

ISSUE ONE
LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOU'VE GOT



REVIVE

devotional

SPRINGVALE
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

WELCOME TO REVIVE

Lori Doner Jones

Not that long ago, I attended my first real Bible study. Let me say first, that I grew up in the church and I am in my forties, so the fact that I had never really made the effort to go to a Bible study is a bit embarrassing to admit. The truth is, I never really had much desire to go. I was a back row of the church kind of girl, and you can still find me in the back row every Sunday. I was the last to come in and the first to leave, and if no one noticed me there at all, that was perfectly fine by me. In fact, for the better part of my thirties, I was a bit of a church nomad, visiting churches, but not having any church I called home and not really feeling like I belonged anywhere. I believed IN God, and I had experienced times of closeness to Him; I had been baptized as a teenager, I was a leader in my youth group, I knew the things to say and do, and I called myself a Christian, but I didn't really BELONG to Him. I had fallen into an area of complacency where we (God and I) had a casual acquaintance thing going on. Then a series of things initiated a change for me, starting with the death of my grandfather, I turned forty, took on a business partner, and a few other events occurred, and I started to see things a bit different. I started asking some questions of myself. The Bible study I attended was working through a Lorie Hartshorn study that posed the question "Do we BELIEVE, what we SAY we believe?" That question stuck to me like glue. Did I believe? If I did, what did that mean? Shouldn't I be different? Is this all there is? Why don't I thirst for God? Why don't I feel anything? Why don't I love God?

So I started to read. I started to ask questions. I started listening to podcasts and online sermons. I started to seek Jesus in a way I had never done before, and maybe a thirst began, because I had seen something I wanted to have - *had* to have. The more I learned, and the more I read the Word, the more I realized I was so far behind!! It felt insurmountable. Why had I wasted so much time; how would I ever learn all I wanted to learn?

Then I read this in Jen Wilkins book "Women of the Word":

"How do you move a mountain? One spoonful of dirt at a time" - Chinese proverb

"It has been said that we become what we behold. I believe there is nothing more transformative to our lives than beholding God in his Word. After all, how can we conform to the image of a God we have not beheld? On the other side of the mountain of my biblical ignorance was a vision of God high and lifted up, a vision stretching from Genesis to Revelation that I desperately needed to see. I have by no means removed that whole mountain from my line of sight, but I intend to go to my grave with dirt beneath my nails and a spoon clutched in my fist. I am determined that no mountain of biblical ignorance will keep me from seeing him as clearly as my seventy or eighty years on this earth will allow." - Jen Wilkin

REVIVE, is really my journey out of my comfort zone in the back row, and into a life of examining who Jesus is, what the Bible says, and renewing my mind to THINK about what I believe - and I hope it is **your** journey too. I hope you'll come with me, as we figure out HOW TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL WE'VE GOT.

Let's start digging together....

HOW TRAGIC THAT WE IN THIS DARK DAY HAVE HAD OUR SEEKING DONE FOR US BY OUR TEACHERS. EVERYTHING IS MADE TO CENTER UPON THE INITIAL ACT OF "ACCEPTING" CHRIST (A TERM, INCIDENTALLY, WHICH IS NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE) AND WE ARE NOT EXPECTED THEREAFTER TO CRAVE ANY FURTHER REVELATION OF GOD TO OUR SOULS. WE HAVE BEEN SNARLED IN THE COILS OF A SPURIOUS LOGIC WHICH INSISTS THAT IF WE HAVE FOUND HIM, WE NEED NO LONGER SEEK HIM... IN THE MIDST OF THIS GREAT CHILL THERE ARE SOME, I REJOICE TO ACKNOWLEDGE, WHO WILL NOT BE CONTENT WITH SHALLOW LOGIC. THEY WILL ADMIT THE FORCE OF THE ARGUMENT, AND THEN TURN AWAY WITH TEARS TO HUNT SOME LONELY PLACE AND PRAY, " O GOD, SHOW ME THY GLORY" THEY WANT TO TASTE, TO TOUCH WITH THEIR HEARTS, TO SEE WITH THEIR INNER EYES THE WONDER THAT IS GOD"

- A.W. TOZER "THE PURSUIT OF GOD"

DAY ONE SPIRITUAL CROSSFIT

Lori Doner Jones

YOU WILL SEEK ME
AND FIND ME,
WHEN YOU SEEK ME WITH
ALL YOUR HEART
-JER 29:13



As I get older, I am more aware that I need to care for my physical body, overall health and level of fitness, which led to me joining a crossfit gym. I should admit right out of the gate, that I am the worst crossfitter at that establishment. It's sad really, and yet I continue to go and try my best to keep up!

The thing I find interesting about Crossfit, is how success is measured by your ability to overcome yourself. You need to use your mind, to tell you body, that it can do MORE. I find it fascinating to watch the elite athletes of crossfit compete, as success at this sport is not **just** determined by your physical strength, but more than that, is the mental fortitude it requires to keep going when your flesh wants, or needs to stop. In order to be exceptional, they need to be fully committed, every day to developing their skill, perfecting their form, and training their **minds**, as well as their bodies.

It's also interesting how quickly your progress is undone if you stop, or take a break in your training. Not only do you need to be "**Committed**", you need to be "**Consistent**". Each day you train, you get stronger, and eventually you start to look different, and perform differently, but it doesn't happen overnight. It takes time.... lots of time, and lots of work.

As your muscles are growing you are sure to experience pain and discomfort. In fact, if you aren't experiencing any discomfort, you probably aren't doing it right! Personally, it's not always easy to go to the gym; I'd rather stay in bed, or eat pie! But, when I am *consistent*, I have to admit, I enjoy the results. I feel better and I look better. Following Jesus is much the same! Somedays it's hard and we'd maybe rather be doing other things, but when we put in the work, the results are life changing.

We need to hit the spiritual gym/ Word of God, and start exercising our minds for the race that is ahead, if we truly believe, what we say we believe. How much time do we spend training ourselves in the Word? We need to develop our mental capacity and to push past our fleshly desires to stop short when it becomes challenging or uncomfortable. We need to immerse ourselves in Christian community that encourages us, so each day we are getting stronger, better, and have more endurance. As we train hard, we will also *look* different. Pretty soon, people will start to say " Hey, something is different about her...what's going on there?" That's the kind of Christianity I want to practice and train for! The kind that will leave me transformed.

I often feel that I don't look any different than non-believers. I **want** to, but on my own, I fall short. I shared this with a woman who led a Bible study I attended and she gave me a card that I keep in my Bible that reads "**Declaration: The substance of God's love and peace overwhelms people wherever I go**". I laughed when she handed me that, because I fear it's quite untrue! However, in her encouragement she said to me, you have to speak it over yourself and **let God do what He does** - then she reference a verse in Romans that says, "*The God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were*" Rom 4:17. God can take what is dead in you, or what doesn't exist at all, and transform it.

Jesus says "I am the vine and you are the branches, if a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Prayer:

Lord, thank you that you are able to change me; to make me strong, when I am weak, to make me "look" different. Help me be fruitful, Help me to fulfill your commandments. Help me to "delight" in your law, and help me "train" to know your Word. Create in me a new heart, that wants to love YOU with all I have. In Jesus' name I pray.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment"

Matt 22:37

If I asked you today to write down the 5 most important things to you, would God be one of them? If so, would how you spend your time reflect that?

The way we learn what God expects of us is by reading His Word. We can't begin to make the right moves if we don't know what they are. And we can study all we want in this holy manual of life and learn everything we are supposed to do, but at some point we still have to jump into the water. The proof of our sincerity is in the *doing* not just in the *knowing*. It is one thing to make a list of do's and don'ts but it's quite another to have a heart for God's ways and a soul that longs to live them out. It's one thing to read about life; it's another to live it. Obedience is something you do; having a heart to obey is something you *pray* about.

"Power of a Praying Woman" – Stormie Omartian

DAY TWO

LOVING GOD THROUGH SUFFERING

Stephanie Rourke Jackson

1 Peter 5:10

“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

On August 25, 2011 my husband of 19 years came home to deliver the most gut-wrenching news I'd ever received in my 46 years on this earth. He'd been having an affair with the worship director of the church we were attending at that time. Shock was putting it mildly. My world imploded! Not him, not the guy who told me I was his best friend and loved me more than anything. There was no real evident reason why this had happened. Why? Why? Why? What had I done? What drove him away? Where was God in all this? Surely, a good and loving God wouldn't have allowed this to happen! Not in church. Not to us. Yet, He did allow it. He also made a way for this distorted act to come to an end. Even though God intervened and shone his big God light on the destructive sin of infidelity, their actions had tremendous consequences. Not the least being the unrelenting pain I experienced for a very, very long time. My suffering was excruciating. Unbearable to the point of desiring death on some days.

This experience was not lost on me though. My faith increased in ways I could have never imagined had I continued to live a relatively pain free life without any trial. It's been said that untested faith is fragile. If you ever want to expand the depths of your faith, pray a dangerous prayer that God would give you challenges to know Him better and be a blessing to others. Because He will.



Although I knew the verses that pertain to trials and tribulations, John 16:33 “In this world you will have trouble” I still couldn’t believe this was MY LIFE! Anything but THIS, please God!!! The bargaining, the anger, the deep sorrow, more shock...this couldn’t really be happening; could it God? How will I ever get through this?

God in His sovereignty showed me His very heart, gave me His strength, and called me out of the pit of my despair on January 16, 2012, my darkest day. In a puddle of sobbing tears, a blubbing mess on my living room floor I listened to “Lead Me To The Cross” by Hillsong where I literally yelled at God to “TAKE ME” I couldn’t continue in this suffering. Instead though, God gave me the clearest picture of Himself, as Christ on the cross, broken, bloodied, battered, beaten and betrayed. I looked up to see Jesus and He said to me, “Stephanie, I did this for you. For this very moment. I understand your pain intimately. I went to the cross for this moment. But I didn’t stay there. I got off the cross and walked in a resurrected life. And you can too. I will give you the strength to walk in a new, resurrected marriage. I will restore what the locusts have eaten. Lean into me.” With that I felt the wash of the Holy Spirit pour over me. I surrendered. There was nothing I could do in my own strength but submitting myself to the only One who can redeem and restore my shattered heart was how I learned to LOVE GOD WITH ALL THAT I’VE GOT! There was no other way. The one human being who was supposed to love me the most failed me. I had failed me. Others also failed me. Who could I depend on if humans are capable of such injustice and responsible for causing so much pain? God, through Jesus, was ALL I could depend on. And that was enough.

That moment on the floor almost 8 years ago gave me clarity and hope that in my suffering I could find freedom in surrendering my own life, marriage and everything else to God who loved me and my husband infinitely more than I ever could imagine. Having a front row seat to experience God’s grace and love when all I wanted to do was run has been the greatest joy of my life.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for trials in my life. Especially the BIG suffering ones where I could no longer depend on myself. In surrendering my life, You have given me life. Continue to give me the peace that surpasses all understanding, so that I may be made new in You Jesus.

Job 23:10 *But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.*

Philippians 4:13 *I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

Joel 2:25 *I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten*

Philippians 4:7 *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*

James 1:2-3 *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything*

DAY THREE

I HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS, NO TURNING BACK, NO TURNING BACK.



Lori Doner Jones

Last week in Bible study we discussed Genesis 19 and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It's interesting to me when I discover familiar stories in new ways. Read the story in Genesis 19 and see how it unfolds.

The Angels tell Lot that they are about to destroy the city and he should remove his family and those that belong to him. He goes to his sons-in-law to urge them to come, however, they think he is joking and ignore him. Then the Angels tell Lot to hurry and get his daughters and wife and leave. Lot himself hesitates! So they drag him and his family out (v16) and once out of the city, they instruct Lot again: "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere on the plain! Flee to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"(v17). At this point, you would think Lot would be running for the hills as fast as he can, but instead he then tries to negotiate with them a solution that is more favourable to him! *"No my Lords, please! Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can't flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I'll die. Look here is a town near enough to run to and it is small - let me flee to it- it is very small, isn't it? Then my life will be spared."* (v 18-20).

When you read it like this, does it make you want to laugh? Here, he is faced with destruction, but being given a chance to live and rather than run as quick as he can from the wicked place he's been living, he's bargaining! When he is told where to flee, he suggests instead he just go to this close-by city that is probably a little less sinful than the first, because he will *die* if he goes where God wants him to?! Seems a bit over dramatic doesn't it?

I wonder - is that what we do? The Bible gives us specific instructions for living life God's way, and we drag our feet, we hesitate, we try to negotiate God's laws with our will. Maybe we don't fear God's judgements / warnings as we should? Have we lost what it is to tremble before God? Are we Lot?

The book of James reads: "He who doubts is like a wave on the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is double minded and unstable in all he does" (v7-8)

Commentary says “being double minded is to be caught between following Christ and the world.”

Lot’s family are instructed to “not look back”. But Lot’s wife *did* look back and she was instantly turned to a pillar of salt. The Moody bible commentary says this:

“Why this happened was not simply because of her action of looking, but rather because of the heart attitude and spiritual allegiance that prompted her to “look back”. The Hebrew verb employed by the Angels in their warning and in the statement afterward that Lot’s wife looked back (vathabbet) is not the usual verb employed to denote the action of looking or seeing but is the less frequent verb that carries the specific idea of looking at something with desire, approval or confidence”.

Not only did she “look back”, but she did so “longingly”. Sometimes in our lives, once we choose to live for God, we leave one foot behind, in our old life. We try to negotiate our obedience, instead of just doing what we have been told to do.

If we are unwilling to follow completely, are we following Jesus at all?

Do you still have one foot in the door to your old life, propping the door open, just so you can look back every now and then? Are you sometimes lingering in a space that God has long since told you to run from?

Prayer: Lord, Thank you for Jesus, so that when we fail, when we hesitate and get it wrong, we are still saved from destruction! Let us not be like Lot and his wife! Help us to not look back upon the sin from yesterday, with longing. When you call, help us to obey, and not look back. Help us to love your ways. Help us to love you, and not the ways of the world, with all we’ve got. In Jesus' name I pray.

“ No Matter how strong we claim our faith in God is, when life gets hard it all comes down to resolve. Do we really believe what we say we believe? The answer we come up with not only affects our feelings but also our culture. Going through the motions is a dangerous place to live for followers of Jesus Christ. We are living in an age where there is much at stake in our obedience. We are called to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. We are to stick out in a culture that is desperately looking for answers. If we don't figure out this thing we call the Christian life, and live like we mean it, we will be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.”

- “RESOLVED” – Lina Abujamra

DAY FOUR

TRUSTING GOD TO THE UTMOST; A TRIP INTO CRAZY



Barbara Hill

Ps 40:4: How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust.

One of the main differences between the child of God and a child of the world, is where we put our trust. The necessity of trusting God is woven all through the Bible from the very creation of man in Genesis. All the heroes of the Old Testament had to trust God in crazy situations, where trusting that God had a plan seemed to be nuts. Think of Abraham leaving Ur without a destination: later he was all set to sacrifice the son God had promised would be the seed of a huge family. Noah building a boat in the desert. The Israelites traipsing into the Red Sea. Later they marched round Jericho's walls while the inhabitants laughed - right until the walls fell down. These are not normal human activities, or results in the eyes of the world. The child of God has to be ready to be misunderstood or considered a fool. Particularly in our culture today.

Where else might we be tempted to put our trust? In human understanding, in worldly wisdom, in the power of people who have indeed been successful in this world, in new age philosophies, in the power of science? Any, or all of these other areas may seem to be saner choices and we may be encouraged to trust them, even by good people close to us. But think of Peter and John rejoicing after being beaten for Jesus' sake, of Paul and Silas singing in chains in prison, Martin Luther fleeing the power of the Roman Catholic church and changing the world, Anne Askew racked and burnt refusing to recant her beliefs, to say nothing of all those saints in Hebrews 11. Crazy to trust in God to their own hurt and pain and death - why not just surrender to the power of kings, or Roman governors or Henry VIII?

Because God will show wonders to those who trust. Because God has plans for us, too many to declare. The ultimate wonder was Jesus himself, his coming to earth, death and resurrection. Jesus trusted God through the awful experience of abandonment on the cross. The battle is won, but only because Jesus set his face to trust the plan, to do God's will, to win by losing. Trust is an action, an affair of the will. How far will we trust Him?

The poem below is unattributed: I find it inspirational to keep in mind.

*And shall I fear
That there is anything that men hold dear
Thou wouldn't deprive me of And nothing give in place?*

*That is not so
For I can see Thy face
And hear Thee now*

*My child, I died for thee
And if the gift of love and life
You took from me
Shall I one precious thing withhold
One thing beautiful and bright
One pure and precious thing withhold?
My child, it cannot be.*

This is our God. Psalm 16:8

"I have set the Lord continually before me: Because He is at my right hand I will not be shaken".

DAY FIVE

CORRECT SELF APPRAISAL

Deborah Woode

2nd Thessalonians 1:5

*"God's judgement is right, and as a result
you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God." (NIV)*

Do you ever question if you are really worthwhile? I mean feelings of inadequacy. Realize they are just that-feelings, not facts. They blind us to who we really are in Christ. This is why we should always base our opinions on what God's word says about us.

The Lord's judgement of who you are and what you are worth is more accurate than what you think of yourself, because His view is eternal! He doesn't appraise you by investigating temporary issues such as who you know, where you live, your tithe, your income or how you look. Rather, He sees you through the BLOOD OF CHRIST JESUS! He desires for you to seek Him wholeheartedly.

As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause, who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.

Job 5:8-9



My dear sisters and friends take your focus off what you think-or what others think about you and embrace what the father says. Ex 36:26
Your self-esteem will automatically improve because God's opinion is the only one that really counts forever.

What I mean by that is people will notice you've been with Jesus!
Acts 4:13 "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

My question to you is: Do you have a passion for obeying the Lord?
Or do you merely engage in Christian activities because "it's the right thing to do."?

Your heavenly father wants you to obey Him out of love, joy and gratefulness-not out of obligation. He wants to pour Himself into you, shine through you and give you a genuine love for all that He is doing so you'll join Him in His Kingdom mission. This is what people saw in Peter and John, men who served with Joy, wisdom and power that was not their own. It was obvious the saviour was working through them.

Likewise, when you make time alone with Christ your priority, it affects and influences every facet of your life. He gives you His energy, wisdom and strength to fulfill His purposes and make you fruitful for His kingdom.

It's not enough to listen. *Genesis 2:16 (NIV) "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat."* True listening has a crucial companion which is obedience. Obedience to God is a serious decision. *1 Pet 1:14-15 "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you be holy yourselves also in your behaviour."*

Obedience is a very serious issue because of who is giving the command. He is the creator of the universe, the source of our lives. We are completely dependent on Him. This is why God sent His Holy Spirit to live in our lives because it is essential and critical to the life that we live and what it is that He has called us to do.

The Christian life is walking obediently before God!
He just didn't want to save us, He came down to live inside us and to demonstrate to the unbelieving world what He is like.

Therefore, the decisions we make are important to God, He never loses sight of the big picture.

So, my question to you is, what is the highest level of your emotional intensity?

A desire to obey Him or anything else in life? Is there anything that competes with your allegiance to Jesus Christ? If so then you have allowed something or someone to take the Lord's rightful place.

What the Lord said to Adam was heard, but not heeded. God was very clear and concise! But this is how the enemy operates – he tempts you and me with the one thing we have no business doing. Satan focuses our attention on the objects forbidden to us and stirs up dissatisfaction in all the blessings God has given!

But realize every “You shall not” in the Bible is a promise of God's protection! He's not preventing us from enjoying life; rather, He is saving us-keeping us from destroying ourselves. Every command in His word is an expression of divine love to you and me - His beloved child. He wants to protect and preserve my life and yours so we can enjoy all the blessings He's planned for us. Adam and Eve didn't get this understanding, and the world is affected by it's consequences. Don't make that mistake.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that I can always count on you, and that I am your beloved. Help me to see myself the way you see me. Help me to love your ways and hunger for more of you. Protect me from the enemy and grant me wisdom, in the name of Jesus.

"Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble."

- Psalm 119:165

"Once people come face-to-face with with Jesus, the God of the universe in the flesh, and Jesus reaches down into the depths of their hearts, saves their souls from the clutches of sin, and transforms their lives to follow him, they are going to look different. Very different. People who claim to be Christians while their lives are no different from the rest of the world are clearly not Christians."

"Follow Me" - David Platt

DAY SIX

PICTURES OF LIVING FOR JESUS & TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE



Barbara Hill

Luke 10:27 talks about the heart, our emotional response to Jesus, but also about the mind. We are to love Jesus with all our mind. Why do we need to do that? Because we are being bombarded every day with messages from the world in our minds. Self-help, effective habits, taking control of our lives, getting what we want out of life, looking after # 1. Pursuing success, significance, self-realization. Some of these things are valid in themselves but they must all bow and be brought before the throne of God to be put in their proper places by the woman who wants to love God first and to be blessed by Him. In any case, the hungers of our souls are met as part of the "all things' added to us when we seek first the Kingdom (Matt 6:33).

And then there is the voice of our enemy, whispering into our minds about failure and weakness and temptation and our past. He must not be allowed a foothold in our minds. He only wants to hurt and weaken and pull us off the path.

So what do we do? Paul says we take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Sometimes that means minute by minute we are interrogating our thoughts to make sure we are not going down a road away from what God says is true of us. We are his daughters, we are the children of his love, we are redeemed and dressed in white, we are co-heirs with Jesus. We have the weapons of the spirit to fight with. We are not helpless but have the power of God in us. These things are true of us, praise God. Living in them is not a one-time intellectual assent but a daily walk, a progressive ability to listen less to the world and more to God. But we have to capture the thoughts. They won't become more like Jesus by themselves. We watch like hawks, knowing the opposition but also knowing the battle is already won.

Prayer: Let us pray today for protection for our minds to the God who provides us with weapons not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses (2 Cor. 10:4). To God himself be the glory in our lives today.

Every sin begins as a thought in the mind. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" - Mark 7:21 If you don't take control of your mind, the devil will.

"Power of a Praying Woman" - Stormie Omartian

DAY SEVEN

REFINED FOR GLORY



Rebecca Doner

When I am preparing to speak at an event I go through the same process. I start by sitting with the topic, thinking and praying about it for a long time. Then, I start to talk it out. Whenever I am alone I talk out loud and work through different pieces and segments. Once I am at a place where my thoughts are roughly organized, I write it all down. This is when the work begins. I start to research scripture and read commentary. I read my draft over and over while continually praying over it, asking for wisdom. My original copy is almost always repetitive, has sections that contain error and it is usually too long with unnecessary pieces. So, I begin the process of refinement.

I print out what I have written and with a brightly coloured pen I take to the page. I cross out sections, rearrange pieces, and add new thoughts and ideas. After I am done I type it all up review it from the start as it has become something altogether new and different. Then, I do it all again. Sometimes I remove things that were wrong, or just weren't needed for the purpose I had intended. I remove phrases that are distracting and sometimes I have to cut out something that I really like. Often the part I really like though it seems to flow well, sounds funny or is just a good point, doesn't serve the intended purpose of the event, so it needs to be removed, and that can be hard to do. I go through this process over and over and over often right up until the moment I am on the platform. Even then, my page is usually filled with markups and edits.

Recently I have been thinking about how this reflects how God works in our lives. It says in Psalm 139 *"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."* Before the foundation of the world God knew us. We have been on His heart and mind for a long time. When we come to know God as Lord and Saviour by accepting Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross we are to live transformed, so God refines us. He cuts out what is destructive in us, what is distracting and sometimes He removes things we really like or love, and it can be extremely difficult for us.

We must not however miss an important, and beautiful distinction in this analogy. I can never possess the time or ability to achieve perfection in what I am going to say and I will always be left with marked up pages. In my limitations I just have to determine that I am at a point of 'good enough' or 'the best I can do'. God however, possesses everything needed to bring His work to completion. He promises to continue loving us and refining us right through until we reach heaven, see glory and are made perfect without sin.

Perhaps today you can sense God's refining work in your life. Rest in the knowledge that He is creating in you something altogether new and different. Trust in Him today as He is preparing you for glory!

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you want relationship with us and that you never give up on us. Lord we ask that you that you would refine us, that you would make us more Christ-like everyday. Lord, we trust that even when we may not understand, and even when it is difficult, you will bring your work in us to completion when we enter your kingdom and into your glory. May we ache with expectant joy for that day with a heart that longs only for you. In Jesus' name I pray.

Phillippians 1:4-6 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

DAY EIGHT

LOVING GOD THROUGH FAILURES



Lori Doner Jones

This week as I prepare for REVIVE, I have been thinking of Peter. Peter stood by Jesus during his ministry and he was one of his closest companions. He knew the truth, he was witness to miracles with a front row seat. Jesus in fact, told Peter that he would be the rock the church was built on (Matt 16:18), and Peter declared his commitment and love for Jesus, saying “even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Matt 16:33) and he declared “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matt 16:35) Nevertheless, Jesus knew that Peter would deny him, and by the time the morning arrives on the day Jesus is arrested, Peter has done what he thought he would **never** do and denied his Lord, not once, but three times - just as predicted. The Bible says that when the rooster crowed and he realized what he had done, he wept. *He wept bitterly.* I can imagine how that must have felt, to fully understand your own failure; to know that you were incapable of doing what you said you would do, even more, what you actually desired to do. It must have felt immense to him. It must have shattered him.

Fear and self-preservation are such strong forces in our lives. They can make us do things, **or not** do things, that we should or would, otherwise do. I don't doubt Peter loved Jesus, but he still denied him, he still abandoned him, he still wasn't ABLE to love selflessly- that's powerful. Have you ever been wounded by someone who said they loved you? Have you questioned what kind of love is that? Have you ever hurt someone you truly loved?

BUT Jesus is bigger than our failures. It's interesting what Peter did next:

"The good news is that the more challenging the test, the more monumental the reward waiting for us on the other side of it - if we react the right way. We are often put to our most difficult test just before the greatest work of God in our lives is about to be accomplished"

- Stormie Omartian "Just Enough Light for the Step I'm On"

A few days later, Jesus was risen from the dead, but Peter despite the euphoria of the resurrection and still aware of his own weakness and failure announced to the other disciples, "I am going fishing" (John 21:3) I am not sure if I read this correctly, but three years before he had been called from his fishing and had left everything behind him to follow Jesus. Now he was going back! He perhaps thought there was little point in doing otherwise. He had only proved he was not dependable. His actions could not match his words.... He had been exposed under pressure for what he was really like. He was humiliated. At least he could fish. There was always work he could do."

- Charles Price "Alive in Christ"

As I read that passage from Charles Price, it got me thinking, that makes sense that Peter would run back to who he was before Jesus. I think he must have retreated back to the thing he was secure in; maybe he thought, "who did I think I was? I am just a fisherman... of course I failed, I was never qualified to be at the side of Jesus". I think he must have ran to the security of that fishing boat, feeling like that's where he belonged. Ironically, as they fished, they failed at that too and caught nothing! Maybe God was telling them that you can't go back, that you are no longer suited for what you once were -there is nothing to go back to. Until Jesus shows up on shore and all of the sudden their catch is plentiful.

When Peter sees the Lord on the shore and he realizes who it is calling to him, the Bible says he leapt into the water to go to him. He didn't wait for the boat to reach the shore, he just threw himself into the water to run to him. What must it have felt like to see a second chance awaiting him; a moment to erase his worst failure, and try again? Have you ever felt like that? Like there is this **one thing** (or maybe several) you've done, that can never be undone, and will forever define you? That you will always be that person, stuck in the moment when the rooster crows? Doesn't it make you want to leap into the water and run to Jesus?

That day as they ate fish on the shore Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him, and Peter says three times, "Yes Lord, you know I love you, Yes Lord, you know I love you, Lord you know all things; you know I love you". Of course Jesus knows Peter's heart, but maybe now - Peter knows it too. He denied him three times, but now, three times he asserts to Jesus he loves Him, and Jesus, gives him his assignment - "feed my lambs, take care of my sheep, feed my sheep." He leaves Peter, this fallen friend, the most important task he could give him, and I would suggest, that Peter **needed** to experience the failure, in order to be able to complete the assignment.

Without the failure, who would Peter be? Would he be capable, or qualified or have the fortitude to be the rock that Jesus had prophesied he would be? Peter isn't Peter without the rooster. Who are you, without your failures?

Not that long ago I experienced what I perceived as a pretty big failure. And honestly, I was a little more than upset with God, and asked "Why me?" I thought I was doing what God wanted me to do, but the results were not at all what I was hoping for, or anticipating, and truthfully there was some pretty serious self-pity happening. But, in the midst of my wallowing, the thought that came to me was "**Is that all you've got?**"

I imagine, that if Jesus was before me, he would have said, "Really? You get knocked down *once*, and you're done? You're ready to walk away? You say you want to serve me, but when you don't get approval from others, you shrink back to where you were before? Is that ALL you've got?" Shamefully, I was more interested in what everyone else thought of me, than what God was leading me to, and at the first sign of rejection, I was ready to throw in the towel and go find something to do that wouldn't make me too vulnerable. Maybe head back to hiding in the back row, in my comfort zone. I can relate to Peter running back to his fishing boat; hoping he could disappear, heading through the door he left propped open from his previous life...wanting to no longer try, for the fear of failing epically again.

REVIVE, as a ministry was birthed from my failure; failure that I am now thankful for. It is the moment where I believe God said "*Is that all you've got?*" that he showed me his "*mercies are fresh each day*"; Just get up, and try again. Expect there to be trouble along the way, but rest assured that it will work out and *STOP looking back*, because his plans are way bigger, grander, and more awesome than I could imagine or execute on my own, and I need to trust that He will see it through and lean into Him.

I just need to give Him all I've got.
I just need to "Love Him with ALL I've got."
The rest is in his hands.....

Reading: Matthew 26:
31-75 and John 21: 1-19

Are you still defining yourself by the "moment the rooster crowed" in your life? Are you still fixated on a failure or hardship, that is in your past, when God wants you to move forward to the assignment He has for you? Maybe He needs you to leap out the boat and run towards Him, leaving behind the safety of what you "know" in order to become who He wants you to be.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that your mercies are new each day, and I don't have to be who I was. Continue to change me, show me what I need to let go of, and help me love you and seek you with all I've Got. In Jesus' name I pray.

Ladies, after assembling all these ideas for you I am left wishing I had more time to make them better; to get them perfect for you. However, I think I will leave that up to you! I've spent so much time in God's word thinking and writing for you this week, that I can now see how beneficial it's been for ME! Now it's your turn - write a devotional about your thoughts on "Loving God with all you've Got!" and, if you're comfortable, share it with someone else, or share it with me lridonerjones@hotmail.com. After you've done with your own, please go back and edit, refine and research the ideas in these pages we've written for you with your own verses and thoughts. Make these devotionals your own! My prayer is that this booklet starts you thinking, praying, seeking and Loving God with all you've got!

Much love,

Lori

notes



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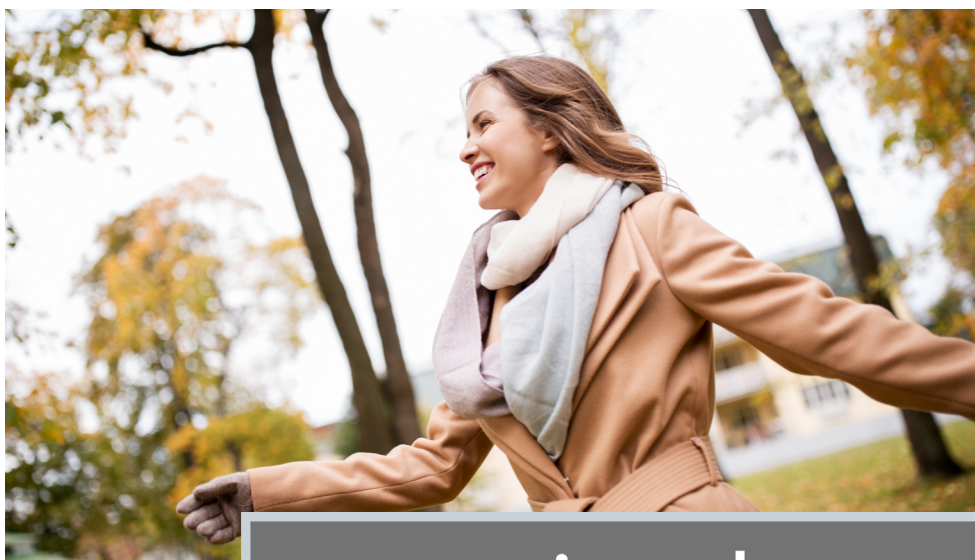
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