *From Servant to Son; From Orphan to Heir*, Heidi Baker, a missionary to Mozambique, tells a story about a child named Ramadan who had come to live in their children's village. *When he first arrived, he would run around and bite and kick people, looking miserable all the time. Ramadan had experienced great pain in his early childhood, had never known love, and now was an orphan. There was so much shame and sadness in him that he would not look anyone in the eye. Ramadan did not believe he had access to his new family or their home. Like some of the other children, Ramadan could not comprehend what a refrigerator was because he had never seen one before. He would not dare move toward the fridge and never had a Coca Cola in his life. Heidi took Ramadan by the hand and told him, "That fridge has a Coke in it. You can go get that Coke whenever you want it." At bedtime, she would tuck him in and sing him a song. She regularly looked him in the eyes and said, "I will love you."*

Then God started transforming his little heart. Finally, one day, Ramadan walked up to the fridge and took out a Coke. Heidi recounts that the first time he opened the fridge door and realized that it was his, that he belonged to the family, joy hit his heart and spiked across his face. He finally believed that he had full access to the home as a son.

She explains that we are all a bit like this with God. We think things like, "Am I really allowed? Can I really open that door and have the good things that He offers? Does He really love me?" But through time with Him, God heals our abandoned and orphaned spirits. When Galatians tells us that God redeemed and fully adopted us as His own children, that means all that is in God's house is available to us. We are allowed to partake of His peace, His joy, His patience, His long-suffering, His healing, and His provision. We are free to be His children.

Work //

As you think about Ramadan's story, **pray that you would understand your place as God's child** and be free to come into His presence and accept His gifts. Continue your journey toward wholeness by asking God to show you any hurts, fears, or pains that need healing. Remember to **spend time in silence and with no touch** as often as possible this week (even if a whole day isn't possible) praying for God's children who have been rejected and have no voice in the world.



DAY 13: ADOPTED

Psalm 68:4-6 Sing to God, sing in praise of His name, extol Him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before Him —His name is the Lord. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, He leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

Heart //

The truth that Psalm 68 speaks is that God is a Father to the orphan and defends the lonely and the hopeless. While it is easy to see this truth when we hear about an abandoned child being physically adopted into a loving family, there is an adoption that every human heart is in need of. Jack Frost wrote in his book *Spiritual Slavery to Spiritual Sonship*, "We all were born with an orphan heart that seeks to independently do everything our own way. We never feel at home, we're afraid to trust, afraid of rejection, and afraid to open up our hearts to receive love." He goes on to say that, "this orphan heart must be displaced by being introduced and submitted to a loving Father."

One of the most shocking and thrilling lines in today's verse is that God "leads the prisoners out with singing." He loves to take the most oppressed lives and restore them. We never need to fear that living as a child of God could lead to a boring, stifled existence. He sets the lonely in families and gives us our hearts' greatest desires. He loves us so well that we can't help but love those around us... just to be like Him.

Work //

Watch this story of a family who has reached out to the most broken and rejected children they could find to love them the way God does. It's an amazing picture of how we all have something to offer this world. In God, we are not defined by what we cannot do, our shortcomings or our limitations. We are defined by the gifts He has given us and we are more than enough in Him. After watching, spend some time asking God how you can join Him in His work of defending, freeing, and loving people.

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/70135263>



DAY 14: TOUCHED

1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

Heart //

Lydia is a woman born in Uganda to a dying widow. One of the only things Lydia received from her mother was HIV/AIDS. Lydia spent the early years of her life lying in the corner of her hut, being shown almost no affection, and teetering on the brink of starvation. If it were not for the concern of a neighbor who brought her food, Lydia would not have survived the early years of her life. Her mother died when she was only 9 years old, leaving her to be cared for by her 17 year old brother. Sadly, he was ashamed of his sister's condition and refused to feed or medicate her, telling her she was dying anyway. She was rejected by the other children in the village and all she could do was pray that God saw her differently.

One day, the same neighbor who had provided food delivered the news of a home in town for children with HIV/AIDS. She paid for transportation to bring Lydia to the home and told the caretakers her story. Ms. Sara, the "mother" of the home, told Lydia that she wanted her to be a part of the family, and immediately loved as her own daughter. Ms. Sara opened her arms and drew Lydia in for a hug, this was foreign to Lydia who had never received affection in this way. Lydia collapsed into Ms. Sara's arms and cried in joy. This was the care that Lydia had prayed for. She was loved.

Lydia grew up to be an extraordinarily compassionate woman whose smile now beams as she takes care of children coming from a similar situation that she did. With unshaken faith, she holds the children when they are scared, hurt, or sick, knowing that the embrace she received changed the course of her life. It told her that she was valued and worthy of affection. She gives out more hugs than most people because she understands the unspeakable power of touch.

Work //

Lydia's story connects us to the reality many people face, orphaned and alone, with no one to touch or speak love over them. Mother Teresa once charged the people of God to, "spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting." Today you may not be able to reach out to an orphan, but **think of kindness as you greet every single person.** Greet your family, teachers, friends, and even strangers with intentional warmth, even if it feels different, even if they don't deserve it.



DAY 15: WE ARE NOT ALONE

Galatians 5:13-26 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Heart //

As we've learned this week, our amazing Father gives us wholeness through adoption as sons and daughters. He calls us to love. In our own strength, loving like Jesus is unreachable, but God, in *His* perfection, pours love into our hearts and gives us His own Spirit whose love flows out of us (Romans 5:5).

As humans, we cannot live the Christian life any more perfectly than the Israelites could keep the law. Our Father calls us to live a righteous life, but He does not ask us to do it alone. He gives us His Holy Spirit to live through us. When we make space in our hearts for less of our self-focus and more of God's kindness, joy, and peace, we can live the abundant life Christ came to give us (John 10:10). When we remove the desire for *our* best and seek *His* best, the Spirit can empower us and we experience the strength of God.

As love becomes our way of life, we must constantly be reminded of His strength in us. Christianity is not an addition to our lives, it is a new life to live. When we let go of the world and find our identity as children of God, His Spirit grows the character of Christ in our lives. Ephesians 2:10 explains that we were "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." As we continue this walk in the Spirit, let's begin next week's journey into compassion with this idea in mind: I am God's, and there's work He has for me to do!

Work //

Ask God to show you someone to **show out-of-the-ordinary kindness** toward today. Maybe that looks like eating with someone at lunch who usually eats alone, even though people may laugh. Maybe it looks like playing with a younger sibling that usually gets left out instead of hanging out with your friends. Maybe it looks like doing something kind for a person you have had a hard time with. Ask the Spirit to help you get outside your comfort zone and show kindness in a way that would be difficult without His help.



WEEK THREE: COMPASSION

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/83794417>



DAY 16: CO-SUFFERING WITH CHRIST

Romans 8:16-17 "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."

Heart //

How incredible it is that God would call us His children! Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God has brought us into His family and promised us true life in Him. As family, we have the privilege of sharing in the good and the bad, the glory of God, and in His sufferings. As we focus on compassion this week, let's take a better look at what it actually means.

The original meaning of the word "compassion" means to "co-suffer" with another. How are we called to "co-suffer" with Jesus? Well, let's think about it this way... to love our neighbor as ourselves means that we are open to feeling what they feel and are willing to put ourselves in their place. This leads us to experience a deep passion to alleviate any suffering they may be experiencing. It leads us to *care*. Don't you think God's heart must break as He feels the suffering of His children who are enslaved by things like poverty, fear, and the pursuit of worldly pleasures? How often do we allow our hearts to be touched by the suffering of our fellow humans?

We are God's children and He has given us everything we need to be His hands and feet to those who are suffering around us. We become more like God when we engage our hearts with His, and we begin to care about who He cares about. When we follow in His footsteps, our life could get a little out of the ordinary, but isn't that what being a Christian is all about? Putting others first doesn't always mean selling everything and moving to a poverty-stricken community. But we must know that when we open our hearts and begin caring about the vulnerable people in our world, things will begin to look different... and for most of us in modern, affluent church, 'different' could be a very good thing.

Work //

Ask yourself if you are willing to co-suffer with Jesus even if it means that you may experience hard times. Think about this: Worldwide more than 6 million children die from malnutrition each year. One out of every seven people worldwide battles hunger every day.* Most children living in poverty only get to eat one meal each day, which is typically a small portion of beans and rice. **Take on the challenge of eating beans and rice this week--for lunch each day, for an entire day, or for the whole week!** As you eat, think about what it would be like to eat that for every meal and have barely enough to survive.

*Statistics from Compassion.com.



DAY 17: TOUCHING THE NEED

Mark 1:40-42 "A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said. Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed."

Heart //

Compassion not only sees the need, compassion touches the need. All throughout Scripture the thing that always caught Jesus' attention was another human being in need. Not only did He see the needs of those around Him, but He was willing to act on their behalf.

During the time Jesus walked on the earth it would have been considered "defilement," almost like polluting or contaminating Himself to touch a person with leprosy. But Jesus cared more for the man than He did about what the culture said was right or what people would think about Him. He lovingly engaged in the suffering the man was facing and touched and healed Him.

It is often too easy for us to close our eyes to the needs of the people around us because we are too concerned with ourselves and what others may think of us. Jesus asks us to love one another as we love ourselves, and says that the world will know that we are His disciples by the way we love one another. (Johns 13:35) What does the world see when they look at our lives? When we stop and remember how healing, comforting, and good God's love has been to us, it's not hard to want to share that love with others. Let's keep our eyes open for opportunities to show the world what God's love looks like.

Mother Teresa once said, "Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely, and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work." What grace have we received that we could use to bless someone in need? If we have a voice to encourage, a dollar to share, or a smile to offer, then we have something to give.

Work //

As we spend time with Jesus, we begin to act like Him. We begin to share in the sufferings of others and want to touch their needs. Think about the people in your life who may be suffering and **choose someone today to encourage with your words or actions.** This may mean writing an encouraging letter, doing yard work for someone, or even just asking "how are you?", and then listening and caring.



DAY 18: GENEROSITY FOR ALL

Lamentations 3:21-23 "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Heart //

In the heart of a severely impoverished community of slums in Kampala, Uganda, lies a group of people who are desperate to find hope. People living in this area of the city are daily faced with the challenges of finding clean water, food, clothing, and adequate shelter. The lack of these basic necessities creates an extremely difficult and seemingly hopeless situation for the thousands of men, women, and children living there.

Yet there is hope even in the darkest of places. Within this community of slums there is a body of believers called Saints Gate Church, who are daily ministering to their neighbors. Many of the members of the church live in the slums and are very poor, but if you were to meet these people you would be meeting some of the most joyful and hopeful people around. Anet is a singer and a translator at the church and says that her prayer in life is to make an impact for Christ. These Christians have found that their greatest treasure is to know God and they have given their lives to serve Him, even if they aren't sure where their next meal is coming from.

The reality of compassion and generosity isn't just that the rich need to give to help the poor. It's that Christians need to be like their Father and live with relentless compassion. We are to do what our Father does. Even the poorest Christians are called to give and love generously. Mark 12:42-43 describes a poor widow who gave "more than all the others" in Jesus' opinion, with the few cents that she was able to sacrifice. May that be a challenge to all of us, those who have much and those who have little.

Work //

Today, **make a list of the gifts, blessings, or skills God has given you.** Ask Him to show you how you could use those gifts to be His hands and feet to your community and to the world.



DAY 19: LOVE AS BROTHERS

Hebrews 13:1-3 "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Heart //

If you could travel to the mountains of Zacapa, Guatemala today, you would find a community living in extremely difficult conditions. Their home is the local trash dump. Families with multiple children have built shelters there so that they can be the first to grab whatever the dump trucks drop off onto the pile of trash. These people don't have access to clean water and they live each day without being sure of where their next meal will come from. Disease is rampant in the community and paying for health care is not an option. The effects of poverty make it very difficult for the adults to work jobs, or for the children to attend any schooling. This creates a cycle of poverty within families that is very difficult to break, which leads to feelings of hopelessness and despair.

The Bible reminds us to remember those who are hurting as if we were the ones suffering. When preaching on the subject of compassion and in reference to the story of the good Samaritan, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'"

Try to imagine what it would be like if you were born into this community in Zacapa. Now, imagine if someone loved you enough that they made personal sacrifices in order to take care of you and your family's needs. Think of how your life would change if you heard of the love and hope in Jesus! There are people in our schools, our cities, and around the world who need a word of encouragement, a meal, or a listening ear today. May we show true compassion and use the gifts, talents, and resources that God has given each of us to care for those who are suffering. Let us be people that love like Jesus does and refuse to ignore our brothers and sisters who are in need.

Work //

There are an estimated 153 million orphans worldwide. That's more than twice the population of minors (children 0-17 years old) in the United States. 1.4 billion people in the developing world living on less than \$1.25 per day. Every year, approximately 1.8 million children die as a result of diseases from unclean water and poor sanitation... that's five THOUSAND deaths each day.* As Christians, these facts should move us to compassion and loving action. **Do a little research today to find out who the most needy people in your city are.** Where do they live? How do they survive? Who is reaching out to them? Pray for the people and organizations in your city that are doing their part to reach out to the poor.

*Statistics from Compassion.com and Worldorphans.org



DAY 20: KNOWING GOD BY LIVING LIKE HIM

Jeremiah 22:16 "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know Me?" declares the Lord."

Heart //

At this point in the book of Jeremiah, God stepped in and spoke to the kings who were leading the nation of Judah. He rebuked them for how they were neglecting and even oppressing some of the people. The current king was building his own kingdom and palace by unrighteous and unjust acts. God saw the needs of His people and desired to set things right. He commanded the king to make justice and righteousness a priority in leading the nation. In fact, He said that defending the cause of those who are poor and in need is ultimately *what it means to know Him*.

To truly know God is to know what He is like and what things He cares about. His heart is compassionate toward those who are in need and He talks about loving the poor all throughout Scripture. He sees their needs and rescues them. Therefore, we cannot claim to know God and then live a self-focused life that is completely contrary to His heart's desires.

The issues of poverty and injustice in our world are deep and complex. It will take generations of change to make a dent in the issues at large. But there is a choice each one of us can only make for ourselves. We can choose to make justice a priority in our own lives by becoming educated on the issues in our world, being willing to change our ways, and living simple lives that are marked by compassion rather than self-serving consumerism.

In his book, *Crazy Love*, Francis Chan addresses this issue in our modern church. He states, "The concept of downsizing so that others might upgrade is biblical, beautiful, and nearly unheard of. We either close the gap or don't take the words of the Bible literally." We, as Christians, must be willing to step outside of the norms of our society and ask God honestly, "How can I best serve Your Kingdom?" There is so much we can do!

Work //

How much of you (your money spent, plus time in activity AND thinking about the activity) is spent on your clothes and your entertainment. Try to calculate time and cost per week, then multiply it by 52 to think about the whole year. Now, of course we all spend time and money on these things. But when you're finished, answer this question... Why? Fun clothes, food and activities are great things, but how much of yourself is being spent in search of popularity, escaping reality, or just plain boredom. Ask the Lord to search your heart and help you to understand the difference between things you "need" and the things you "want". In which areas of your life could you consider LESS in a culture that is always pushing for you to want more?



DAY 21: LOVING GOD BY LOVING PEOPLE

*Matthew 25:31-46 "When the Son of Man comes ... he will sit on his ... throne. All the nations will gather before him, and he will separate the people one from another ... and give blessing and inheritance ... **For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.**' ... the righteous will ask, "When did we do that?" ... "whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.' He will curse those who ... did not do for one of the least of these ... "*

Heart //

After hearing the message of Heartwork, the junior high and high school students at Third Church in Pella, Iowa became passionate about learning to be like God by spending themselves on behalf of people in need. The youth pastors partnered with Heartwork to challenge students to raise enough money to help support an orphan-care ministry in Jinja, Uganda. Students learned about today's verse, God's heart for the poor and how Jesus tells us that providing for the poor is like providing for God Himself. The students rose to the challenge. They sold possessions, brought in jars full of change, sacrificed lunch money, gave up their Christmas gifts, and worked extra hours at their jobs. God blessed their work.

The group had set out to reach a goal of \$20,000 to build a new home for the children being cared for by the Jinja ministry, which is led by a Ugandan family, committed to seeing their children restored to dignity. When the fundraising was complete, to everyone's surprise, the students had raised almost double what they had set out to do. Not only did they build the new home for orphans, they were able to build a home for a widow in the Jinja community and her family, and purchase a tractor for the ministry to be able to use for business endeavors that can sustain many of the childrens' needs.

The willingness and sacrifice of these students has made a lasting impact on dozens of orphans' lives in Uganda. They have continued to sacrifice and send funds to the orphan home in Jinja to help sustain the ministry God is doing there. As young people, it's easy to feel that our contribution can't really make a difference, but that is simply not true. No matter our age, we can ask God what our part is to love people who are in need. He will give us the wisdom and strength we need to do our part.

Work //

God has uniquely designed you to participate in His Kingdom coming to this world. He's given you creativity, the ability to work hard, and the resources (even if they're small!) to be a generous giver... Ask Him to teach you how to use those things to join Him in His plan. **Today, make a plan to gather with friends or family to pray together.** Do a little research before your meeting on issues your group could pray about. God is still at work in the lives of the vulnerable and needy. How can you be a part?



DAY 22: GOD'S RESCUE STRATEGY

Psalm 82:3-4 "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Heart //

God is looking out across the earth as a Father who is longing for His children to be rescued and to return to Him. He sees their suffering every day and His heart is full of compassion for them. Today, spend a few extra minutes watching this video and allow your heart to be moved by God's love and how He may want to use you!

watch this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWHJ6-YhSYQ>

Work //

Are you so sick of beans and rice yet? Isn't it starting to sink in what it would be like if that was your ONLY option? It's heart-breaking to realize this is reality for so many in our world. Today, **write down your thoughts on your beans and rice experience and make a plan to serve at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter** in your area. Open your heart and make yourself available for God to use you however and wherever He desires within your daily life here and now, and trust that He will guide you into whatever plans He has for your future.



WEEK FOUR: MISSION

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/83794416>



DAY 23: FOLLOW ME

Matthew 4:19-20 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him."

Heart //

Follow Me. These two words from Jesus have life-changing implications for anyone who accepts them. When Jesus first called the disciples, He was calling them to give up everything they had ever known. When He called, they immediately "left their nets and followed Him." Their nets symbolized their career, their ambitions, and their lives. Following Jesus is a call to let go. It is a call to die to ourselves and to find a new life in Christ. It is a call to live like Jesus.

God sent His Son to the world on a rescue mission... Jesus came for people. He came to bring hope to the hopeless. He came to seek and save the lost. When Jesus called the first disciples, He called them to join Him on His mission. When we decide to follow Jesus, it's not just a ticket to Heaven, it's an invitation to a journey with Him.

So often, we minimize the call to follow Jesus to just reading the Bible, praying, or going to church. But the real call to follow Him means reaching out to those who are weak, to those who are looked down upon by society, and to those without hope. Throughout the gospels, we see Jesus constantly spending time with those in need. We see Him constantly telling others about the good news of the Gospel. If we are not actively spending our lives on behalf of others, then are we really following Jesus? New Testament scholar Scot McKnight puts it this way, "Those who aren't following Jesus aren't his followers. It's that simple. Followers follow, and those who don't follow aren't followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it."

Work //

Today, spend a few minutes looking through the Gospels in your Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and **find a few things that Jesus called His followers to do**. Make a list that you can add to whenever you're reading the Gospels in the coming weeks. **Think of one practical way to live out one of the commands you read today.**



DAY 24: FAITH WITHOUT ACTIONS

James 2:15-17 "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Heart //

Let's imagine we have a friend who calls himself a musician. He is constantly talking about music. He goes to concerts almost every week and frequently reads magazines and articles explaining how to be a great musician. But, even after years of knowing him, we'd never actually seen him play an instrument. In fact, we may really start questioning if he is a musician at all. Though he knows all about music and enjoys listening to other people play, he wouldn't really be defined as a musician because he does not play an instrument himself.

This is the trap that many of us fall into as we call ourselves Christ followers. We are constantly learning more about God by going to church, listening to sermons, and reading our Bibles. But if we never actually do what Christ did, then how will people know that we are actually His followers? In order to live on mission for Christ, we have to get past mere talk and knowledge, and be moved to action. We cannot say we love the lost or we care for the poor, but then do nothing about it.

Work //

This week we encourage you to put your faith into action by empathizing with the poor and speaking up on their behalf. Being an advocate for those in need is a great way to show compassion. **Get a sandbag at your local hardware store or a large bag of beans or rice from a grocery warehouse. Carry it with you on your shoulder wherever you go, maybe for a day or the whole week.** Many children in developing nations spend hours each day walking to get food or water and miss out on the opportunity to go to school. As you do this, think about what it would be like to spend each day walking miles carrying food or water just to be able to survive. This will give you a great opportunity to be a voice on their behalf when others ask what you are doing.



DAY 25: ANOINTED FOR MISSION

Isaiah 61:1-3 – “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”

Heart //

As today’s verse refers to Jesus, the Messiah, it also applies to us as sons and daughters of God. As a co-heir with Christ, He has anointed each of us individually for a specific mission. He has created us to bring His love and His hope to those who need it. Isaiah 61 says that His Spirit is on us. The Lord does not just give a mission and expect us to do it all on our own. He has given us His Spirit to empower us and give us the strength and direction as we live out our mission.

Pastor Charles Stanley once said, “earthly wisdom is doing what comes naturally. Godly wisdom is doing what the Holy Spirit compels us to do.” Dr. Stanley is affirmed by Acts 1 which says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

He has given us His Spirit so that we can be His witness to those who do not know Him. He has given us His Spirit so that we can be a part of freeing the oppressed. We are anointed by the Holy Spirit to live like Jesus did. He has commanded us to “go make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) and he promises us that He “will be with us always.” We are not alone. We have the power of the Holy Spirit with us as we reach our hands out to the needy. We have the power of Christ as we spread His name to those who do not know Him.

Work //

Jesus said it was good for Him to leave so that the Holy Spirit would come to believers. Today, make a plan to talk to a mature believer who you trust to **ask them about how they live out this idea of depending on the Spirit for guidance.** Ask that friend or mentor to pray with you that God would help you to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit every day. Pray that He would guide you and give you opportunities to show love to others.



DAY 26: BRING YOUR LOAVES

John 6:1-15 – Feeding of the 5,000

Heart //

In the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 we see how He can take “not enough” and make it *more* than enough. At first, all the disciples could see was a huge problem, but Jesus saw an opportunity. He used the little offering of a young boy to make a huge difference.

So many times we feel inadequate, thinking we do not have anything to offer Jesus. In reality, all He asks for is willing followers who are ready to give all they have. All throughout Scripture we see God’s unfolding plan to change the world through ordinary people. He used a shepherd boy to become the King of Israel, He used a teenager to birth His own son, and He used a fisherman to start the early Church.

In 2010, God used a small youth group from Wichita, Kansas to make a huge difference in the lives of people across the globe. This group of 13-18 year old students had heard about the orphan crisis and were determined to do something about it. The youth group only had about 10 students, but they believed God was calling them to build a water well in Swaziland at a cost of \$6,000. In man’s eyes this seemed like an impossible task, but again, Jesus saw an opportunity to use ordinary people to change someone’s world.

The students began to use their gifts and talents to raise money. They held benefit concerts, mowed lawns, and worked extra hours at their jobs. The students would also fast a meal each week and give the money to the project. One of the students said, “God didn’t tell us to take care of those hurting and in need only if we have the money. He commands us to love, and I believe one of the ways we can show love is to give—even if it is just 1 or 2 dollars. What I might consider to be little can do great things in this orphan crisis.” God took these students’ offering and multiplied it in miraculous ways. The group accomplished their goal and raised \$6,250!

Work //

Worldwide, about 780 million people lack access to clean water. That’s 2 and a half times the population of the United States.* Water sources are often shared with animals and contaminated with waste and trash. Today, **fill a water bottle and then add dirt from your yard or pieces of trash. Carry it around with you today** as a reminder that many people in this world have only contaminated water to drink. Think of the women and children who have to spend their entire days just carrying water for miles to and from their homes. As you carry around your sandbag this week, remember how blessed you are and ask God how your giving, no matter how small, could impact the life of someone in need.

Statistics from water.org.



DAY 27: HOPE TO ONE

Mark 5:21-23 "When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

Heart //

Can we really make a difference in the orphan crisis? Can we really decrease the stranglehold of poverty? Can we save a whole generation from the destructive road of self-focus? These are the questions that pop into our minds when Christ teaches us to love the poor and the lost. We often get caught up in the overwhelming statistics and end up feeling like we cannot possibly make a difference.

In Mark 5, Jesus made a difference in the lives of two different individuals. In the midst of a huge crowd, He reached out and healed two people, changing their lives forever. He could have been concerned with reaching the whole crowd or been overwhelmed by the busyness of His ministry, but He chose to focus on just two people in need and gave them hope. Throughout His lifetime, Jesus was focused on the individual. He healed the blind and paralyzed, took time to be with children, and freed the demon possessed.

We can make a difference in the lives of others... one life at a time. God may not call us as students to end the AIDS epidemic or provide food to every person on the planet, but He *has* given us the resources to bring His healing and hope to individuals.

Work //

Watch this inspiring video that demonstrates that we can make a difference in the life of a child. It is a process, but when we are able to see past the problems that impoverished children face and instead see the people they are and the potential they have, we will be moved to do whatever we can to help empower them... One life at a time.

watch this video: <http://vimeo.com/19223562>



DAY 28: SPEAK UP!

Proverbs 31:8-9 "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Heart //

Let's try to imagine, for a moment, being born in the poorest of conditions. Living in a shack with seven brothers and sisters, and at the age of five, both of your parents pass away. You are left alone with no one to look after you, no one to provide for you. Shortly after the passing of your parents, two of your siblings are ripped away from you by disease. You are now the youngest of five children, with no one to provide for your family's needs. The only place you can turn is to God.

This is the story of a young man from Uganda named Walter Williams. He heard about Jesus when he was five years old and began experiencing God's love and provision as he led his five siblings. The first thing Walter did everyday was get on his knees and pray for God to provide food for him and his family that day. Everyday was a struggle to survive, but time and time again the Lord answered his prayers.

Walter William's life was completely changed when a stranger decided to give him a voice. Someone on the other side of the world decided to sponsor Walter and give him an education, food, and a place to live. Someone on the other side of the world decided it was time to defend the rights of the poor and needy. Because this person decided to spend themselves on behalf of someone in need, Walter is now a grown man who uses his knowledge and education to tell others about the hope of Jesus Christ!

There are thousands of others who are ensnared by poverty and do not have anyone who will speak up for them. While there is much that we cannot do, there are things that we can do... things that we must do. John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, once said, "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." We must speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. We must defend the rights of the poor and needy. This is the only way to find true life.

Work //

Today, speak up to your friends, family, or on social media by sharing a story or a statistic about someone who is living in poverty. Pray that as people hear about these things, they would also be moved to learn and share. As you go somewhere today carrying a bag of rice or sand on your shoulder, use it as an opportunity to **tell people what you are doing, why you are doing it, and about those in poverty who are walking miles to get their water.**



DAY 29: FINISH THE RACE

Acts 20:24 "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."

Heart //

The Lord has given each one of us a mission to fulfill while we are on the earth. He has enabled us to accomplish that mission through the power of His Holy Spirit and He has given us the resources to be able to make a difference. He is now calling us to spend ourselves for the fulfillment of that mission.

Paul knew the task God had given him - "the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace." His only focus in life was giving the Gospel to those who did not know Christ, and he did not stop until he died. God has called us to follow Him in pursuit of the lost, broken, and hurting. He commands us to preach good news to the poor and has called us each to different expressions of that mission. God is encouraging us to "finish the race and complete the task."

Forest Witcraft once said, "One hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, how big my house was, or what kind of car I drove. But the world may be a little better, because I was important in the life of a child." There will come a time when we stand before the Lord and the only thing of importance on that day will be how we used the gifts God had given us. May we be able to stand before the Lord and, like Paul, come to the end of our lives having finished the race and completed the task the Lord granted us. May our lives have been spent generously and fully on behalf of others and in spreading God's grace. May we enter into eternity and hear our Father say, "well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21)

Work //

As we come to the end of our journey to learn to Spend Ourselves, the question that remains for each of us is: **"What mission is God calling me to?"** As you continue to grow in Spending Yourself, allow God to answer this question. Watch this short film that portrays a student spending himself for an orphan on the other side of the world. Think of one person you can spend yourself for today, and go for it. You are free, you are God's child, you are following in His footsteps. Here at Heartwork, we are so proud of you.

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/13023190>



DAY 30: DESTINY RESCUING DESTINY

watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/83794415>

James 1:27 "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Heart //

Our prayer is that as we complete these 30 days, we would be *brave enough* to open our eyes and ask questions - How can we keep ourselves pure in our devotion to God? Who are the "orphans and widows" in my life? If I was born into an impoverished family, how would I want to be treated by those who have a lot more resources than me? What could my life look like if I was not afraid or self-focused? Have I turned some of my "wants" into "needs"? What career has God gifted me to grow into and how could I use that to serve the Kingdom? Let's be brave enough to look around at different community groups within our cities and our world as we plan for the life we want to live.

It takes courage to open our eyes. If we live in a family or community where we can eat whenever we feel hungry, we have overflowing closets, and we have gifts given to us several times a year, then we are "rich." By the worldwide standard, if we live in the USA, we are probably rich. And that messes with us, doesn't it? We want to put that title off on people who live like royalty, but think about it... Compared to most people in our generation, and most people throughout history, we live like royalty. Are we saying that the only answer is to give everything away and take a vow of poverty? No. We are simply saying let's open our eyes to the world around us, and open our hearts to God.

Go to school, work hard, make money, and then ask, "How will I spend it?" It takes courage to consider going against the grain of our culture that says "get something bigger and better, you deserve it, you don't have enough yet, keep climbing that ladder..." But we at Heartwork believe that you can stand up against the wave of "normal" that tries to overtake you. You can create a "new normal" in your generation. You can let go. You can be secure in who you are in God rather than needing to look successful and powerful to feel good about yourself. You can be strong enough to co-suffer with those in different circumstances than you. You can love well and serve God's kingdom rather than just building your own. You can do all of this as a child of God because in your weakness, He is strong. This is pure religion. It's giving life, and receiving a greater life than you could have imagined in return. We call this destiny rescuing destiny.

Work //

It may not be all at once, it may be over the course of your life, but as you let go of things and find your identity in God, His compassion will grow in your life and His mission will be right in front of you... it's up to you to take the next step. **Ask God for passion and endurance to run and finish the race He has for you. Pray for believers all across the world to also run with perseverance to the end.**





YOU JUST COMPLETED THE 30 DAYS OF HEARTWORK!

Thank you for taking this journey, we are so proud of you and would love to help you apply all you've learned to take the next step!

Head over to www.Heartwork.tv to adopt a project or to bring Heartwork to your city!