

DAY ONE: Truth Read Ephesians 4:11-16

The Apostle Paul teaches that the Church, the Body of Christ, exists to help people become mature in their faith and walk with Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). One of the chief ways we accomplish this is by speaking the truth to one another in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Some people pride themselves in *speaking the truth*, which is really just a defense for being nasty towards others. This is not what Paul is talking about. The aim of our truth-speaking is to build others up. When we have others' best interests in mind, we love them with the truth.

The reverse is also true. We can say we love someone, but if we withhold the truth from them in fear they may be offended then we're not really loving them at all. We're just coddling encouraging their insecurity. Truth in an atmosphere of grace is the medicine we all need and is developed over time through sowing and reaping- doing what God wants and trusting him to use it.

The message of the cross is the perfect example: none of us likes to hear we're separated from God for eternity because of our sin, but without grasping that reality we'd never understand and accept Christ's gracious work on the cross.

As you welcome God into your day, consider how you can sow *speaking the truth* into the lives of others as you ask God to give you the courage and compassion you need.

DAY TWO: Faithfulness Read 1 Samuel 7:15-17

Much of our life, on a day-to-day basis, could properly be described as "mundane": common and ordinary. But it's in this "ordinariness" of life we learn faithfulness, a "slow and steady" type of faithfulness we demonstrate by showing up again and again over time. It's the same type of faithfulness Samuel exhibited as he served as a travelling judge in Israel. Operating in a four-town circuit (1 Samuel 7:16-17), Samuel served as a judge and preacher, handing out justice as cases (perhaps the toughest ones) were presented to him. "Year to year" he made his circuit, faithfully hearing the testimony and examining the evidence. He was persistent and dedicated.

It's this faithfulness to God, as he called people back to obedience to God, which qualified Samuel for spiritual leadership and resulted in God's blessing for Israel. God used his faithfulness in the "small," day-to-day things over time to prepare him for larger tasks.

But it's in the "ordinariness" of life where we're most likely to quit: a boring class that has no challenge, respecting your parents, never-ending practice for an instrument, serving with little—or no—results. It's exactly here where God calls us to *faithfulness*, to follow him as he prepares us for larger tasks ahead.

Today, listen to the song *I Will Follow* by Vertical Church Band as you commit to following God in the *ordinariness* of life.

DAY THREE: Keep Going Read 2 Corinthians 9:6

Keep going over time. Spiritual growth isn't going to happen quickly. Most of the time you won't go to church or pray a prayer and instantly feel closer to God. It's no different than planting a watermelon seed and expecting to instantly see a watermelon. It just doesn't happen that way.

Here's another way to think of it. Think of praying, reading the Bible, and going to church like eating. I know that sounds strange, but stick with me. All of us have a food or a meal we crave. Maybe for you it's a steak dinner. Maybe it's an entire bag of Doritos. It's different for all of us, but we all have a meal that gets us excited. But not every meal is going to be that amazing meal. Not every meal is going to be a perfectly-cooked steak. A lot of meals will be peanut butter and jelly sandwiches or pizza. Does that mean you stop eating because all food isn't as amazing as you want it to be all the time? No.

Because those meals still nourish you and feed you. And, over time, those meals will keep you going and help you grow. Time with God is like that. Sometimes it's going to feel like a steak dinner. It's going to be the best experience ever. Other times, it's just PB and J. **But don't give up going after God.**

As you think of ways to begin sowing some seeds into your relationship with God, take time to memorize **2 Corinthians 9:6**. Let it remind you that when you find ways to "sow" into your relationship with God, you can "reap" a better relationship with Him over time.

DAY FOUR: Repentance Read Psalm 51:1-4, 17

Repentance, by definition, is to simply "turn around." But when it comes to sinful habits, it's easier to say than it is to do—especially those habits and patterns we've developed over time. When we realize we're walking down a path contrary to God's desire for our lives, he wants us to "turn around" and starting walking after him.

King David, in Psalm 51, gives us an excellent example of what repentance looks like. David had just committed some major moral mistakes and his prayer of repentance gives us insight on what real repentance involves.

Repentance can be broken down into three *C's*: *contrition*, *confession*, and *change*.

- True repentance starts with *contrition*—a broken heart over sinning against God.
- Then we must *confess* to God our error. The truth is, he already knows; but there's power in verbalizing and owning our fault before God. It frees us from the power of secrecy.
- Finally, we must *change* our actions and begin to obey. Repentance comes full circle when we're actually obeying God from our hearts: obeying him because we want to.

Today as you invite God into your day, think about the beginning of repentance: having a broken and contrite heart. Ask God to break your heart for the things that break his as you daily turn back to him and away from sin.