

# FRACTURED

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# PREFACE

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Broken World. Broken People. Broken Family.

The moment you realize something is broken, it changes everything.

Questions then come:

Can it be fixed?

Where do I go to get this fixed?

How long will this take?

What does the process look like?

These are the questions that come when we physically break something, but these are the questions that also should come when we realize that our family is broken.

*Fractured* looks at four main topics. First, is the critical impact. It is noticing that something is wrong. The second topic is best seen from the view of a broken bone. It describes the reset or the process of how to recover. Third, warns about a relapse or falling back into the broken state. Finally, strength through brokenness is highlighted. It is about victory and being healthy.

*Fractured* consists of four study guides for personal or group discussion and twenty-four devotions for further insight. *Fractured* not only exposes the problem, but will take you through the healing process. You can end up being stronger than you started.

LESSON ONE

# IMPACT

PASTOR JAYSON COMBS



It was the first practice of seventh-grade football. I was so excited to play. It was the first year you could play on the school team. For this first practice, we did not have pads. The coach was just seeing who could run, throw, and catch. For one of the drills, I lined up as a wide receiver. I ran a pattern and the quarterback threw me a pass. The ball hit me right in the hands, which is a good thing except for when I looked at my fingers, my thumb bent at a 90-degree angle. I remember showing the coach and he just popped it back into place. That night as the pain grew and grew, I finally went to the doctor and sure enough, it was broken.

It totally messed up my season. That seventh-grade season, that I was so excited for, would never be the same. For most of the season, I wore a cast. It changed everything.

1. Has an injury ever come at the wrong time for you? How did it change your plans?

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2. For those of you who are into sports, has an injury ever occurred to one of the players on your favorite team and it messed up the season?

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The word fractured is defined as “the act of breaking; state of being broken.” Sadly, this defines many families in our culture. It is almost as if either the family is broken or in the act of breaking. The truth for most of us is that it hurts. It messed up a season or seasons. For many, they do not see a way out of the pain. The purpose of this book

is to deal with the impact of brokenness in the family. We will work through that pain and see the healing and purpose that God can bring to you and your family.

Brokenness in the family is not a new thing. From Adam and Eve to Jesus and many people in-between we see hurt in the family. These fractures come in all shapes and sizes. I encourage you this week to read the devotionals. Staff from our Family Team share from their experiences. Here are the topics: death, anger, divorce, sickness, money, and addiction.

Matthew 9:9-13 says, ***“As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”***

Psalms 34:18 adds, ***“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”***

Psalms 147:3 continues, ***“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”***

Isaiah 41:10 says, ***“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”***



Jeremiah 17:14 records, ***“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.”***

3. Jesus is often called the Great Physician. What do you learn about the Great Physician in these passages?

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4. What does Psalm 147:3-7 say about God's credentials?

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Psalm 147:3-6 says, ***“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.”***

5. When choosing a doctor what credentials do they need?

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6. Why are God's tenderness toward sinners, power over all things, and personal knowledge of all so important when evaluating His credentials?

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7. What fractures have you struggled through? Are there scars? Are there things that you do differently now because of your wounds?

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8. What is stopping you from healing?

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Matthew 11:28 says, ***“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”***

We all know people who will not go to the doctor. Some are too prideful, some are too scared, and some doubt there is any real help.

9. Does this by chance describe you at all when coming to the Great Physician? Is there pride standing in the way? Do you fear that God will not really show up?

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Jesus promises us healing if we come to Him. That first requires the realization that we are sick and in need of help. It requires us to call upon Him.

In 1 Peter 2:24, we read, ***“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”***

Healing always first starts with salvation and then grows into a daily casting our cares upon Him because He cares for us.



Chris Rice has a song that I love to sing:

*Weak and wounded sinner  
Lost and left to die  
O, raise your head, for love is passing by  
Come to Jesus  
Come to Jesus  
Come to Jesus and live!*

*Now your burden's lifted  
And carried far away  
And precious blood has washed away the stain, so  
Sing to Jesus and live!*

*And like a newborn baby  
Don't be afraid to crawl  
And remember when you walk  
Sometimes we fall, so  
Fall on Jesus and live!*

*Sometimes the way is lonely  
And steep and filled with pain  
So if your sky is dark and pours the rain, then  
Cry to Jesus and live!*

*O, and when the love spills over  
And music fills the night  
And when you can't contain your joy inside, then  
Dance for Jesus and live!*

Maybe you feel weak and wounded today. Come to Jesus!





# MY PERFECT LIFE

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## IMPACT, DEVOTION 1

**Kyle Wendel**

Disclaimer: I am in no way trying to insult or hurt anyone in this devotional. I am going to tell you my story of divorce and how it impacted my life.

I grew up in a perfect family, or so I thought. My family was very loving and caring. I thought we had the “cookie-cutter” family. My parents were always there and genuinely cared for their kids. I felt nothing but love and care from them. My life was great as a child. Yeah sure, we had problems just like everyone has but nothing major. The biggest family problem I had growing up was my little sister. She and I could never get along and were always fighting. However, that is siblings for you. Other than that, my family was perfect. My life was perfect and my home was perfect, until the day my parents told me they were getting divorced.

My parents never showed any hint to us children that they would ever get divorced. I saw many other kids at school who had divorced parents, and I always felt bad for them. I knew my parents would never get divorced, so I had nothing to worry about, or so I thought. One day we were supposed to go out to dinner as a family. Right before we were supposed to leave, my parents sat my three younger siblings with me down on the living room couch. They then explained to the four of us how they were getting a divorce. My younger siblings were just a little too young to understand what that meant entirely. However, I was a freshman in high school and understood exactly what was happening. I sat there filled with a million questions and emotions. I rarely saw my parents fight before. I saw them constantly showing love to each other and us. There were no warning signs of

this coming. I could not believe this was happening. After questioning my parents for a minute, I quickly ran to my room and locked myself inside. I refused to go to dinner that night and act like life was fine. My world was drastically flipped upside-down. I remember my dad coming to my door trying to talk to me, and I could not face the truth of what was happening. I thought this was all a huge nightmare.

For me, the next season of my life was a mess. I could not handle the emotions that came with my parent's divorce and how it was changing my life. I had so many emotions built up inside against my parents and how they could do this to me. I began to rebel in any way that I could. I started hanging around the wrong friends and making poor choices. Sin was wrecking my life. It was having a massive impact on my life and those around me.

My story is different from the majority of children who go through a divorce. My parents got divorced and were back together a year later. It is an incredible story to see this happen, as this is not common. Fast forward years from then and my parents are still married, which is an awesome blessing to have! However, this did not stop the hurt and pain that I endured from this. Sin has an earthly impact just as much as it has an eternal impact on our lives.

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

Sin has huge consequences in our lives, and it impacts those around us. Sin brings separation between the Lord and us that we cannot fix. Sin brings eternal punishment to us, but there has been a gift to get us out of it. The only thing that can bring us back to God is His Son, Jesus, dying on the cross to pay the punishment of all our sins. This is the greatest news ever!



Even though our sin has been wiped away by Jesus, there is still an earthly consequence of our sin. Those around us can be significantly hurt through sin in our lives. I went through a lot of hurt and pain from my parent's divorce. It hurt my relationship with them for some time. I also made a lot of poor choices on my own as well from it. I do not wish this journey on anyway. However, for me, this journey led to me finding the Lord. It was a springboard to me finding a genuine relationship with Him. I found that God and His love will never waiver; it is firm and always there. When there is sin in our lives or others around us, there will be hurt from that. The Lord is always there and is waiting for us to cling to Him when sin impacts our lives.

Know the impact your sin has on you and others around you. Know that the Lord is there for us through it all.





# CHANGE YOUR PREPOSITION

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## IMPACT, DEVOTION 2

Pastor Tommy Youngquist

***“Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’” 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (NLT)***

On February 26, 2014, as I was heading into class to finish my senior year of college, I received a phone call from my dad. He proceeded to say that my mom was being sent to the hospital, that I should drop what I was doing and head to Lapeer General. I did. My mind wondered the whole way there.

I vividly remember walking into the family waiting area, giving my dad and three sisters a hug, and then asking what happened. My mom’s friend, Mrs. Kaiser was also there and she told me. She had gone into septic shock.

You see, my mom was in the process of figuring out why she was having trouble going to the bathroom and why she was losing so much weight. She had gone to the doctor’s office that morning for an enema so she could have a colonoscopy. As we stood there waiting, my mind speculated even more. Finally, the doctor walked into the room. The doctor, with a confused look on her face, told us that my mom had died. The enema she had received earlier that day broke her colon and she died from septic poison.

I stood in silence as tears started to well up in my eyes. My sisters wailed in disbelief. My dad did everything he could to try and comfort his children. I walked into the room where my mom’s body was

lying and held her hand for the last time. I thought and felt so many emotions. Death had rocked our family. It devastated us. As my time with her was wrapping up, I remember thinking to myself, "How on Earth am I going to move on without her?"

If you have experienced death in your family, has anyone ever told you that it is time to move on from the deceased? Whether it is six months, a year, or five years after they have passed, it is not easy. This bit of advice is pretty common in our world. I have heard quite a lot of people advise my dad that it is time he moves on from my mom. Maybe someone has said this to you. They have said that you just need to "move on." Even though their intentions might be pure, that bit of advice is garbage. We should not move on "from" the ones we love, but we should move on "with" the ones we love. You need to change the preposition!

Whoever you have lost, that person is still present in your mind. That person helped shape exactly who you are and continues to do so. Do not arbitrarily try to leave all of those memories in the past. Continue to move on "with" them. Allow everything that they taught you to continue to make your life better. Finally, be encouraged in this hope:

***"And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with***



***them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. So encourage each other with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NLT)***





# WHEN THINGS BREAK

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## IMPACT, DEVOTION 3

Justin Dean

Being sick is one of the most miserable things. Whether it is a little head cold or significant illness, you end up feeling like garbage and helpless because there is not anything you can do to change it. Recently, my family has experienced a lot of sicknesses. Between my wife, my mom, my sister, and even my dog, someone always seems to be experiencing a major issue. Illness has a way of affecting those around us as well. It leaves us broken and hurting for those whom we love that are sick.

Recently, Psalm 147:3-4 has been an encouragement to my family and me, ***“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.”***

It seems like a simple concept, but so often in the face of turmoil, we seem to forget it. Sickness has a way of throwing a wrench in our families' ordinary. One diagnosis can turn our family normal from band concerts and date nights to hospital waiting rooms and doctor visits. This verse reminds us of a couple of things. First, God can heal the sickness with which we are dealing. Second, God can comfort those of us that are defeated because those that we love are dealing with sickness. God is big enough to deal with the physical and emotional hurts that we are experiencing. He is in control of everything, even naming the stars, and we have to remember that when we worry about what He has in store.

Every time I wrestle with the stress of sickness in my family, it just reminds me of our need for Christ. In Matthew 9:12-13, it says,

***“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”***

We were all once sick with sin, and we need Jesus every single day to help nurse us to health. We may not all be dealing with someone in our family that is incredibly sick, but we are all dealing with the effects of sin in our lives. Whether we are watching a loved one wrestle with sickness or dealing with the occasional cold, we all need to remember the healing power of the Gospel. God is in control of it all, and we need Him to bind our wounds, heal our broken hearts, and save us from sin.



# SEEING RED

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## IMPACT, DEVOTION 4

**Mark O'Connor**

If you know me now, you would never be able to picture me losing my temper. It just does not happen. You may see me a little irritated or annoyed, but you likely have never seen me angry. My wife has only seen me lose my cool less than a handful of times in over twenty years together. People get quite irritated with me that I am not super emotional and angry in certain situations. Yet, I remain a steady ship in the roughest of seas.

That was not always the case. Up until I was about 14, I had what was commonly referred to as an Irish temper. Like many boys, I did not have the coolest of heads. It was not unheard of for me to mouth off to my parents. Yet, I was not prone to fits of rage. Although there were more than a few times I would get angry enough to get into a physical altercation, I never started an actual fight. It is surprising looking back on it. There was one day, however, which I am far from proud of, that could have taken my life down a very different path.

We were playing soccer in the back yard. Being boys, we played a little rough. I was already angry at Donny for some stuff he said. Then he slide tackles me. It was not lightly, but quite roughly. It was at this time I saw red. Something snapped in me, and I chased him. As he ran, I picked up a rock and hurled it towards him. It barely missed his head. We are talking centimeters, not inches, and it most certainly would have seriously injured him. That was the exact moment I realized I needed to get control of myself. I was going to do something I could not take back.

From that day, I learned to walk away from those situations. Despite controlling my physical reaction, I still held on to grudges and anger. I did not let it show, but it was there. It took some time to work through it. Then I learned about Jesus and started following Him. Many verses in the Bible speak about anger, but two of them have burned into me.

James 1:19-20 (NIV) says, ***“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”***

I was always quick to listen. Listening to other people's problems helped distract me from my own. I have honed that skill to be a lot healthier now. It was the slow to anger part that was my challenge. I wanted to see the righteousness in my life that God desires. Over time, as I matured and longed to be more like Jesus and less like me, this just became a part of who I am. It does not mean I have no anger; I only understand how to handle it.

Ephesians 4:26 (NIV) adds, ***“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”***

This is a practice in all areas of my life. I try so hard to give my anger to the Lord. I want Him to be the comfort He promises to be. I can honestly say that Jamie and I do not go to bed angry at each other. Has it happened? It may have happened once or twice. When it has, we did not have restful evenings. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. It will destroy relationships. It will quickly build walls that can take years to tear down. It will impact areas of your life you never could conceive possible. It can come to the point where you are the one intentionally hurting those around you. It happens both physically and mentally, and you have no idea how you got there.



# JEKYLL AND “HIDE”

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## IMPACT, DEVOTION 5

Breann Jordan

Addiction not only hurts the addict, but it hurts and causes many problems with the family. My husband, when we first met and for many years into our relationship, was an alcoholic. He put drinking before God, before our family, and before his own life many, many times. To say it was a strain on our relationship is an understatement. Addiction causes turmoil in the family. It causes pain, and it causes worry. We spent our first four years of our relationship fighting, fighting because of an addiction. I spent many nights worrying about how he was going to act, if I should hide the keys, or if my kids' dad would be in jail or be able to continue providing for them.

There were many times I wanted to “throw in the towel” and break off this relationship. Many times I wondered if my kids and I deserved better. Yet, I also loved him, and our family together, and I knew the person he was when he was sober. When he was sober he was very hardworking, very loving, and really did care about us. When he was drunk, it seemed like it was a different story. He chose to party and hanging out with friends before he chose his family.

During this time of our lives, we did not have a very strong, or a very good relationship. I did not put my faith and my trust in God, that He knew what His plan was, and that He would get us through whatever we were going through at this point. However, God knew what was going to happen, and everything changed for us, in the blink of an eye.

On March 31, 2019, my husband, with the power of God and all His glory, became sober. Jeremiah 29:11 says, ***“For I know the plans***

***I have for you declares the Lord, plans for welfare, and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.***” God had a plan for me, my husband, and our family. He changed our world and our life for the better! I am so glad and so very thankful that God gives us a second chance if we are willing to walk with Him.



# THE IMPACT OF A MONEY PINCH!

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## IMPACT, DEVOTION 6

Pastor Roy Townsend

Today, as I am writing this devotional, the United States reports 22 million workers as unemployed due to the worldwide pandemic. Financial problems, troubles, worries, distresses, difficulties, constraints, challenges, or pinches are all words that have a large impact on the family. A family's finances may be impacted by a lack of money, excessive debt, home costs, job loss, and medical costs. Some of our financial troubles can be alleviated when submitting your finances to a biblical worldview. The River Church believes the Bible has much wisdom for life including principles for finances. These principles can teach us how to live.

First, God is our everything. We do not find our security in money and finances; we find our security in His love for us. Philippians 4:19 reads, ***“And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”***

Second, we are to be “giving” to others. In Luke 6:38, we read, ***“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”*** It seems hard to give when we feel like we are in money trouble, but the concept of being generous is for all followers of Christ. It is understood that those who have less will give less, but generosity comes from giving sacrificially.

Thirdly, the Bible teaches that we should save and not spend everything we have. Proverbs 21:20 says, ***“Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours***

*it.*” We need to have saved in order to plan for the financial crises that will happen in our lives. We cannot spend all of our money and resources so that we have nothing saved up for life’s difficulties.

Next, the Bible warns against being in debt. Proverbs 22:7 reads, ***“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”*** We lose some of our freedom when we go into debt. In some instances, you will lose the opportunity to take a different job, or not be open to God’s calling to ministry because of your debt.

Lastly, we need to work on being content. Hebrews 13:5 states, ***“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”*** The impact of discontentment can lead to overspending. Please listen, we do not need the stuff to make our life complete. We need Jesus. We just read that He will never leave us. This can be a hard concept when in a money pinch, but our contentment will lead us to a better use of the money that God has given to us.

We see the impact that money trouble has on marriages and families. Please consider implementing these principles to help protect your family from a money pinch.





LESSON TWO

# RESET

PASTOR ROY TOWNSEND



I had a friend that called me about a little auto repair that needed to be fixed. Apparently, there was something wrong with the brakes on his car. It was making a little bit of noise, but everything seemed to still be working, and he did not want to take the time to fix or work on the problem. He had gotten some advice that it was okay to drive on the malfunctioning brake. So, he continued to drive on the brakes each day.

1. Usually, does it work out to your benefit to ignore a problem with your car? Why?

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2. Do you have a specific example of where you ignored a problem? What happened?

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Well, you guessed it. The problem went from a little auto repair to a much larger repair, but now he did not have enough money to take the car to an appropriate auto repair shop. So, he asked me and my brother if we would help him repair his car. I admit that I am not a mechanic by any means, but my friend needed to fix his car. We borrowed the appropriate "mechanic's manual" and read up on how to properly repair the car. Things seemed to be going pretty well. By that I mean we did not have any left-over parts. So, everything was back together. It was time to take the car on a test drive to see if it worked. Everything was going well, but the car seemed very sluggish. We had not worked on the engine at all, just the brake assembly. When we got home to the driveway, we jumped out of the car to look at the tires. The brake rotors and drums were so hot - they

were bright orange. They almost looked like lava from a volcano. Well, now we had done it. I was afraid that the drums were going to melt the tires. So now, we had no choice. My friend took his car to the local mechanic and had to replace everything on the brakes and wheel assembly. So a neglected repair turned into a larger repair, the advice was incorrect, and he had gone to the wrong people to fix it.

3. Do you have a story of trying to fix something with your car or house that did not go well?

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4. Had you researched how to fix it or did you enlist any help?

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During my time working with families, I see this scenario playing out within the family. Something is broken within the family, but Mom or Dad choose to ignore it. They may not have the time or think that they do not have the time to work on fixing the problem. So they ignore it and keep moving forward just like my friend who ignored his needed brake repair. We know that this really does not help to address the situation. When something is broken within our families, what does the Lord want us to do?

Ephesians 6:4 reads, ***“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”***



This tells us that God intended our homes to be centered on the instruction of the Lord, but often I hear of Christian homes that are grounded on the world's discipline and instruction.

5. What is the current worldly wisdom on families? Is it grounded in the Lord's instruction? Why or why not?

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Ephesians 4:14-16 reads, ***“So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”***

Have you ever wondered how a child's mind or our minds jump from one thing to another? We can go from laughing to crying at the same moment. Often this is the result of the family listening to the world's instructions. We are never truly established as a family if we follow the world's instruction.

The family is taught to “follow your heart.” This is poor advice. As a family, you should follow His heart and this comes from knowing His Word.

Jeremiah 17:9 reads, ***“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”***

The advice we should follow in our lives and in our homes should be grounded in God's Word. Remember to follow His heart and not follow our hearts because they will deceive us.

6. Can you share a time when your heart was deceived on a family decision?

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Moreover, the family is taught to "be true to yourselves." Again, if we accept that man's state is that of rebellion and wickedness against God, why would you want to be true to yourselves?

In being true to yourself, we see the flaw of our lives are consumed with our thoughts and desires. Instead, we should be consumed with His thoughts and desires.

Colossians 3:1-3 reads, ***"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."***

7. Why do you think we need to be reminded to ***"seek the things that are above?"***

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Lastly, I hear from families that God wants them to be happy. I am not too sure about this advice. It sounds very man-centered and not God-centered. We use our happiness as an excuse to make decisions



that are contrary to God's character and God's Word. He has called us to be holy, which means set-apart. If the world is making decisions to be happy, then why are they not happy? We cannot take God out of the formula for fixing the brokenness in our family.

In 1 Peter 1:14-16, we read, ***“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”***

Just as my friend should have gotten the correct advice about his car repair, we should seek advice from His Word and His Church. We need to build our family lives on His truths.





# REALIZING IT IS BROKEN

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## RESET, DEVOTION 1

Kyle Wendel

I grew up playing hockey and absolutely loved it. One of my favorite things about hockey was the tournaments. It was always so much fun going to stay a weekend in a hotel with your team and competing against other teams for a weekend packed with games. Typically you would play at least four games over the weekend. We played one Friday night, two on Saturday, and one or two on Sunday depending on if your team made it to the championship.

One of my favorite tournament destinations we went to over the years was Sault Ste. Marie in the Upper Peninsula. We went there a handful of times over the years and it was always just an awesome place and atmosphere. One year was totally different. It was Friday, the first day of the tournament. It was our first game. In the opening minutes during my first shift on the ice, I was checked from behind into the boards. This is a very dangerous and illegal play in hockey because it leaves the person getting hit defenseless going face-first into the boards and often ends in injury. If the hit is bad enough you can get kicked out of the game for it. As I was hit from behind, I felt an intense pain in my thumb. I instantly got up and skated back to the bench. I was in great pain and knew something was wrong. Because of the adrenaline from playing, I thought that I had just jammed my thumb really bad. I could not use my thumb like normal and the way it was supposed to move. In hockey, your hands are very important to control your stick. I played the rest of the game but told my teammates to only pass it to me if they absolutely had to. I could not play my normal game and was almost worthless out there.

After the game, my thumb and wrist began to swell a lot. I was certain that I had broken it. I went out to meet my parents in the arena lobby and they knew I was injured but did not know to what extent. I began to tell them what happened and show them my thumb. My mom and I thought for sure it was broken and that we needed to get it checked out immediately. However, my dad was always one to think everything was fine. He said I probably just jammed it and there was no reason to go to the hospital. Luckily, my mom and I were persistent that this was more than a jammed finger. We convinced my dad to go with us. I think he came just to prove us wrong and rub it in our faces afterward. My mom and I were telling each other how we were hoping it was broken just to rub it back in my dad's face!

The hospital took X-rays and it was confirmed that I had broken my thumb. However, it was actually broken down at the bottom of my thumb right by my wrist area. I never realized your thumb went down that far. The hospital then gave me a splint to wear to help keep my thumb straight. We would have to wait until we got back home to get a cast. Ironically, it felt so good to know it was broken to prove my dad wrong. The whole time I knew something was wrong. I knew it was broken. I knew something had to be done, even though my dad thought everything was just fine.

I went on to play the rest of the tournament with a splint on my thumb, playing differently than I normally would, and having to adapt to my injury. It was definitely a crazy experience and one I will always remember and laugh about. Looking back, I still cannot believe my parents and coaches let me play.

Too often in our lives, we do not realize when something is broken. We try to act like everything is just fine and normal. We must realize that we are broken and need help. If we continue to act like something is not broken in our lives, it will never heal the way it is supposed



to. God wants us to be looking at our lives and what needs to be examined. He wants us to come to Him with our brokenness so that He can heal us the way we need to be healed. Acknowledging the break is sometimes hard, or it is not easy to look for help. We often do not want to admit we are broken or that something in our lives is broken. To heal properly, the first step is to realize that something is broken. If you cannot accept that, then you can never truly heal or take the steps to recovery.

Examine your life today. What is broken and needs to be fixed? Do you accept that it is broken or do you choose to not believe it? How can you go to God with your brokenness?

Psalm 147:3 says, ***“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”***





# SITTING OUT

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## RESET, DEVOTION 2

Keaton Washburn

When I was in middle school, I fractured a finger while at basketball practice. It was painful and I wanted to play through it, but the pain was too much. I ended up going to urgent care later that night and the next day they put most of my hand in a cast. As a result, I had to sit out the rest of that season. I did not want to sit out, but for my finger to heal it had to rest.

In life, God gives us opportunities to rest. Often, it seems much easier to continue moving. I have noticed that in my life, my default is to stay busy. When someone asks me how I am doing, my response is often, "Good, doing well, keeping busy." Why is it that as humans we look for ways to keep ourselves busy? I think it is because resting feels dangerous. I would have preferred to not sit out that basketball season after fracturing my finger, but I had to in order to get better. The same is true with broken relationships. To get better, we have to pause and choose whether to obey God or keep living our way.

The author of Hebrews talks about this in chapters 3 and 4. He is reflecting upon the Israelites in the book of Numbers where they sent the spies to check out the land that God promised to them. After seeing how menacing the enemies in the land looked, they chose to not enter the land that God had promised them. Hebrews 4:8-11 says, ***"For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."***

The rest that the author is speaking of is the inheritance that God promised the Israelites - the land, and, eventually, their salvation through the work of Christ. They did not care about their inheritance at that moment, they were only thinking about their fears of the physical. They did not care what God promised them, they were caught up with how weak they were. When it comes to the fractured relationships in your life, are you choosing to live in fear of the hard work and hurt that mending the relationship could bring or are you resting in God's restoring power by praying for that relationship and trusting God to do the hard work of healing what is fractured?

Rest is not natural. At the moment, it does not feel like praying for our broken relationship is the most powerful thing we can do. However, to heal, we have to stop working, choose to sit out and ask God to do what only He can do.



# PICK THE RIGHT DOCTOR!

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## RESET, DEVOTION 3

Pastor Roy Townsend

“You better pick the right doctor.” This sounds like good advice when you are dealing with an injury. We have all heard stories of people who got some bad advice from a doctor. On the other hand, we have all heard stories of how the right doctor has made a huge difference for some of our friends and family. However, I have often seen families react to situations by listening to bad instructions and advice.

Proverbs 19:20-21 reads, ***“Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”*** We see families that are falling apart, but the parents are taking the advice of the world. Frankly, they are following the wrong doctor’s advice.

This concept of finding the right doctor hits close to home for me. In 2014, I was told that I needed to have significant heart surgery. My cardiologist made a couple of suggestions, so my wife and I visited the first surgeon. He explained how the process would work in his hospital with his team. After meeting with him, I had an uneasy feeling. It was not that he said anything wrong, but the process felt very “laid back.” This was my life we were talking about, and I walked away with a very unsettled feeling. So, we decided to get a second opinion. When we went to the second doctor’s consultation, it was overwhelmingly different. The process was much more entailed. They wanted to know everything about me so that they were prepared for every outcome. I teased my wife that they knew where all my moles were on my body. I am not sure how that would be important, but I

felt like the advice was good and very thorough. Well, this book is published in February of 2021, so it will be seven years exactly, and I think I picked the right doctor who gave me excellent advice.

So when something breaks in your family, my advice is to find the right doctor. You need to seek advice that will help your family. In 2 Timothy 3:16, we read, ***“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”*** How you react to the situation in your family needs to be based on the Word of God. If you are not sure about what to do, please seek godly counsel from other families or pastors in the church. Proverbs 11:14 states, ***“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”*** We all know it is difficult to react correctly when your family is hurting, but that is the best time to pick the right doctor.



# PREVENTING INFECTION

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## RESET, DEVOTION 4

Mark O'Connor

Have you ever had that wound that just would not heal? I once had a cut on my thumb that just would not totally heal. It would start to get better, then I would hit it on something and the scab would come off. It would start bleeding and the whole process would start over again. I feel like it went on for weeks but it may have been shorter. I am proficient in being awful for remembering time frames. I can tell you for certain it was longer than average because I can remember a single cut. Band-Aids would not protect it for some reason. It got to a point where it started to get the red irritating ring around it. The wound began to be infected. It was time to break out the Neosporin. Why I did not use it in the first place, I do not know. Sure enough, as the Neosporin started working, the small infection started going away. A simple step that probably would have saved me days or weeks of pain and irritation, provided relief in a very short time.

Now have you ever experienced an injured heart? I am not referencing a heart attack or physical condition. I am talking about that time when someone hurt you. It could have been a parent, a sibling, or a friend. In those times, when those words are said or actions are taken, infections can set in quickly. Our relationships can be just like that infection. The initial injury happens and we do not think much of it. Life goes on and it festers. We do not feel it much, it is just an irritation. Life moves on and we think we forget about it, or maybe not. Maybe it stays there and that nerve keeps getting hit over and over again. At some point, the infection starts to grow and gets worse. Then, before we know it is toxic. It consumes us in a way we could never have imagined. We begin to react in ways that we never would have imagined and say things we never thought we would say.

It does not have to be that way. Proverbs chapter 4 instructs us to guard our hearts: ***“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways”*** (Proverbs 4:23-26 NIV).

In reading these words, we see how to prevent that infection from festering and also how to keep ourselves from injuring those around us. Jeremiah chapter 17 tells us that our hearts are desperately wicked and deceitful. When we guard and protect our heart, when we fix our gaze on the Lord, past injuries will start to heal. Future injuries, while they still may sting will be easier to handle. We can be especially hard on our families in both attacking and healing. When those who we should be able to trust strike out at us, that hurt and pain can be immense. Looking to and leaning on the Lord is the most effective antibiotic we can use to begin the healing process and preventing the toxicity from developing.



# **FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS**

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## **RESET, DEVOTION 5**

**James Mann**

In a previous devotional, you read about finding a physician. When you find a physician and they diagnose the problem, they will often give you instructions to follow. It is not often when these instructions are something enjoyable and allows you to perform life as if nothing happened. Many people can agree with me that we like to follow the instructions to the bare minimum and wind up ending the instructions before when we should.

When I was 17-years old, I broke my back in a bounce house. I was told I should be dead or paralyzed. I stayed in the hospital for a few days and was released with a full torso, hard plastic, back brace, and a walker. I was told I would be wearing this brace for the next six months and had to use the walker as much as possible for stability. I could no longer do the simple things of life by myself, like bathing myself, getting in and out of bed, or even walking up the stairs. Being a stubborn man, I was only going to do this for as long as I felt it was necessary. Towards the end of my six months, I remember going to student camp back in 2012 and convincing my parents I would wear my brace the entire time. Being a high school boy, not wanting this brace to “cramp my style,” I took off the brace as soon as I got on the bus and did not wear it again until I was getting off the bus a week later. Truthfully, this did more harm to my body than good. It was that summer that I realized my back would lock up and not allow my legs to kick in the water anymore. I realized this as I was swimming across Rifle River with my friends. I began to drown and would have died that day if it was not for a friend who turned around and took me back to shore.

We need to understand that we are not the professionals here. When it comes to our bodies, doctors are professionals. When it comes to our spiritual well-being, God is the professional. When we are trying to heal our brokenness within our family, we need to look to God as our physician and then follow the instructions He gives to us. James 1:5-7 tells us, ***“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”*** We need to remember that God is all-knowing, and when He shows us how we can fix our family, we need to follow it. You may be asking where to find these instructions. Simply pray to Him and trust that He will show you the way. Also, make sure you are spending time reading His Word. Often, your answers are already given to you there.



# REHAB

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## RESET, DEVOTION 6

**Brianna Grunwald**

For the past three months, I have been dealing with some intense shoulder pain. I have always disliked going to the doctor's office because I felt like every time I would go there was nothing ever wrong with me. After weeks of sharp and deep pain within my shoulder, I decided it was wise to go see a doctor. After clear x-rays, my doctor diagnosed me with MDI (multidirectional instability). He then decided to send me to physical therapy to see if that would strengthen my taffy-like tendons and control the pain. Something in me was hurt and injured. Because of that hurt, I did not function the same. My arms could no longer be raised above my head and my shoulder could no longer bear the pain of lifting weight. The first step after recognizing that there is an injury is to work it out. I went to physical therapy for weeks; each time doing different exercises to help strengthen my shoulder muscles. I will not lie to you, physical therapy was painful. Week after week I would struggle my way through the exercises and be in more pain when I left than when I arrived. However, I knew that towards the end of this journey, I would begin to feel less and less pain. It would be freeing to finally control the pain and begin healing! After months of frustrating and discouraging doctor's visits, I began to get stronger.

Church, we are broken. Once we realize that we are all broken sinners, we can begin the healing process. There are so many things in our lives that break us; divorce, abuse, toxic relationships, lust, pride, I mean, must I go on? This then causes us to not function the same as we did before the hurt. We begin to distance ourselves from those we love, by lying, cheating, being angry, or you fill in the blank. Yet, we must identify the problem and seek the solution.

God wants us to bring our hurts, brokenness, and pain to Him. Matthew 11:28-30 says, ***“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*** We are called to find accountability in fellow believers and seek the counsel of those wiser than ourselves. Galatians 6:2 adds, ***“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”***

Now church, this is a painful process. We have to examine ourselves, really dig down deep, and work out the root of the problem. I often think we as Christians try to hide our brokenness or injury and ignore it. When we do that, we only make the injury worse. However, if we persevere and take our sorrows to the cross, we begin to feel comfort (James 1:12; Romans 5:3-5; 1 Chronicles 16:11). We feel healing. We feel freedom. We feel strength. Scratch that, we do not feel these things. We “are” those things - Healed. Free. Strong.





LESSON THREE

# RELAPSE

PASTOR RYAN STORY



A relapse can be worse or more frustrating than the original fracture.

1. Have you ever re-injured yourself playing or participating in a sport or hobby? What happened?

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I love family month. I love family ministry. I have heard it said, “Strong churches do not make strong families, strong families make strong churches.” I desire to see the families within The River Church become stronger. The strength I am referring to is the strength that only comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When families are living out the Gospel at home, the church will be stronger.

Sadly, despite our best efforts to live as Christ-honoring families, sometimes things break, and sometimes things break again. I have had numerous conversations with my sons about disobedience. I have had to have numerous conversations with my wife about ensuring that work does not take precedence over family. While week one we talked about the initial moment things go wrong resulting in pain, this week I am hoping to lead you through the process of what to do to avoid a re-break.

Having issues in your family is not the worst-case scenario, not learning from the initial injury is the problem. Proverbs 26:11 says, ***“Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”***

(My goal for this lesson is for you to be able to do this within your family. While I think having the conversation within a Growth Community is an amazing outlet, please utilize this lesson within your family. “Strong churches do not make strong families, strong families make strong churches.”)

There are ten concepts that need addressing.

**1. Do not keep walking in pain.**

Ephesians 4:17-19 says, ***“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”***

I used to think it was a testament of strength to walk with a limp. I thought I was tougher if I could endure the pain and press on. Sadly, many people live life with constant pain, friction, tension, and unresolved issues that have resulted in a calloused heart. Inside the family, I think it seems missing because they are ***“alienated from the life of God because of ignorance.”*** There are well-meaning Christians who cannot “call a spade a spade” and discuss the sin that is separating a member in their family from God and from each other.

2. Why do we continue to walk in pain with our families?

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**2. Old habits are not necessarily godly habits.**

Ephesians 4:20-24 says, ***“But that is not the way you learned Christ! - assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt***



***through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."***

I have never liked how people refer to themselves in the same mentality as a canine. "You can not teach an old dog a new trick" is not a justifiable response to living a life that is not honoring to Christ. I come from a family background that was horribly ungodly. I was never taught empathy, respecting others or myself, or proper ways to deal with conflict. I was never taught the Bible, but my family would have said they were "good with their relationship with God." I look at where I am now with my family and realize I cannot claim, "Well it is too late for me to learn a new way." To lead my family, I had to learn a new way. If I want my children to live a life that is Gospel-centered, it is going to take me showing I ***"learned Christ."***

3. Is your family the first group of people to see how you have ***"learned Christ?"***

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4. What does it mean to be ***"renewed in the spirit of your minds?"***  
How can you do that as a family?

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### 3. Speak the truth.

Ephesians 4:25 records, ***"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."***

Somehow, Christians have been taught that they have to always be “nice.” We avoid conflict, we avoid hard conversations, and we avoid discipline, all in the name of nice. We have mistaken kindness for niceness. The kindest thing you can do at times is to speak the truth in love, discipline your child, and push into conflict rather than avoid it.

5. Why is speaking the truth to our loved ones sometimes the hardest thing to do?

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6. How could a truthful conversation avoid a bigger issue down the road?

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#### 4. Do not let emotions rule your relationship.

Ephesians 4:26-27 adds, ***“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”***

One of the favorite rules my wife and I made in our marriage is we have 24 hours to discuss any issue that caused tension in our relationship. This forces us to have a healthy conflict to ensure unity inside our marriage. Anger happens, people disappoint, and expectations are sometimes not met, but that does not give you the right to sin.



7. How does anger give an ***“opportunity to the devil?”***

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### 5. Assembly is required.

In Ephesians 4:28, Paul continues, ***“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”***

Nothing ever is fixed by leaving it alone. This includes emotions, relationships, families, children, husbands, wives, and our relationship with Jesus. Jesus had to come down and do work to reconcile our relationships with God.

8. Are you willing to put the work into seeing your family strong in their walk with Jesus?

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9. After things break and break again, why is it so hard to want to continually work “honestly with our own hands” inside our family?

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### 6. Words are powerful.

Ephesians 4:29 says, ***“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”***

10. How do you define *“corrupting talk?”*

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11. Have you ever said something to your spouse or your child out of frustration? Why can words break us down so much?

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### 7. Let God work.

Ephesians 4:30 adds, *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

One of the scariest truths I find in the Bible is we can put ourselves in a place where we can grieve God. We can live a life that brings sorrow and pain to God. There are many examples of how one can grieve the Holy Spirit, but at the core of all of the instances that are used in the Bible, you see a lack of faith in God. If we allow our families to be a place where people begin to give up on each other, where we do not believe that God can work, no longer believe Scripture is true, and allow sin to rule, we in essence have given up on God and have grieved the Holy Spirit.

12. How can a family grieve the Holy Spirit? How can that cause a sinful relapse within the family?

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### 8. Clean up your heart.

Ephesians 4:31 adds, ***“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”***

13. As a family, what are some actions you need to put away in order to better reflect the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

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### 9. Forgiveness is key.

Ephesians 4:32 continues, ***“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”***

There is no question for this verse, just memorize it and apply this verse every day of your life!

### 10. Walk like God.

Finally, Ephesians 5:1-2 says, ***“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”***

14. How can your family walk in love with each other?

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## LESSON THREE | RELAPSE



# ANGER

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## REPLASE, DEVOTION 1

Keaton Washburn

Recently, I had the opportunity to preach on the life of Moses. Having grown up in the church, I thought I knew about all there was to know about him. I knew about him killing the Egyptian man, running to the desert, hearing from God at the burning bush, leading the people out of Egypt and then into the wilderness, and receiving the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai. As I began preparing to give my sermon, I realized there's a lot more to Moses than just those instances. I saw how he was a flawed man, one might even say he was very flawed. Today, I want us to find comfort in that by looking at one moment of Moses' life.

In Numbers chapter 20, we see Moses and Aaron leading the people in their wanderings in the wilderness. They have been wandering for about 39 years at this point and are close to finally entering Canaan. The Israelites have been without water for three days and begin to grumble and complain. Moses and Aaron petition God to provide water for them in Numbers 20:6-8 (NIV). Read those verses and see what God commands them to do. He gives them specific instructions: ***"Take the staff,"*** and ***"Speak to that rock before their eyes."*** That is not what Moses does. Numbers 20:10-11 (NIV) tells us that in his anger, ***"Moses said to them, 'Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?' Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank."*** Moses chose to speak to the people and strike the rock, instead of speaking to the rock. In his anger at the people, he chose to disobey God. As a result of his disobedience, God did not allow Moses to lead the people into the Promised Land.

There is a valuable lesson to be seen here. It was not Moses' anger that was disobedience, but what he did in his anger. His reaction, striking the rock and not regarding God as holy, was the sin. For us, our family lives are not perfect. No mother has been perfect, nor son, daughter, grandparent, or father. When we think about their mistakes and shortcomings, it can lead us to become angry. This is especially true if they have hurt us with their actions or lack of action. The temptation when we get angry at someone is to lash out, gossip, or push them further from us. Today, choose what you will do with your anger. Will you allow it to lead you into sin or will you bring it to our loving, perfect Heavenly Father?

Our sinful nature tells us that we will feel better once we just "get it off our chest," by gossiping or telling that person off. Psychology tells us that it does not make us feel better. It just leads us into a dangerous cycle of feeling in control, when in reality, our anger is in control. We see in the life of Moses that we must be very careful what we do with our anger.

I want to conclude with a final observation from this encounter with Moses. God still brought water out of the rock! In His grace, He still provided for His people, even though Moses disobeyed. In His grace, God will provide for you what you need today if you seek Him. Seek Him today.



# DOUBT

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## REPLASE, DEVOTION 2

**Pastor Tommy Youngquist**

When I was twenty-two years old, I caved the right side of my face while tubing behind a boat. What a way to start a devotion, huh? After the accident, I was taken to the ER only to discover that I had shattered the orbital around my right eye and right cheekbone. Also, I had fractures in my jaw and skull. It was not the kind of news you want to hear, but I decided to deal with it none the less. After all, it is my face. I had reconstructive facial surgery at what used to be Pontiac General Hospital a week later. When I woke up, after the anesthesia wore off, the doctor was standing over me. He tried telling me all of the details about the surgery, but the only thing I remember is him telling me that he pulled 56 splinters of bone out of my right sinus, putting them back in place.

After the surgery, an excruciating three-month physical recovery process took place.

There were many things I wanted to do that I could not. I remember thinking to myself, "Are you kidding me, God?" I found myself wondering where He was. Have you experienced this? Maybe you are sitting at home wondering that right now. I would say things to myself like, "God, what in the world? You there? Asleep? What's up?" It is like I sent Him a text just to check-in and see how things were going, I saw the read-receipt, and I even saw the ellipsis bubble pop up, but then nothing. Right? "Come on God, respond!"

Sometimes, my relationship with Him feels very one-sided. Does it ever feel that way with you? I mean, you are reading the Bible, praying (occasionally), trying to follow all of these rules and commands, and

you are doing your best. You try to be a good spouse, parent, or child. So, you are doing your part, but then, waiting on God.

During seasons of waiting, I tend to doubt God. Do you? Abram doubted God. In Genesis 15:2 (NLT), it says, ***“O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son?”***

It is almost like he is saying, “Come on God, where are you? What in the world? Why are You not coming through for me? I am doing my part, now do Yours.”

Most of us, in seasons of waiting, tend to believe our doubts and doubt our beliefs. So why not catch yourself and flip that saying around. We forget that waiting is a normal part of following God. When things are not happening the way that we want them to happen, we wonder if God even has our best interest in mind. We fixate on the doubts that creep into our minds and hearts. We get caught up in what we are doing instead of who we are running to. In moments of doubt, hold fast to your beliefs in God, His promises, and the Bible. Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts. If you do, you give God the opportunity to say what He said about Abram, ***“And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith”*** (Genesis 15:6 NLT).

Be counted as righteous because of your faith today! Even when you have to wait, believe your beliefs, and doubt your doubts.



# DEPRESSION

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## REPLASE, DEVOTION 3

**Mitchell Holmes**

Hopeless. Purposeless. Directionless. Abandoned. These are the dark and very real feelings that I experienced during a time in my life when everything that I thought I was working towards came crumbling down. I had no idea what God had in store for me or what He wanted me to do next. I have never felt so alone in my life. I pushed away people who were close to me because I did not want to be a burden. I pushed away from God because I felt He had abandoned me. I was depressed and I was lonely. I yearned to know what God had planned for me and I was scared of an unknown future.

According to the World Health Organization, approximately 264 million people suffer from depression as of 2019. The National Institute of Mental Health says that in 2017, approximately 7.1% of the U.S. population over the age of 18 suffered from depression. That is to say, that 1 in 14 adults in the U.S. suffers from some form of depression. It is highly likely that you or someone you know suffers from depression, whether you are aware of it or not. Depression is an epidemic of staggering proportions and there seems to be no simple cure.

Depression is more than mere sadness. It is the inability to get out of bed, the unwillingness to make plans, it is constant exhaustion, and an inability to focus. During that time, I wanted nothing more than to improve myself, to develop a plan for my future, and to heal. Everything I tried was futile; I was attempting to fight my demons as a man, as a person, that could simply muscle through and win with enough perseverance and willpower. All the while, I was ignoring the One who already had a plan for my life, if I would simply take the time to listen.

Jeremiah 29:11 says, ***“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*** Our Lord in Heaven has a plan for us. It is a plan for a future and a plan for hope. He cherishes each of us deeply and wants so much more for us than to simply exist. If you are at all like me, the thought of an unknown future is terrifying, so you try and fix it yourself. God tells us that He is in control and everything will go according to His plan for our lives. Rather than worry about the future, focus on building a relationship with your Heavenly Father, and strive to listen to His direction for your life.

Isaiah 41:10 says, ***“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*** Dealing with depression is terrifying. Battling your own mind is a daunting task. At times, it can feel unwinnable. I remind you that you are not alone. Place your trust in God and draw close to Him, and He will provide the strength needed to weather the storm.



# ADDICTION AND ABUSE

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## REPLASE, DEVOTION 4

Katrina Young

I think it's safe to say that we all have a scar of some sort that marks a time in our lives with a story to tell. It is also probably safe to say that if we have had one from childhood, we may have gotten it while doing something that we should not have been doing. Maybe you have a scar from a tragic experience and are thankful to be here to share its story. Maybe you have a scar that is not visible in the flesh but lies deep within your emotions. Relationships can leave scars, the ones that are difficult to talk about because of the pain that they still carry, often from some type of abuse. For those of us who have suffered from the unseen scars know that they tend to resurface when we least expect it. They tell their story through anxiety, fear, insecurity, and even depression. Every believer has a story to share, a "testimony" of where you were without Christ, and who you are now with Him. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are told that we are a new creation - The old has passed away and the new has come.

I was given a book many years ago called, *"Your Scars are Beautiful to God"* by Sharon Jaynes. The book is written to help those with emotional scars to find peace and purpose in the hurts of their past. I will be honest, I have not read it cover to cover, but the second chapter, "Recognizing Jesus Through Our Scars," had a huge impact on me.

The author goes to John 20:19-20 and describes the encounter that Jesus had with His disciples after His resurrection. They were all gathered together in a room when Jesus appeared in their midst and spoke to them, but they did not know who He was. In order to convince them that He was the risen Christ, He held out His

arms and revealed His nail-pierced hands. It was then that they recognized Him. The point of the chapter was for believers who have experienced healing from past wounds to not be ashamed to show their scars to the world. In doing so, they are able to share how there is a healing process through Christ.

We have a choice in how we let our scars from the past affect our families and our lives moving forward. We could allow them to produce fear and anxiety, or we could allow God to use them for good. Romans 8:28 says, ***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”*** It is not the scars from our past that defines us, it is who we are now in Christ that tells our story. Sharing it allows us to tell others of His provisions, His mercy, His peace, and ultimately His love. Revelation 12:11 (NKJV) adds, ***“They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb by the word of their testimony”***. Chapter 3 of Jaynes’ book concludes by saying, “God is calling us to not be ashamed of our scars, for it is by those very scars that others will recognize the Savior, Jesus Christ.”



# APATHY

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## REPLASE, DEVOTION 5

Justin Dean

Growing up in my house there were a number of words added to the curse word list we were not allowed to say. We were not allowed to say “shut up,” “fart,” or things which may be on the edge of inappropriate but most of my friends growing up would not have considered that bad. I remember getting made fun of for it a lot, but there was always one word I was never allowed to say that would not lead to teasing, but would instead just lead to confusion. Growing up I was banned from saying the word “whatever.” To my mom, saying “whatever” communicated you did not care and to her, that was never okay. If I answered with whatever, be it to “what do you want for dinner” or to an apology, it was never okay for me to communicate that I did not care. To not care meant indifference and apathy, and my mom wanted me to understand that we as a family were not going to be indifferent to anything. My mom always warned me about the dangers of not caring and becoming “lukewarm.”

Constantly I am reminded about God’s rebuke to the church of Laodicea. We see what He says in Revelation 3:15-16, ***“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”***

I am sure of one thing, the last thing I want is to be spit out of the mouth of God. Yet I know, for my wife and I, apathy, specifically in me, has been one of the single leading causes for strife between us. I may not say the word “whatever” but my actions can just as easily communicate that is how I feel. Be it Bible reading as a family, to doing the dishes, apathy can really drive a wedge between the

members of your family. The trouble is diagnosing apathy, because of it being an action that is done and seen by others, it is much easier to mask and excuse. We tell ourselves, "I just had a hard day of work, I will hear about my spouse's day tomorrow" or "My kids have wiped me out, and honestly I would love to just eat in front of the TV rather than pray together and talk over a meal." Apathy can easily creep its way in and then become the norm.

We have to fight our apathy, seeking to be fervent followers of Christ. Romans 12:11 has always shifted me into gear when apathy begins to creep into my life, ***"Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."***

We are called to be a fervent people. That means being fervent for our families, fervent in serving God, fervent in loving those around us, and fervent for our relationship with the Lord. When we let apathy creep in it is only a matter of time until something breaks in our lives. However, when we make ourselves care, and push through even when it is difficult, we combat that apathy.



# RELAPSE

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## REPLASE, DEVOTION 6

Kyle Wendel

What does it mean to be selfish? Google says being selfish is lacking consideration for others; concerned chiefly with one's own personal profit or pleasure. Do you view yourself as selfish? I think many of us would think that we are not selfish people when we are a lot more selfish than we think. Do others think we are selfish? Often, we are blind to seeing faults in ourselves but are quick to see them in others.

Philippians 2:3-4 says, ***“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”***

This past year in my life has been truly incredible but a major eye-opener for me. My wife and I had our first child and it has been an awesome roller coaster. Parents out there, you know what I am talking about. I have always been pretty selfish. I think mostly about my wants or comforts. I did not like to go out of my way for others. There are times that I do those things for others, but I often do not like to go out of my comfort. This past year has taught me a ton about being selfless. I thank God for the lessons learned through fatherhood and being a husband through everything.

A father is called to ultimately be a selfless leader. There are many times I would rather be selfish. There were many times I did not want to help my wife with our daughter. There were many times that I did not want to change those poop diaper. There were many times that I did not want to do the dishes. Many times, I would come home from work and I would just want to relax like I used to before we

had our daughter, but that was something that I could no longer do. I love my wife and daughter. This love drove me to learn to combat my selfishness in many ways. I try my best to put them first in every way, but it is not always easy. I want to show them my love for them through my actions. I want my actions to show Christ's love to them. I want to be the example of my Heavenly Father to my family and show Him through me.

Philippians 2:5-8 continues, ***“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”***

The world tells you to be selfish. The world tells you to only care about yourself and do what you want. The world will tell you to not do something that is out of your comfort or out of your way. Follow your own heart is one of the biggest lies the world will sell. Your heart is selfish. Jesus, however, shows us perfect love. Jesus shows us the perfect example of unselfish love. Jesus never sinned once, yet He sacrificed Himself in our place on the cross. He died the death we deserve. Even though Jesus is God, He took the place of the lowly sinner to save us from our sin. Jesus shows us the ultimate example of love, sacrifice, and being unselfish.

No matter what life stage you are in, I am willing to bet you need to work on your selfishness. We need to look to God and others first with our thoughts and actions. We need to put God first in our lives because He put us first in His. We need to put others first because God calls us to show His love to others. Let us look to have the same



mindset of Jesus, our Lord, in all of our thoughts and actions. It is not easy, but we can learn from what Jesus did. We can look to Him for help.

LESSON FOUR

# STRENGTH

PASTOR RYAN STORY



I hate the letter V. It may be an odd thing to say that you do not like a V. The reason I do not like the letter V is two-fold. First, the letter V is only worth four points in Scrabble and it is the hardest letter to play. Second, I flinch anytime I hear the word "vulnerable." I hate being vulnerable. I have struggled with major trust issues, I hate it when I cry, I hate it when I am being insecure, and I hate it when I realize I have to let someone in because the hurt inside my heart is too much for me to bear alone (Man, did this lesson jump in seriousness.) Now, I have a list a mile long on reasons why I struggle with these things, but the one thing I realized early in my marriage is that there is power in vulnerability.

1. How are you when it comes to being vulnerable within your family?

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2. How are you with being open and honest with a small group of trusted people within your church?

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Let me help you with something, I know you have struggles in life. I know you struggle with sin. I know you have past failures that haunt you. I know that there are some married couples reading this that are fighting to keep their marriage intact. There are parents reading this lesson who are struggling with the reality that their child is straying from the path where God wants them. There are no perfect fathers (other than our Heavenly One), there are no perfect mothers, and there are no perfect children. The greatest con job Satan does to humanity is the way he makes us feel inadequate and unfit. Those emotions drive us to believe that we are the only ones who fail and

the only ones to have struggles in our families. Those toxic thoughts drive us to isolate ourselves.

We see this pattern in Genesis 3:1-5, ***“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”***

3. Why would Satan want to isolate Eve?

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4. Why does the devil only speak in lies?

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5. Why is isolation so dangerous?

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I feel working for The River Church has also helped my *Trivial Pursuit* skills. To frame this idea within the idea of a broken bone, I had to brush up on my anatomy and physiology. After something is broken the healing process is broken up into three phases.



## 1. The Reactive Phase

During the reactive phase, the area around the break begins to inflame and swell. In this case, the swelling and inflammation are meant as good things. The damaged area inflames to push away and infection and allows the body to start the beginning stages of healing. Sadly, in our lives when we first are hurt, our natural instincts when we begin to swell is to push others away. In pain, we push away the good and the bad.

In Psalm 34:18, we read, ***“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”***

6. How can you apply this verse to your family's life during a painful moment?

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Romans 12:15 adds, ***“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”***

7. How can you apply this verse to your family's life during a painful moment?

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8. How do these two verses contrast the natural notion to push people away during pain?

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## 2. The Reparative Phase

During this phase, the membrane that surrounds your bone converts itself into bone and cartilage that bridges the two broken parts of the bone. The body ends up taking care of itself by helping fill in the break.

Galatians 6:2 says, ***“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*** The way God designed our bodies is fascinating. Our bodies were created to purposely have a mechanism that helps with the healing of bones. Now, this is not a stance to throw away modern medicine, but it is amazing that a cast, a doctor’s solution to a broken bone, is modeled after God’s design. A cast just helps the process out.

If you missed the symbolism of the Reparative Process, allow me to elaborate. The body surrounds the broken part of the body to strengthen it in the same way that the Body of Christ should surround those who are hurting. To begin the healing process, the body surrounds the broken part and becomes the broken parts strength.

9. How would it look if the Body of Christ acted like our bodies to help those who are hurting?

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10. How would this same truth look inside a family?

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One of the biggest lies the devil has been able to convince the church is that its members must always be strong, put together, and never struggle. The truth is we all struggle, we all have shortcomings, and all fall short.

11. Why is it so hard to be vulnerable inside the church and admit you need help?

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### 3. The Remodeling Phase

During the last phase, the Remodeling Phase, the temporary bone placed there in the Reparative Phase begins to be replaced with compact permanent bone. While the body comes to aid in the healing process, the end result is that the body is able to heal and begin to operate as it did before the break.

The reality of life is we will all be a part of hurting, whether the one who is hurt, the one who is helping a person who is hurt, or (sadly) the ones who hurt others. However, our hurt is never meant to be something that we let define us. There has to be the end goal in healing that a person is capable of moving forward. This is not a call to be unsympathetic or even unempathetic toward those who have gone through incredibly difficult times within their families. The Remodeling Phase is the final stage that allows us to move forward healed.

At one point in Joshua's life, he suffered a major blow as a leader. He leads his people into a battle where the nation of Israel had major losses. Because of the sin of one man, Achan, the nation of Israel had lost a seemingly winnable battle. In total 36 men were

killed. I want to make sure that we do not breeze over that number because we do not have the faces or names of these men. Possibly 36 families were now grieving the loss of a loved one, as well as the grief that was created by the entire nation of Israel.

God tells Joshua what to do to ensure the Remodeling Phases are completed. Joshua 7:13 records, ***“Get up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the Lord, God of Israel, ‘There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you.’”***

12. Why does God seem unsympathetic toward Joshua by telling him to ***“get up?”***

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13. What does it mean to consecrate yourself?

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14. For a family to completely heal, why is it important that they get rid of things that are hurting them?

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“My family is my first ministry.”  
Dr. Josh McDowell









# HUSBAND

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## STRENGTH, DEVOTION 1

Mark O'Connor

Husband: a married man considered in relation to his spouse.

That is the dictionary definition of the word husband. It is not quite that simple. Like many areas of our lives, there are good and bad. I have seen more than a few bad husbands in my time here on Earth. I have also had the blessing to see exceptional men who are tremendous husbands. I am fortunate to have come into a relationship with Christ before Jamie and I were married. It was my growing spiritual maturity and the examples that I saw in my exposure to the church world that steered me in the direction to be the very best husband I could possibly be. Now, please understand that I am not saying I am a perfect husband. I am far from it. However, learning how this whole marriage thing works made me want to be more Christlike in the entirety of my life. This is a natural thing that will bleed into our marriage.

We see in Scripture multiple descriptions and directions for spousal relationships. In Ephesians, Paul pretty clearly tells us our responsibility to our spouses. We like to spout it out all the time. In chapter 5 verse 22, he says all we need, right? ***“Wives, submit to your own husbands.”*** We guys like that part. Our wives have to be subservient to their husbands. It is a gross twisting of context that is common throughout American Christianity. Read on and it says she is to submit as the church submits to Christ. This is a little different when you think of it that way. We could write chapters of books on this concept, which many people have.

Husbands, let us fast forward a couple of verses. Let us take a look and see the massive responsibility we have. It is a responsibility that

sadly, we have missed the boat on in a massive way. Ephesians 5:25-27 says, ***“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”***

Love your wife as Christ loved the church. Just to be clear, we all understand the love that Jesus has for us right? We have an idea of what Jesus did and endured for the church. Husband, you have a responsibility to your wife that is of the greatest measure.

We are not only to love, care for, and provide for our wives, but we are to put her ahead of all things. I love my children dearly, but not more than my bride. Are the needs of your wife more important than our own? Looking around our world and even our church, I will contend not in many cases. Do you support her, and do you support each other? I strive every day to be the picture that Paul lays out for our marriage. It is definitely a team effort.

Successful teams have a leader. Who is leading your family? If it is you husband, who are you allowing to lead you? If the answer to that question is not undeniably Jesus, you need to check yourself now.

Paul closes chapter 5 with a quick verse to clarify the whole thing if there was any confusion, ***“To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband”*** (Ephesians 5:33 CSB).



# WIFE

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## STRENGTH, DEVOTION 2

Katrina Young

Have you ever worked in a job that you were not qualified for when you started? It is probably safe to say that all of us have entered a new job, a new role, a new position, or even marriage with some anxiety about what to expect. Entering the unknown requires the flexibility of being “teachable,” and a “quick study.” Job descriptions do not always prepare us for the responsibilities that are required. The role of a wife as described in Proverbs chapter 31 (a virtuous woman) is a bit different, it describes her character and heart with one constant thread through the verses - “Her Strength!” From verse 10 through the end of the chapter, unfolds a description of a strong woman who puts God’s wisdom into action in her life and through the work that she does to serve her family and others.

When I Google searched what does the virtuous woman mean, I found this: *“In the Bible, Proverbs chapter 31 describes a virtuous woman as the one who leads her home with integrity, discipline, and more. All the virtues she is practicing are aimed at making the life of her husband better, teaching her children, and serving God.”*

As a wife and mother, everything that I do is focused on my family. I strive to meet their needs and would drop everything in a heartbeat to help them. I am not always equipped for what is needed but I know that when faced with a crisis my God is always near. I do not have it all together like the woman in Proverbs but I can teach, I can pray, and I can love and be supportive knowing that it is not our strength that carries us through difficult times, but His. He provides for strength to work through our difficulties in marriage, wisdom to care for our children, patience in the workplace, and knowledge to

solve difficult problems. Psalm 31:24 (CSB) says, ***“Be strong, and let your heart be courageous, all you who put your hope in the LORD.”***

Thirty years ago when my husband and I were married, I would have told you that we could handle anything that life threw at us. Today, I will tell you that I was not prepared or qualified for the role that I was walking into. I am thankful for the “on the job training.” I am so thankful that God is loving and merciful and allows us to adapt and become teachable.

***“She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.”*** Proverbs 31:25 (NIV)



# FATHER

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## STRENGTH, DEVOTION 3

Mitchell Holmes

When I was a young child, I spent much of my time outdoors. I grew up without much influence from video games or television. We lived on ten acres and had a garden, chickens, and a lot of open space. I spent most of my days scouting in the woods while using my imagination. One such day, my younger sister and I were in the yard playing while the chickens roamed around. Most of the time, the chickens were friendly and paid us no mind. This day, however, one of the chickens became upset with my sister. I am not sure what my sister did to upset the chicken, but he began to chase after her and peck at her legs. My sister was terrified and began to scream and cry as she ran from the now deranged monster that chased her. I watched helplessly, unsure of what help I could be for her. Suddenly, my father came dashing down the hill with a hockey stick in hand and an unsettling fire in his eyes. I had never seen my father move so quickly before nor with as much purpose. In mere seconds, my father was upon the chicken and chasing it away from my sister. I never saw what happened next as my father chased the chicken around the pole barn, but I do know I never saw that chicken again.

My dad always took charge and knew when the right time was to step in and intervene. Growing up, he allowed us to make mistakes to allow us to learn, but there would come moments when there was no room for mistakes and my dad would step in and guide us back to safety. My father was a leader and a teacher and always took pride in seeing us learn, most often from our own mistakes.

Ephesians 6:4 says, ***“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the***

**Lord.”** My father did not grow up in a church family so when he came to know the Lord, he knew better than anyone how important it was to have a friendship and a relationship with the Lord. Growing up, he raised us to be disciplined in the time we spend with the Lord and in our Bibles. He always set an example for us; I would frequently see him in his Bible in the early mornings. It was very obvious how important it was to him and it made it that much more important for me. Even more than just spending time with the Lord, my dad was vigilant in raising my sisters and me so that we can live our lives in a way that glorifies God. My father was a strong man and an incredible leader and teacher. He led by example and taught through experience.

Even if you are not a father, there may be people who look up to you spiritually and it is important to consider what examples you are setting through your actions and your habits. The strength of your diligence and commitment to the Lord can have a massive impact on those around you. I think of a member of the church that I volunteered under as a high-school student and how his relationship with the Lord gave me direction as a young man. He may not have known it, but I looked up to him and saw him as something of a mentor.

I implore you to consider who around you may be looking up to you. Which of those around you view you as a mentor? What example are you setting for those people?



# MOTHER

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## STRENGTH, DEVOTION 4

Keaton Washburn

The second Sunday of May is always Mother's Day, but I want to start a petition for Mother's to be celebrated more than once a year! If you are a young mom or know a young mom, I think you understand why I want to petition for this. I have a cousin who has three boys under the age of five and I do not know how she does it. How does she ever find time to relax? I do not think she does! Whether it is keeping them occupied, feeding them, keeping them out of trouble, cleaning up messes, or one of million things required of a young mom, there is so much to do with young kids. In addition to the physical needs of kids, there are also emotional, sociological, and spiritual needs. It is caring for them when they have been hurt, are feeling sad, or are lashing out at a sibling, to name a few. I genuinely do not know how Mothers find the strength to do it all. Mothers are not appreciated enough!

My mom (along with my dad) raised me and my two younger siblings who happen to be twins. While I am thankful for all the physical things she did for me, I am beyond thankful for the way she met my spiritual and emotional needs. She gave me strength in my weakest moments. She was always there; some days it was crying with me when I did not make the middle school basketball team, other days it was disciplining me for the way I treated my siblings, and still other days it was grappling with the difficult facts of leaving the church where you grew up where everyone was like family.

In 2 Timothy chapter 1, Paul is writing to his friend and spiritual apprentice, Timothy. Throughout the letter, Paul encourages Timothy to stand firm in the face of false teachers and to look to Christ as his foundation. Before getting there though, in his greeting to Timothy he

said this is 1:5, ***“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*** He sees in Timothy a sincere faith, a faith that was passed down from his grandmother and mother. As you read this you may be mourning that your mother does not know Christ or you may relate to Timothy and me, having a mother who raised you in Christ and constantly pointed you to Him. No matter which party you are in, your mother has affected you in deep ways.

If your mother, like Timothy's, has been used by God to bring you to Himself, take a few moments, and thank God for her. Reach out to her and thank her for the ways that God used her! If your mother does not know Christ, take a few moments, and pray that God would bring her to a saving knowledge of Himself.



# CHILDREN

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## STRENGTH, DEVOTION 5

Pastor Tommy Youngquist

There are three young boys, of whom I currently disciple, that have recently experienced what it feels like to have their parents divorce each other. That is definitely a fracture in the family unit. All three of these boys really do not understand why, they are all angry, and they are wondering how a supposedly good God would allow this to happen to their family. Now, there are few things more detrimental to the psyche and emotions of a child than divorce. How do you tell a child that is going through this that everything will be okay? After this break, how do you tell them to be strong? How do you explain that God is good all of the time no matter what happens?

In order to answer these questions, it is good to go to a very common verse in Scripture. In Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT), the Word of God says, ***“For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’”***

Now, this verse is printed on t-shirts, etched on coffee mugs, and stamped on greeting cards. It is so popular! However, it is also one of the most misused Scriptures in all of the Bible. You might find yourself using this verse to temporarily encourage someone going through a time. One might use this verse to say that God only has good plans for you here on Earth. You know, the stuff that we think is good would be money, power, health, and parents that are still together. While God is the giver of all things hopeful, we have to understand the context of this cherished verse.

Jeremiah was a prophet from God that prophesied in the southern kingdom of Judah right before the Israelites were taken into captivity by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In Jeremiah chapter 27, he prophesied that the Israelites would serve Nebuchadnezzar and his next four generations. Life would be hard and they would be under the control of a foreign king.

In the next chapter, a guy named Hananiah prophesies that God would free the Israelites not long after their captivity and God would restore every material thing that He had taken away from him. That sounds awesome, right? There is just one problem. Jeremiah challenges Hananiah by calling him a false prophet. Jeremiah tells everyone Hananiah will die because of his lies and two months later, he was dead!

In chapter 29, Jeremiah is encouraging the people to continue living their lives even though they are going through a really tough time in exile. He tells them this tough time will last for 70 years! Does this sound like plans for hope and a future for God's chosen people? They wanted everything to go back to normal and go home while God said to wait and deal with it. The hardest part of dealing with it was that the older generation would never return to their home. They would die in Babylon.

So, here is the key; it is the "Ah-Ha" moment. We need to understand the difference between our idea of a bright and hopeful future, and God's idea of that. Humans are so short-sighted and earthly-minded. God's ways are so much better than our ways. When He says "our future," He is talking about eternity with Him in Heaven. He is talking about Romans 10:9-10 (NLT), which says, ***"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in***



***your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.”***

That is our hope and our future. That is the plan for good and not disaster. That is how you can answer those boys' questions of why. That is how they can gain strength. That is how you can tell them everything will be okay. That is how the fracture can get stronger. You do not try to explain “why,” you point them to “Who!”

You explain the Gospel to them, over and over and over again. You show them the goodness of God in the creation of our being and the salvation of our souls. You show them Jesus' finished work on the cross. You do this by guiding them in the repetitive reading of Scripture; that is how. Instead of tethering our minds to this temporary world and all of the things we think we want for it, we fasten our minds to the promises and truths in the Word of God. We fix our sights on eternity. It all begins with the Gospel.

God has only plans for good, and not for disaster for His chosen people because nothing about Heaven will be disastrous. I would like to encourage you to read Jeremiah chapters 27-29, so you can get a biblical and broad view of everything we just discussed.





# GRANDPARENTS

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## STRENGTH, DEVOTION 6

Pastor Roy Townsend

We often overlook the wisdom and strength that can come from older loved ones in our lives. Too often we discount their wisdom as being old-fashioned, out-of-date, too restrictive, or not keeping up with the times. In the brokenness of our current state, culture, and family, we do not look to our grandparents for stable wisdom and love. On the other hand, grandparents have often stepped-back from providing wisdom and strength because they believe their wisdom is not wanted. They may also believe that they do not have much to offer in our ever-changing world. I can only tell you that God has a plan for everyone's life, and His call for grandparents is strong within the family.

In 2 Timothy 1:5, we read, ***“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*** Timothy, who was a companion of the Apostle Paul and a New Testament Pastor, is reminded of the influence of his grandmother's faith in his life. I want to remind and challenge grandparents to influence their families including their grandchildren toward faith in Jesus Christ. In the brokenness of our culture, please do not allow the world to tell you that influencing your grandchildren for faith is useless. There is great power from the Holy Spirit in communicating your faith to your family. Remember Proverbs 17:6, ***“Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.”*** What better crown than being able to pass along your faith to your family.

I came home from the church building the other day, and my kids were really excited to bring up a story from my childhood. They could

remember the story in great detail, and could not wait to remind me that I had gotten in “big” trouble from my parents. Another area where your influence, wisdom, and strength can be helpful is messaging truths to your grandchildren. We read in Exodus 10:1-2, ***“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.’”***

Moses was told to tell this truth to both his children and grandchildren that God is in control. This truth is important and can be effectively messaged and reinforced by grandparents. If my parents tell my children something is important, it really resonates with my children. Our world and the church need more of this influence, wisdom, and strength to combat the impact of this broken world on our youth and children. Please, young people, listen to the messages from your grandparents and older saints that love and care for you. Please grandparents do not give away your opportunity to pass along your faith and effectively message the truth to the next generations.









## OUR MISSION

Matthew 28:19-20: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”***

### REACH

At The River Church, you will often hear the phrase, “we don’t go to church, we are the Church.” We believe that as God’s people, our primary purpose and goal is to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ. We encourage you to reach the world in your local communities.

### GATHER

Weekend Gatherings at The River Church are all about Jesus, through singing, giving, serving, baptizing, taking the Lord’s Supper, and participating in messages that are all about Jesus and bringing glory to Him. We know that when followers of Christ gather together in unity, it’s not only a refresher it’s bringing life-change.

### GROW

Our Growth Communities are designed to mirror the early church in Acts as having ***“all things in common.”*** They are smaller collections of believers who spend time together studying the Word, knowing and caring for one another relationally, and learning to increase their commitment to Christ by holding one another accountable.

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