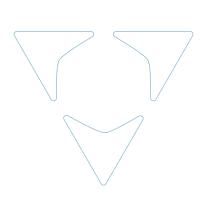


SPIRITUAL JOURNEY DEVOTIONAL

RENEW STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN



NAME:

This devotional guide is meant to be used by everyone at Village Church as part of our Spiritual Journey for the RENEW campaign. It is only as we seek God and his renewal, we believe, that we ourselves will experience spiritual renewal. This devotional is meant to be a help in facilitating that process.

Each day contains a brief Scripture reading, followed by a devotional thought, prompt for reflection, and space to respond or write out a prayer. The devotionals cover Monday through Saturday of each week, and coincided with a Sunday sermon series delivered in the fall of 2023 that you are welcome to view online.

These devotionals have been written by a cross-section of our congregation, ranging from new members to those who have been at Village since its first Sunday service more than 40 years ago.

The devotionals also focus on a key emphasis each week for which we are seeking renewal. These include:

MISSION // Week 1
PRAYER // Week 2
SACRIFICE // Week 3
INVESTMENT // Week 4
PARTNERSHIP // Week 5
FAITH // Week 6

Our prayer is that, as you commit to using this devotional, God would do a renewing work in our church. We want to be renewed by God to further his mission. We want to see Lake County renewed by God through people transformed by the gospel. Thank you for going on this journey with us.

SUNDAY, WEEK 1

SERMON & TEXT: MATTHEW 5:13

MONDAY, WEEK 1

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. // Psalm 22:27

Missions may seem daunting when we live in a world of such skepticism, anger, and vitriol. Yet the Psalmist reminds us that, while we may feel alone, God has not forsaken our lives and our efforts toward mission do not exist in a vacuum. Sharing the news of Jesus' virgin birth, his death on the cross, his resurrection to life, and God's offer of forgiveness may be met with hostility. But that message alone penetrates the entire world. Here the Psalmist attests to how that once resistant world will one day bow in worship to the Lord.

Can you see the faces of your co-workers, friends, and acquaintances bowing and worshiping the one who was ransomed for us all? How does this truth affirm and motivate your courage today when sharing in an unbelieving world?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

TUESDAY, WEEK 1

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

//1 Peter 2:9

The apostle Peter gives the church its marching orders and its reason for existence— "that you may proclaim." Further, he grounds this purpose in God's love for us and his selection of us. Peter knew this to be true in his own life. While he began as a fear-filled disciple who denied Jesus three times, after he was filled with the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) he became bold in telling others about Jesus.

What would you say is the purpose of your own life? Is testifying to Christ a part of it, and if not, how could this become central to who you are?

REFLECT & RESPOND						

WEDNESDAY, WEEK 1

Sing to the LORD, all the earth!
Tell of his salvation from day to day.
// 1 Chronicles 16:23

This verse from the Old Testament gives us a command, in fact, two commands. The first command is to sing to the Lord and the second command tells us what to sing – to tell of his salvation. This verse also tells us the scope of these commands – they are to all the earth! What a job! But the great news is that we don't do this alone, God is with us every step of the way.

In what way have you been a part of telling of God's salvation to all the earth? How might God be prompting you to take a new step to tell of his salvation?

REFLECT & RESPOND						

THURSDAY, WEEK 1

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

// John 20:21

As the disciples grieved for Jesus and struggled to understand what happened after his death, they were also afraid for their own lives – the authorities might come after them next for following Jesus. He appeared to the disciples, and here in John 20:21 he reassured them of his resurrection, reminded them of his presence and peace, and revealed their purpose for the future. They were to be sent, even as Jesus himself was sent. Only in the Lord can we find peace in chaos and purpose that guides our day-to-day lives, and this is just as true today as it was then.

What would change about your daily life if you kept the mission and purpose given by Jesus at the forefront of your mind?

REFLECT &	RESPO!	ND		

FRIDAY, WEEK 1

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. // Acts 1:8

After the resurrection, Jesus meets one last time with the disciples. And not just with a few, but with 120 of them! He commissions all of them to 'go!', whether locally, in neighboring areas, or far away. How poignant that they simply 'went!' They did not ask for refresher courses or to be equipped yet again. They did not leave the mission to their 'leaders.' Each one used the skills they had and simply served! Many observe that today we are far better equipped than first-century Christians. We have readily available Bibles and teaching.

Prayerfully consider how you can serve Christ using the equipping you've already received.

REFLECT & RESPOND						

SATURDAY, WEEK 1

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

// Habakkuk 2:14

Do you feel like you are living in a time surrounded by people who aren't serving the Lord? So was Habakkuk. In the midst of an environment of his own people struggling in their walk with the Lord, and with many idolatrous influences surrounding them, Habakkuk laments to God: "Where are you when there is so much evil and corruption around us?" God answers that he is in control and will work out justice and salvation in his perfect time. God's perfect strategy includes us, his children. While imperfect, we are a key part of bringing the "knowledge of the glory of the LORD" to the world.

Will you take that mantle and pray, asking how you can carry the good news of Jesus to the world?

REFLECT & RESPOND						

SUNDAY, WEEK 2

SERMON & TEXT: NEHEMIAH 1:1-2:8

MONDAY, WEEK 2

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And Jesus told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

// Luke 18:1

Prayer – what is it? It's spiritually breathing, it's a discipline, a privilege, a loving conversation with our Savior, a petition, or a time of praise. Jesus told his disciples to pray and not be discouraged. Why? Because sometimes the answer desired isn't always granted immediately. Sometimes it feels like no one is listening or cares. Sometimes we lose hope or feel defeated and sometimes it feels like our prayers are not reaching God. But none of that is true, ever. We may receive a 'no' or 'not now' answer, but Jesus asked his disciples and us to pray because prayer develops spiritual character, strength, fortitude, and closer communion with our Lord. Just like a person can't cease breathing in order to maintain life, the Christian needs prayer to breathe, to grow, and to thrive. Prayer is essential to the life of a Christian and it is also a discipline that requires cultivation and continuous use.

How is the Lord calling you to draw closer to him through prayer in this season?

REFEECT & RESPOND		

TUESDAY, WEEK 2

The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

// Psalm 145:18

All of us have days when we feel God doesn't hear us, doesn't care about us, or when we wonder if he's even there. When we feel that way, that is when we really should "call on him". Psalm 145:18 reminds us that, when we do so, the Lord is near to us. He does care about us – about all of us. He is a close personal God who wants to be in communion with us. This verse also teaches that God is close to us when we call on him "in truth." Our prayers should be aligned with God's will for us. The best way to call upon God in truth is to pray according to the Bible. It is through Scripture that we can find God's will for us.

How can you use Scripture to guide your prayers today and throughout this week?

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WEDNESDAY, WEEK 2

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

// Phillippians 4:6

In the Sermon on the Mount, soon after teaching his followers how to pray (The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13), Jesus taught them to cast aside worry and anxiety, even about the basic necessities of life (Matthew 6:25-34). Paul turns to the same topic here (anxiety) and points to the same remedy (prayer). It is striking that he highlights thanksgiving as an important part of making requests to God. Being thankful for what God has already done for us can help us to trust him for what we might otherwise be anxious about.

What has God already done for you? How could that help you experience prayerful peace when you struggle with anxiety (see v. 7)?

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THURSDAY, WEEK 2

DEEL ECT & DECDOND

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

// Acts 4:31

In this culture of self-help and turning to social media to look for answers, how often do we forget to pray? Even when we, with the best intentions, do good things like sharing the gospel or helping others, we often rely on our own power. Here in Acts 4:31, we see God's power and the power of prayer. A place shook! They were filled with the Holy Spirit! They spoke the word of God boldly! That was all God's doing. All humans did was pray. How amazing!

What are you trying to do on your own today that you actually need to bring to God in prayer?

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FRIDAY, WEEK 2

O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you! // Psalm 141:1

Psalm 141 is a short but powerful cry from David to the Lord to guard his heart and mind from the wickedness of the world. A sense of urgency is present throughout the psalm, and David begins his prayer by begging for the Lord's attention. Twice in verse 1 he calls upon the Lord, and twice he begs for the Lord's immediate and undivided attention. It can be likened to a vulnerable child desperate for his father's attention, fully trusting him to intervene and meet his every need. David approaches his prayer to the Lord with a profound desire for his heavenly Father and a child-like faith that God will take action on his behalf.

What is your typical attitude when approaching prayer? Do you pray with urgency for the Lord's ear and trust that he will act in response to your petitions? What obstacles do you feel may stand between you and the fervent prayer to which we are called?

REFLECTAR	ESPOND	'		

SATURDAY, WEEK 2

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. // Colossians 4:12

Paul, in Rome and under house arrest, writes this greeting from Epaphras to encourage the Colossian believers. As we can see, Epaphras was a faithful prayer warrior for the believers. He prayed they would stand firm in their faith and be assured in the will of God. Mature people are spiritually and emotionally stable, marked by wisdom and discernment. He prays constantly, fervently, personally, and specifically for the believers. Clearly his prayers represented his tireless labor, love, and care for them amidst struggles of all kinds and setbacks of opposition that showed his devotion for the believers and the Lord.

How would Paul characterize your intercessory prayers on behalf of your fellow believers at Village Church?

SUNDAY, WEEK 3

SERMON & TEXT: MARK 12:41-44

MONDAY, WEEK 3

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

// Ephesians 5:2

Christ's sacrifice in giving his own life is an expression of his love for us (see also John 15:13). Paul is exhorting us as believers to live like Christ in sacrificial ways. While sacrifice typically has negative connotations today, Paul uses Old Testament imagery of a burning sacrifice as a pleasing aroma to God (see Leviticus 1:9). Such a sacrifice is beautiful to God.

Where are you motivated today to live more like Christ and to offer up pleasing aromas (or sacrifice things) as you walk in your love for him?

REFLECT & RESPOND				

TUESDAY, WEEK 3

I appear to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

// Romans 12:1

In this verse, Paul tells us to present our bodies—our very selves—to God as sacrifices. Not only our things, not only our time, not only our talents, but our entire selves. This level of sacrifice is scary! To be completely devoted to someone else takes vulnerability, and yes, a great deal of sacrifice, but God is merciful, loving, and trustworthy. It is a sacrifice, but it is also a worthwhile way to worship our Creator.

So what of yourself do you still need to sacrifice to your Creator today?

REFLECT & RESPOND				

WEDNESDAY, WEEK 3

But king David said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." // 2 Samuel 24:24

King David repented in verse 10 of this chapter of a sinful and foolish action. The Lord's punishment for this act affected thousands of other people in Israel, and David was commanded to build an altar to the Lord as part of his repentance. In this verse, David expressed the importance that he pay a price for his offerings to the Lord; offerings require a sacrifice. Our willingness to sacrifice depends on what we value and our priorities. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice when he laid down his life for our salvation.

What might the Lord be asking you to sacrifice in obedience to him this week, whether that be time, energy, or money?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

THURSDAY, WEEK 3

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. // Philippians 2:17

In the Old Testament, God's people sacrificed literal animals, but in the New Testament, we see that faith itself is a sacrificial offering. This verse, in fact, contains two sacrifices: (1) The Philippians' faith, (2) Paul's gospel labor on their behalf, which he calls a 'drink offering.' From this we see that true worship is costly. In an agrarian society, it cost an ancient Israelite much to give up an often-expensive animal, and it cost Paul much to labor in the gospel.

Where is your faith costing you currently? Where might God be calling for more of your heart, for more of your life?

REFLECT & RESPOND				

FRIDAY, WEEK 3

DEELECT & DECDOND

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus. // 1 Peter 2:5

In the Old Testament, God's presence often resided in the brick and mortar temple. Only the specially chosen priests were able to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. But that was the Old Covenant. In the New, those who know Jesus become the temple of God, "living stones." What's more, 1 Peter 2:5 says believers have become a "holy priesthood." Because of Jesus Christ, believers themselves can freely come before God and willingly offer "spiritual sacrifices"—their whole person and all the parts of their lives—that have become both pleasing to God and used by God. What a personal and gracious God he is!

Make a list of the gifts, talents, resources, and people God has placed in your life. What area of your life is most difficult to offer as a sacrifice to God and why? How does knowing you can freely come and offer what you have to God prompt obedience or encouragement?

REFEECT α I	LSPON		

SATURDAY, WEEK 3

But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; What I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD! // Jonah 2:9

Jonah promised to praise and sacrifice to the Lord in the temple for his salvation from the belly of the great fish. People in the Old Testament would often pray and make vows to God in the midst of hard or fearful situations. When it was over, they had to be sure to fulfill whatever they had vowed (Numbers 30). Thanksgiving and sacrifice in worship to God is a core part of our lives as Christians. This is true above all because he has saved us eternally. We also pray and depend upon him for help here and now. We do not sacrifice animals at the temple.

But what could you sacrifice to the Lord? How can you make sure to fulfill whatever you vow?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

SUNDAY, WEEK 4

SERMON & TEXT: 2 (CORINTHIANS 9:	6-15

MONDAY, WEEK 4

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. // Matthew 6:21

In the preceding chapter in Matthew, Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, is providing instructions to his followers on what it looks like to follow him. Now in Matthew 6, he specifically gives insight into treasures. For Jesus' followers, we are not to store up our treasures here on earth but rather in heaven. These treasures (reflected in how we give our abilities, time, and money) will also reveal where our hearts' desires are.

As you think about where to invest your abilities, time, and money, where does your heart naturally go? To what the Lord desires that will last forever, or to the earthly things that will last only for a lifetime?

REFLECT & RESPOND		

TUESDAY, WEEK 4

DEELECT & DESDOND

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, The world, and all who live in it.

// Psalm 24:1

Psalm 24:1 reveals that all of creation, the whole world, and all that reside in it belong to God. He "takes claim," some versions read. God is the creator, owner, and sustainer of all living and nonliving things. So what does Psalm 24:1 reveal about creation? Creation does not belong to itself. In fact, God has charged humanity with stewarding his creation. The earth and everything in it, the world and all who live in it, are on loan to humanity, that we might enjoy it and use it to glorify God. The mission of us and the rest of creation is to bring fame to the Creator while trusting him as the Sustainer.

How does knowing everything in all of creation belongs to God encourage or challenge you? Name something specific that God has called you to steward for him. Is God calling you to action or a heart change? Write out a prayer to God with your thoughts.

REFLECT & R	ESPONE		

WEDNESDAY, WEEK 4

DEELECT O DECDOND

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

// Hebrews 13:5

Information technology, e-banking, on-demand retail purchasing, streaming, and inter-continental travel all conspire in helping us believe we are different from those 1st-century believers to whom the biblical writer penned this letter. Yet we too are prone to love of money. It would be mistaken to conclude that two millennia could insulate the modern and comparably affluent Christian from such an ancient temptation. Our covetousness struggle is alive and well, but so are God's promises of his continual presence, excellent purposes, and everlasting power. God's people are secure regardless of their circumstances because he is with them.

How can you choose his presence today over our foolish desires?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

INVESTMENT

THURSDAY, WEEK 4

I will pay my vows to the LORD, In the presence of all his people. // Psalm 116:18

This psalm is a hymn of thanksgiving where an individual prays for deliverance from illness and death. God answers his prayers as he reflects on God's mercy, grace, and faithfulness. He chooses to walk before the Lord in love, faith, and obedience. While worshiping, he expresses how God healed him and spared him from death. Along with the believers, he gives thanks to God for his gracious love, care and healing. The Lord is pleased when we share answers of prayers before our fellow believers.

What could you share with the believers of Village Church regarding God's faithfulness in answered prayer?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

FRIDAY, WEEK 4

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

// 2 Timothy 2:2

In just one sentence to his disciple Timothy, Paul encapsulates four generations of the spread of the gospel message. From his personal encounter with Jesus and the resulting revelation of the gospel, Paul directly instructed Timothy in the message in the presence of others. Now he exhorts Timothy to become the teacher to those who are trustworthy not only to receive the Word, but to go and instruct other like-minded believers in turn. Thus, Paul has laid the groundwork for a legacy in which the gospel message endures and Christ is glorified.

How have others invested in you spiritually, relationally, and/or financially in your lifetime? In what ways might you extend this legacy to future generations?

REFLECT & RESPOND						

INVESTMENT

SATURDAY, WEEK 4

And Jesus said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

// Luke 12:15

Stuff. More stuff. We all have had the feeling of wanting more. Or perhaps you wonder why others have more and you have much less. This verse challenges us all to be content with God's provision for our lives, meaning, God will always provide. Reflect on all God has done and praise him for all he has provided. Call on God to guard your heart from wants and trust him to fill it with contentment and purpose.

After this verse, Jesus shares a parable and describes the rich fool as "the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." How can you break the power of greed and covetousness through the habit of generous giving? It's a habit that changes everything.

REFLECT & RESPOND						

SUNDAY, WEEK 5

SERMON & TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:14-20

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PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, WEEK 5

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." |/ Isaiah 6:8

Earlier in this chapter Isaiah sees God in all his glory. This immediately compels him to acknowledge his own sins. His genuine repentance and restoration are evident as he immediately enlists to serve. "Send me!" Isaiah did not look to others to act. He responded to God's call and he went! We too are called to serve.

How is your view of God and your relationship with him impacting your response to him? Do you have any hesitations that need to be overcome today? You've been 'sent.' Will you 'go'?

REFLECT & RESPOND						

TUESDAY, WEEK 5

Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. // Romans 16:12

This verse reminds us God notices all his children's work in the Lord and honors a hard worker. Do you often wonder if you matter to God, if your giving or hours of service make a difference? Have you heard of Persis? She is mentioned once in the Bible. It is not a familiar name compared to others like David, Paul, or Mary. Yet here she is. You are well known to God. Your story and work may never be written in a book. But the author and giver of life sees and knows you.

Are you partnering with him in his kingdom work? What type of worker would he consider you to be?

REFLECT & RESPOND						

WEDNESDAY, WEEK 5

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. // Philippians 1:3-5

Have you ever partnered with someone to complete a task, maybe at work or around the house or at school? How did it feel? Were you happy because you worked well with your partner? Or bitter because you had to do all the work yourself? Paul was filled with joy as he recalled his partnership with the Philippians.

For the Paul-like missionaries you support, either through Village Church or otherwise, do you consider yourself to be a partner with them? Why or why not? Is there anything you can do to strengthen your partnership with them?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

THURSDAY, WEEK 5

Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. // Colossians 4:7

The apostle Paul had a ministry team that traveled with him on his missionary journeys, planting and ministering to churches. Tychicus was a member of Paul's team, faithfully doing service for the Lord Jesus. Village Church is also a ministry team with many members who faithfully serve the furthering of God's kingdom, and who seek to love God fully and love people completely. God has gifted each member and attender of Village Church uniquely and exactly as needed to be an effective member of this ministry team.

Are you engaging in serving and ministering to others at Village Church, utilizing the gifts, talents, and resources that God has given you?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

PARTNERSHIP

FRIDAY, WEEK 5

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. // Acts 2:42

This verse describes the life of the early church. They were devoted to the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. Devotion to the teaching of the apostles means devotion to the teaching of God's Word. They were "devoted" to community since they were all united in Christ. They remembered the Lord Jesus as they broke bread together, and practiced prayer collectively. The word devoted denotes passion. The early church was passionate for the Word of God and devoted to one another in their spiritual disciplines. Ultimately, this passion is to have a more intimate relationship with God!

How does the example of the early church encourage you as you seek to become more devoted to God each day?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

SATURDAY, WEEK 5

And the twelve were with Jesus, and also some women . . . and many others, who provided for them out of their means. // Luke 8:1-3

The development and growth of a partnership is a vital component in the success of any endeavor and is especially important in the spreading of the good news. Having the same vision, goal, and objective helps people from diverse backgrounds come together to support, promote and expand the primary objective, which is spreading the gospel to all. In Luke 8:1-3 we see Jesus, his disciples, a woman who had been freed from demon possession, the wife of a member of Herod's household, and others, who took it upon themselves to finance Jesus and his disciples. What an eclectic group! Their example shows us that no matter our backgrounds, our standing in the community, or any other obstacle, those who desire to serve and honor the Lord can partner together.

How can you partner in seeing the work of the gospel go forth?

REFLECT & RESPOND					

SUNDAY, WEEK 6

SERMON & TEXT: HEBREWS 11:8-10



