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I encourage you to read and meditate on these pages as much as possible so that the word of God can penetrate your heart. If you are reading one devotion each week, display the related scripture page somewhere in your home or place it in your lesson plan binder, and read it over each day. After you finish the book, continue cycling through the scripture pages (perhaps reading one each day during your quiet time with God) so that you'll continue to be reminded of these truths.

Enjoy!

Angela Watson

Initial Scriptures

I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope He has given to those He called – His holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance. (Eph 1:16-18 NLT)

I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. (Eph 3:16-19 NLT)

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you ... (James 4:8 NKJV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5)

PART ONE:

SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY MIND

Introduction

How I learned everything the hard way:

Focusing on your calling

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 4:10-11)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31)

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb 13:5)

... But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Phil 3:12-14 NLT)

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Rom 12:6-8)

Prayer: *Dear Father, I thank You for showing me my calling and for the gifts and talents you have given me. I want to become a more effective educator so that You can use me to my fullest potential. Please help me exercise self-discipline as I pursue this devotional guide, and give me the wisdom to hear what You are trying to tell me. Wipe the slate clean of my sins and clear my mind of distractions so that there is nothing separating me from You, and so I can focus on the work You want to do in me. Help me to keep an open mind and heart. Thank You for all the ways You have grown me and sustained me thus far in my journey. I trust in You and thank You for continuing that good work.*

Can you really change the way you respond to stress? Celebrating the process of transformation

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom 12:2 NIV 1984)

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:22-24)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor 3:18 NKJV)

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18 NIV)

... 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. (Phil 1:6)

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part, You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (Ps 51: 6-12 NKJV)

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I thank You for calling me into relationship with You! I am so grateful that I don't have to face the problems and stress of this life on my own. Thank You for loving me right where I am now, and yet inspiring and equipping me to come up higher. Help me to be made new in the attitude of my mind and put off my old self. Allow me to truly see and celebrate each level as you transform me from glory to glory! Help me to love myself the way You love me and be patient with myself in this process. Deepen my faith and fill me with Your grace and power. Thank You, Jesus, for working through me!*

**Stop unwanted thoughts from running rampant:
Putting on the full armor of God**

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph 6:12 KJV)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ... (2 Cor 10:3-6 NKJV)

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Eph 6:14-18)

My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken. On God my salvation and my glory rest; the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. (Ps 62:5-8 NAS)

Prayer: *Dear Lord, keep me ever mindful that I am in a spiritual battle. Help me to take my negative thoughts seriously and vigilantly defend myself against them. Equip me with the spiritual weapons and armor You've shown me through Your word. Help me to be alert to challenges and distractions that weaken me. Show me how to guard my mind so I can identify and cast down every thought I have that is contrary to your holiness. Remind me that I don't have to do this alone—the battle belongs to You, and I can claim victory in You. Thank You for the other believers You have placed in my life to help me, and for Your word which strengthens me and shows me how to live.*

**Four strategies for thinking on purpose:
Setting your mind on things above**

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Col 3:2)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. (Phil 4:8)

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. (Col 3:5-11)

Prayer: *Precious Jesus, I come before you today with a humble heart, knowing that far too often, I get caught up in my own thoughts and desires instead of imitating You. I know that my heart and mind are too often divided. Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name (Ps 86:11 ESV). Clear away the thoughts and attitudes that aren't of You, and give me a heart after Your heart. Help me to think on purpose, and keep my mind stayed on You. Empower me to fix my eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen; remind me that what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Cor 4:18). Thank You, God, for the work You are doing in me! Let it all be for Your glory.*

**Handling the emotional response to stress:
Recognizing that joy is our strength**

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Neh 8:10)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4 ESV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given 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. (James 1:5-6)

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek You; I thirst for You, my whole being longs for You in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen You in the sanctuary and beheld Your power and Your glory. Because Your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in Your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise You. On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night. Because You are my help, I sing in the shadow of Your wings. I cling to You; Your right hand upholds me. (Ps 63:1-8)

Prayer: *Lord, help me remember that my emotions do not define me. My identity is found in Christ Jesus, and You tell us in Your word that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom 8:1). Lord, I don't understand why everything happens in our lives, but You do. Give me faith to trust You when You tell me to count it all joy. Remind me that my trials and tribulations are not cause for stress: they are only momentary, and they are creating an eternal weight in glory (2 Cor 4:17). Thank You for teaching me and testing me. Thank You for loving me enough to call me up to a higher level.*

**How to live beyond your feelings:
Weakening the flesh and strengthening the spirit**

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (Rom 7:15)

The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. (Gal 5:17 NLT)

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. (Rom 8:5-9)

Prayer: *Lord, help me to develop wise habits based on the leading of Your Spirit rather than my own fleshly feelings. I want to make wise decisions that I will be satisfied with later on. But I know I can't do that on my own. I need You to guide me. Show me how to make moment-by-moment decisions that honor you. Keep me from feeling discouraged when I don't live the way I want to. Remind me that in Your eyes, it's never too late for me to get back on the right path. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in me and be my helper in discerning the right things to do. Father, I ask you to continue purifying my mind and my heart. I want less of me and more of You. Fill me with Your love and Your Spirit. Thank You, Jesus!*

PART TWO:
BREAKING FREE OF DESTRUCTIVE HABITS

Habit 1

Thinking negatively about yourself:

Forming your identity in Christ

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. (Rom 12:3)

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14 NKJV)

Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding ... Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends. (2 Cor 10:12, 17-18 ESV)

Affirmations:

I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child. (Eph 1:3-8)

I am God's workmanship. (Eph 2:10)

I've been established, anointed, and sealed. (2 Cor 1:21-22)

I've been appointed to bear fruit. (John 15:16)

I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life. (John 15:5)

I've been bought with a price, and now I belong to God. (1 Cor 6:19-20)

I've been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins. (Col 1:13-14)

I've been washed clean and justified in the name of Jesus. (1 Cor 6:11)

I am complete in Christ. (Col 2:9-10)

I have direct access to the throne of grace through Him. (Heb 4:14-16)

Prayer: *Dear Lord, help me not to compare myself to others or to some vision I've created in my own mind of how I'm "supposed" to be. I've read over and over in Your word that I am precious beyond compare: help me to believe that. Let it sink deep down into my soul so that I see myself the way You see me. Give me the wisdom to reject the lies my mind tells me, and return to Your truth. Help me to have a right and balanced self-image so that my identity is rooted in You. Keep me humble, Jesus. Keep my eyes ever focused on You. I love You, Lord! Thank You for loving me first, and showing me how to love myself.*

Habit 2

Explaining setbacks in a pessimistic way:

Training yourself to see things God's way

I [Jesus] have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You. (Ps 119:11)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12 ESV)

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. (James 1:23-25)

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Ps 19:4 ESV)

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matt 19:26)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28)

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in His love He will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. (Zeph 3:17)

It is the same with My word. I [God] send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. (Isa 55:11 NLT)

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. (Josh 1:8-9 ESV)

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, I ask You humbly to give me a heart like David's in Psalm 119. I want to delight in Your word! Drown out those worldly influences that weaken my desire for the things of the spirit. Help me to form new habits so that I look forward to spending time with You, and so that there is none on earth that I desire more than You (Ps 73:25). Lord, let Your word be a lamp for my feet, and a light for my path (Ps 119:105). I am so grateful that You have given Your inspired word to teach me what is true and to make me realize what is wrong in my life (2 Tim 3:16 NLT). Correct me, teach me, mold me. Show me the futility of my pessimistic explanations and replace them with a hope and a peace that comes only from knowing You. I love you, Father!*

Habit 3

Replaying and rehearsing conflicts:

Breaking free of condemnation

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36)

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:1-2)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (Gal 5:1 NKJV)

He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. (Ps 103:12 NLT)

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Isa 1:18)

You [God] will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you ... For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom 8:5-9, 15-17 ESV).

Prayer: *Dear God, I ask You first and foremost to forgive me of my sins. Show me any unconfessed sin I have in my life and convict me. Lord, I also ask that You help me release those mistakes to You so that I don't feel compelled to hold on to them anymore. Wash me as white as snow. Remove my sins, my shame, and my self-condemnation as far as the east is from the west. I'm claiming Your promise that I am now dead to my past and free of the bondage of replaying my shortcomings over and over in my head. Thank You, Jesus, that by Your wounds I am healed (Isa 53:4-5)! I am set free, Lord, even when I don't feel like I am. Remind me that my feelings have no power over Your word. I choose in this moment to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ made me free. Help me to make that choice again and again, Lord.*

Habit 4

Holding on to past resentment:

Receiving healing from God

... In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us ... (Eph 1:3-14)

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:7-10 NKJV)

... "Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24 NKJV)

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they *are* life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. (Prov 4:20-22 NKJV)

Instead of your shame, you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace, you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours. (Isa 61:7)

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Heb 6:11-12 NKJV)

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil. (Ps 37:3-8)

Prayer: *Father, I don't want to let the bad things in my past keep me from having a good future. I don't want anything to stand in the way of You accomplishing Your plan for my life. Help me to stop thinking about (and acting out on) the things that happened in the past, and focus instead on the work You're doing right now in me. Lord, I'm sorry for the times I let my self-pity and hopelessness overshadow the truth that I am perfect and complete in You. Restore me, Lord. Make me whole. Loose the bonds of my strongholds. Destroy every false argument that has set itself up against Your word. Through the blood of Jesus I have been set free of my past. I claim healing and restoration over every aspect of my life. I speak these things in faith knowing that they will be answered in the name of Jesus Christ. Thank You, Lord! All the glory, honor, and power is Yours.*

Habit 5

Taking things personally:

Choosing to be tenderhearted

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. (Eph 4:29-31)

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Eph 4:32 KJV)

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Col 3:13-14)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry 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. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. (Phil 2:1-5 ESV)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (Rom 12:14)

To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your loving kindnesses, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord, therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. (Ps 25:1-10 NKJV)

Prayer: *God, I ask You to show me people's underlying needs that cause them to act out. Help me to actively look for ways to fill those needs, rather than focusing on what the person is doing or not doing for me. Thank You for showing so much patience toward me even when I do the same foolish things over and over again. I'm so grateful that I have that model of how to behave. Help me to walk in the light as You are in the light (1 John 1:7), and shine into the darkness that is around me. I accept the challenge of behaving in a tenderhearted, compassionate way even when I don't feel like it, and I trust You to change my attitude over time as You mold me into Your image, from glory to glory. Thank You, Father.*

Habit 6

Misplacing responsibility:

Working as unto the Lord

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do. (Eph 6:7-8)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Col 3:23-24)

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess 5:12-18)

Prayer: *Lord, I thank You for the opportunity to be salt and light in my school. I choose to see my job as the chance to represent Christ. Please chip away at my laziness and help me to overcome the moments of burn out when I stop caring about my work, and give me a proper perspective on priorities so that I don't swing too far the other way and make teaching my entire life. Surround me with people who lift me up, and empower me to edify them, as well. I invite You into my classroom each day, Jesus. Give me balance. Show me the divine within the mundane. Let me experience each task You give me as something meaningful and beneficial. Father, I choose to serve You whole-heartedly today: fill me with Your Spirit and equip me to work in a manner that brings honor to You.*

Habit 7

Anticipating problems:

Resting in Jesus

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. (Matt 11:28-30 ESV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet 5:6-11 ESV)

Prayer: *Father, You tell me in Your word that You will supply every need of mine according to Your riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19 ESV). I come before You humbly, asking You to teach me to look to You to figure out my future and equip me to handle it. Restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish me, Jesus. I choose to yoke myself to You. I cast all my cares on You, because You care for me. Thank You, Lord, that I don't have to bear all my burdens myself! With Your help, I'm going to replace my anxious thoughts with prayers that You will guard my heart and mind with the peace that passes understanding. Thank You for loving me, for being a friend who sticks closer than a brother, and for the privilege of carrying everything to You in prayer.*

Habit 8

Making presumptuous judgments: Exercising Godly discernment

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. (Luke 6:37 KJV)

Then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with everyone according to all they do, since You know their hearts (for You alone know every human heart.) (1 Kings 8:39)

For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is He who will save us. (Isa 33:22).

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. (John 7:24 NKJV)

So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. (Rom 14:12-13)

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. (Gal 6:1).

For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Matt 7:2)

Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Cor 16:14 ESV)

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? (Rom 2:1-4 ESV)

Prayer: *Dear Jesus, it's my prayer today that no corrupting talk would come out of my mouth, but only what is good for building up, so that I can give grace to everyone who hears me (Eph 4:29 ESV). I don't want to be a judgmental person or a hypocrite: I need You to help me take the plank out of my own eye before I examine the speck in someone else's (Matt 7:5). Keep me humble, Lord, so that I don't presume to know what's going on in other people's hearts and lives or jump to conclusions about the type of people they "really" are. Keep me focused on helping others and building them up instead of tearing them down. Let all that I do be done in love, Father, just like Your thoughts and actions are consistently loving toward me.*

Habit 9

Ruminating needlessly:

Embracing the adventure of following Christ

... Three times I [Paul] was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. (2 Cor 11:24-28 (NKJV))

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:16-19)

We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Father who shows us loving-kindness and our God who gives us comfort. He gives us comfort in all our troubles. Then we can comfort other people who have the same troubles. We give the same kind of comfort God gives us. As we have suffered much for Christ and have shared in His pain, we also share His great comfort. (2 Cor 1:3-5 NLT)

You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus. Our God and Father abounds in glory that just pours out into eternity. Yes. (Phil 4:19 MSG)

Prayer: *Lord, I know that here on earth I WILL have many trials and sorrows, but I can have peace anyway, because You have overcome the world (John 16:33). I am free to focus on meeting the needs of other people because You will meet MY needs. Help me to stop ruminating and start meditating; stop worrying and start praying; stop thinking about my own issues and start thinking about those of others. Renew me in these areas day by day, Lord. Help me to clear my cluttered mind of unneeded thoughts so that I have mental space for problem solving and for hearing Your still, small voice prompting and guiding me. I accept and embrace Your plan for my life; I trust that You will bless and prosper me, and I choose to accept any discomfort along the way. I want to experience the adventure of trusting and following You. I'm committed to and excited about this journey, Father, wherever You may lead!*

Habit 10

Clinging to preconceived expectations:

Trusting the sovereignty of God

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Rev 1:8).

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jer 29:11)

O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ... Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them ... How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way. (Ps 139: 1-7, 16-17, 23-24 NASB)

Prayer: *Lord, I always have such great plans in my heart, but You are the One who directs my steps (Prov 16:9). You go before me, and You go behind me. You created me, and You numbered my days. You have counted the hairs on my head (Luke 12:7), and kept all my tears in a bottle (Ps 56:8). No one has ever loved me the way You have, and no one ever could. Keep me as the apple of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings (Ps 17:8); uphold me in the refuge of Your strong tower (Ps 61:3). I don't need anything but You in order to be happy. Let the world fade away, Lord, so that I see You and You only. More than anything in the world, Jesus, I want Your presence in my life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit; refresh me, and make me new.*

PART THREE:

CULTIVATING A POSITIVE FRAME OF REFERENCE

**Examine your unrealistic standards:
Abiding in Christ**

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt 5:48)

"I [Jesus] am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:1-2)

"I [Jesus] am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." (John 15:5-6)

"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples." (John 15:7-8)

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through Him and for Him. He existed before anything else, and He holds all creation together. (Col 1:15-17 NLT)

Prayer: *Lord, I want to let go of my selfish and prideful tendency to make the world conform to my standards, and I want to surrender my will to Yours. I am choosing not to base my happiness on whether I (and the people around me) live up to my self-imposed standards. I can't meet my own standards, much less Your standard of perfection! Let my shortcomings remind me of how much I need You, and draw me closer to You each day. You accept me even though I am not perfect; help me to follow your example and accept myself and others. Remind me that the purpose of my life is not to be comfortable and get what I want, but to bear fruit for You. Jesus, You are supreme over creation; You hold everything together. Not me. It's in You that I live and move and breathe and have my being (Acts 17:28). Thank You for providing for all my needs. I can let go and cast all my cares on You, because You care for me (1 Pet 5:7).*

**Appreciate the principle of separate realities:
Becoming a servant to all**

... I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Cor 9:22)

Even though I [Paul] am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whatever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life ... (1 Cor 9:20-23, MSG)

The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: they will not go unpunished. (Prov 16:5)

The sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. (Isa 50:4)

... We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. (1 Cor 8:1)

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is! (Prov 15:23 NKJV)

Welcome with open arms fellow believers who don't see things the way you do. And don't jump all over them every time they do or say something you don't agree with—even when it seems that they are strong on opinions but weak in the faith department. Remember, they have their own history to deal with. Treat them gently ... Your task is to single-mindedly serve Christ. Do that and you'll kill two birds with one stone: pleasing the God above you and proving your worth to the people around you. (Rom 14:1, 18 MSG)

Prayer: *Jesus, I come before You today and ask that You help me to approach others with a servant's heart. You tell us in Your word that pride comes before disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom (Prov 11:2). Give me the wisdom to understand where other people are coming from, and grant me insight as to why they think and act in ways that are at odds with mine. Help me to respond in love, with words that build up rather than tear down. Set a guard over my mouth, Lord, and keep watch over the door of my lips (Ps 141:3). Thank You for loving and accepting me unconditionally so that I can show that same love and acceptance toward others.*

Separate practical and emotional problems: Guarding your heart and staying rooted in God

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31)

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Prov 4:23)

He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. (Prov 25:28 NKJV)

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city. (Prov 16:32 NKJV)

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Ps 1:1-3 ESV)

Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord ... But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve. (Jer 17:5-10)

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ... stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. (Phil 1:28-29)

...But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:16)

For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright. He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. (Prov 2:6-11)

Prayer: *Lord, I acknowledge before You today that my life is not about getting my way and avoiding inconvenience; it's about glorifying You. Convict and prompt me to avoid things that strengthen my flesh so that I can rule over it instead of allowing it to rule over me. Give me a hunger and thirst for Your word so that I can be rooted firmly in You. Guard my heart, Father. Help me to be well balanced, temperate, and sober of mind, withstanding the enemy and being firm in faith against his onset – rooted, established, strong, immovable, and determined (1 Pet 5:8-9 AMP). Lord, You tell us in Psalm 91:1 (AMP) that the person who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall remain stable and fixed under the shadow of the Almighty. Help me to remember that my physical self may be in the midst of all kinds of trials and stressful situations, but my mind, soul, heart, and spirit can dwell with You, safely enveloped in Your perfect peace.*

Value peace above the need for control:

Letting the peace of Christ rule in your heart

But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to Him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:40-42 ESV)

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. (Eccl 3:1)

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Col 3:15)

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (Matt 6:25-34 ESV)

Prayer: *Jesus, help me not to resist reality. Remind me that I'm complaining and getting annoyed over situations that You allowed or placed in my life. Ultimately, God, You are concerned with my heart attitude and my spiritual growth, not my comfort. Shift my priorities to align with Yours, Lord. I want to maintain my peace even when I feel totally helpless and out of control. I trust You, and I submit to You. Your word says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8-9). Take my mind off the silly earthly problems, and the big stuff that only You can comprehend. Let Your peace be the ruler of my heart. No matter what happens today, this is the day which You have made; I will rejoice and be glad in it (Ps 118:24 NKJV).*

**Believe the best with a positive sentiment override:
Stirring up love and compassion**

The Lord has given me [Isaiah] a strong warning not to think like everyone else does. He said, "Don't call everything a conspiracy, like they do, and don't live in dread of what frightens them. Make the Lord of Heaven's Armies holy in your life. He is the One you should fear. He is the One who should make you tremble." (Isa 8:11-13 NLT)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Col 3:12-14)

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:16-17)

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands ... Surround yourself with positive people who have a Godly outlook; pray for and encourage one another. (2 Tim 1:6)

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Cor 5:14-15)

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal ... Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things ... So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor 13:1, 4-7, 13 ESV)

Prayer: *Father, thank You for Your perfect love that equips us to love each other. You tell us in Your word that love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet 4:8); it doesn't rejoice at wrongdoing and take pleasure in sharing it. Love tries to make things better. Help me to respond to others' shortcomings with humility and compassion. Make the heights and depths of Your love real in my life: show me that Your love is great enough to heal me from any wound. I don't have to fear being hurt by people, because Your perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18). Even if I am perceived as naïve or am taken advantage of by others, I know that I am blessed, for it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (1 Pet 3:13-17). Help me to bear with people and forgive them, just as You bear with and forgive me. Stir up Your love afresh in me. Let Your love compel and control me.*

**Train yourself to be difficult to offend:
Choosing to be slow to anger**

A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense. (Prov 19:11)

The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. (Prov 19:11 ASV)

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him [Jesus] a woman caught in adultery ... they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (John 8:3-9)

... The Lord, The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. (Exod 34:6)

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. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1:19-21)

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others. (Eccl 7:20-22 ESV)

But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (Matt 5:39-41)

Prayer: *Lord, help me to be slow to wrath and hold my peace. I choose to be a person who is difficult to offend, because Your word says that love is not irritable or easily offended, and keeps no record of wrongs (1 Cor 13:5 NLT). Thank You for showing me that kind of love! You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness (Ps 86:15). Help me to love others that way. Convict me with Your Holy Spirit to keep quiet when my fleshly nature is in control and speak up when I am motivated by love. Give me a tender and humble heart so I am ready to act with mercy. Remind me that my identity is not in what other people think, but in Christ, and that You are the only one whose opinion of me matters.*

Practice forgiveness when you don't feel like it:

Loving your enemies and letting God avenge

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (Matt 5:43-47 ESV)

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord." On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:17-21 ESV)

But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver ... (Mal 3:2-3)

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:31 ESV)

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31)

Then Peter came up and said to Him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Matt 18:21-22 ESV)

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:7-10 ESV)

.... And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors ... (Matt 6:12)

Prayer: *Jesus, You have commanded us to love one another as You have loved us (John 13:34 ESV). I need You to give me a merciful spirit, Lord. I choose to humble myself before You and others, and I am actively deciding to be gracious. I want to be known as Your disciple not because I go around preaching and telling other people how to live, but because of the way I love others (John 13:35). I know that the most loving way to respond to someone who has wronged me is to forgive them. I claim the power to do that in Your name. Prompt me to seek forgiveness when I offend others or act rudely and selfishly. I have been forgiven much; help me to love much (Luke 7:47). Let the example of my loving actions lead other people to You, Lord. I choose to live peaceably with all, as far as it depends on me.*

**Decide ahead of time how you're going to act:
Committing your works to the Lord**

Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established. (Prov 16:3 NKJV)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 1:13 ESV)

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Gal 5:16)

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Tim 1:7 ESV)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to Him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him to the holy city and had Him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended Him. (Matt 4:1-11)

... In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Rom 8:37)

I rejoice in following Your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on Your precepts and consider Your ways. I delight in Your decrees; I will not neglect Your word ... Give me understanding, so that I may keep Your law and obey it with all my heart. You are my portion, Lord; I have promised to obey Your words. I have sought Your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to Your promise. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to Your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey Your commands ... Direct my footsteps according to Your word; let no sin rule over me. (Ps 119:14-16, 57-60, 133)

Prayer: *Lord, I ask You to prepare my heart and mind for whatever situations You have in store for me today. Give me the wisdom to follow the Spirit rather my flesh. Prompt me to think about Your word continually: may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer (Ps 19:14). I commit this day to You, and invite You to direct my steps. Tell me the ways I should go: whether I turn to the right or to the left, let my ears hear a voice behind me saying, "This is the way; walk in it" (Isa 30:21). Help me to remember that in Christ, I am a new creation, and an ambassador for You (2 Cor 5:17-21 ESV). Empower me so that I can walk worthy of that calling, Father. Thank You for Your word, Your love, Your power, and Your sacrifice for me.*

**Accept that you'll never get it ALL right:
Walking as children of light**

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them ... all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." (Eph 5:8-14 NKJV)

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt 5:13-16)

... You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding ... But that is not the way you learned Christ ... 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. (Eph 4:17-24 ESV)

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Gal 6:9 ESV)

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth. (Hos 6:3)

... There was given me [Paul] a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:7-10 NASB)

Prayer: *Lord, I thank You for making me aware of the areas in which I fall short of Your standard. Thank You for loving me enough to correct me and bring me up to a higher level. Thank You for giving me trials so that I can become more like You. It's not easy for me to work through my issues, but because of Your great love, I will not be consumed; Your mercies are new every morning, and great is Your faithfulness (Lam 3:22-23). I ask You to continue renewing my mind day by day. Help me to look to You as I walk in Your light. Let others see the light you've placed in me, and may it bring glory to Your name.*

Afterword

The self-talk of an awakened teacher: Relying on God as our unchanging rock

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb 13:8)

For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Mal 3:6 KJV)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17 NKJV)

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. (2 Cor 4:7-9)

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor 4:16-18)

Trust in the LORD forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. (Isa 26:4 ESV)

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:38-39 ESV)

I will love You, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies ... For You will light my lamp; the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop, by my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? It is God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect. (Ps 18:1-3, 18-32 NKJV)

Prayer: *Dear Father, thank You for drawing me to this study and speaking to me through it. Thank You for renewing and transforming me day by day. Thank You for being my solid rock in a world of sinking sand. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on You. I know that You will keep me in perfect peace when my mind is stayed on You and I trust in You (Isa 26:3 ESV). Continue to work in me, Lord. Show me what to do next so that I keep growing in You. Lead, teach, and guide me, Father. I want to be everything You say I can be in Christ. Use me in my work and in my personal life so I can be an instrument of Your love. Here am I, Lord, send me (Isa 6:8)!*