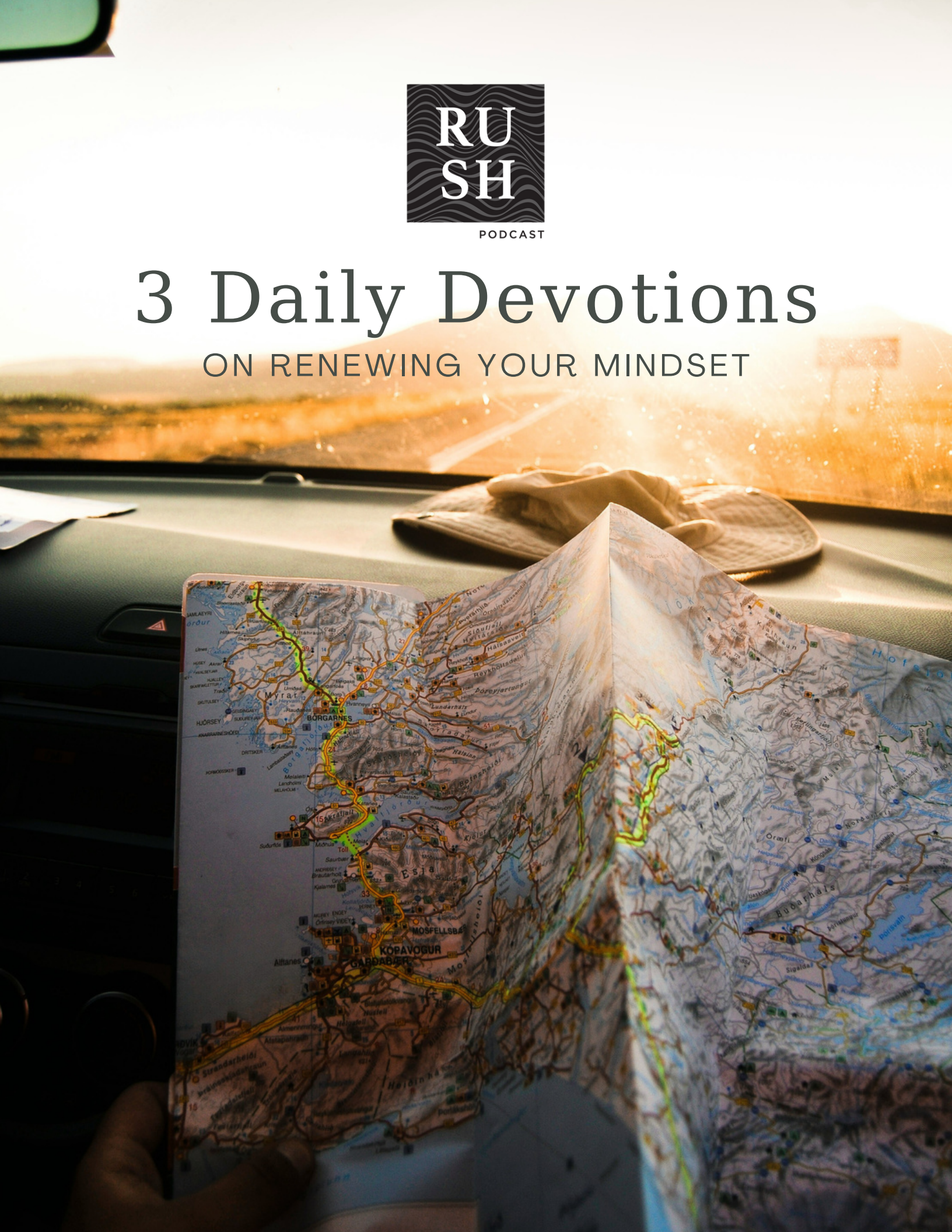




PODCAST

3 Daily Devotions

ON RENEWING YOUR MINDSET



A Force Deeper and Greater

MESSAGE :

There is much to know in this world. A world of information. A world where knowledge is prized. Choices are judged good or bad. People who don't know each other seek to validate—or invalidate—other people's actions.

Yes, there is goodness and there is evil. There is right and there is wrong. But be careful: watch who guides your opinions. For what you see in this world is a fragment, a piece of a fragment, of what is really going on.

It is good to have standards, beliefs about character—what is kind, what is noble, what is loving, what is true. But there are so many things you don't know, so many things that you don't understand. And I want you to be okay with that.

It is a world, on a certain level, that you know intimately: you feel its pulse, you experience the push and pull of its influence everyday. But it is also a world where things don't make sense for a reason. It is a world under a power that is single-minded in its focus: warp truth, blur hope, create chaos and distraction and fear. You are in a battleground where your busyness, your distraction, your feelings of disqualification and overwhelm, are the focus, the goal.

And that is why this world feels the opposite of simple. It is a maze of hurry, pressure, problems and noise. There is an enemy whose main goal is to separate you from me—make you doubt who you are, make your feelings of inadequacy propel you toward seeking progress for the sake of progress, information for the sake of information, power for the sake of power. His mission is to make you feel like you are not enough, that you can never get ahead but that you need to, that there is a standard for measuring your worth and that you are failing at it, definitely failing. He wants to make you feel that while you can never fully measure up, you sure better try.

But there is more here, in this world, that is real, that is good—a more than can sometimes be difficult for you to see. For in this world where Jesus walked, a world of shadow and deception, there is also light; there is also hope. While it is with veiled eyes and heart that you see and experience this world now, I invite you to push deeper in—into my heart. I invite you to desire the truth that I have for you, a greater wisdom fueled by love. It is a wisdom your heart knows and that the world cannot understand.

You are more qualified, more capable, more amazing than you know. For you are in this world but designed for more than this world, too. You are designed to know me, to walk with me, to receive complete freedom from the shackles of success: achievement, progress, monetary growth.

What you seek you will find. What you desire will fuel greater desire. So ask yourself now, what is it you seek? What is it you desire? Are the pressures of this world directing your choices, or is the truth of me, the gifts I have for you, motivating you to rebel against everything this world stands for because you know, deep in your heart, there is more, there is more, there is more?

Underneath the rhythms of movement—of choices sons and daughters make—there is a Force deeper and greater and more powerful than anything else. It is a Force that cannot be explained by words. It is a Force that is beyond knowledge. Come, let me help you get to know Him better.



EXERCISE:

This world can feel like a maze—and we barely have enough time to find our way through each twist and turn. We *think* we're doing the right things. Dealing with all the information coming at us; getting done the things we have to get done; making all the decisions that must be made. We try to make the right choices. We try to keep up. We try to get ahead.

We're often in a hurry. Everything is urgent. Distraction is everywhere.

And we can forget what's most important.

And that takes a toll. The pace and the stress. The comparison and the condemnation. Forgetting what's most important takes a toll on our health, our relationships, and our souls. We begin to seek and devote time and energy to things that just aren't very good for us—to things that take life, rather than give life to us.

"What you seek you *will* find," Holy Spirit said. "What you desire will fuel greater desire."

He also just asked us some tough questions. And answering them just might be the most important thing we can do today.

What are you seeking, truly? What do you desire most, honestly?

Is the culture of the world directing and ordering your steps? Or is God's truth and goodness and love pulling you toward Him, instead?

Let's meditate on the truth of Psalm 46:

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*



*Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.*

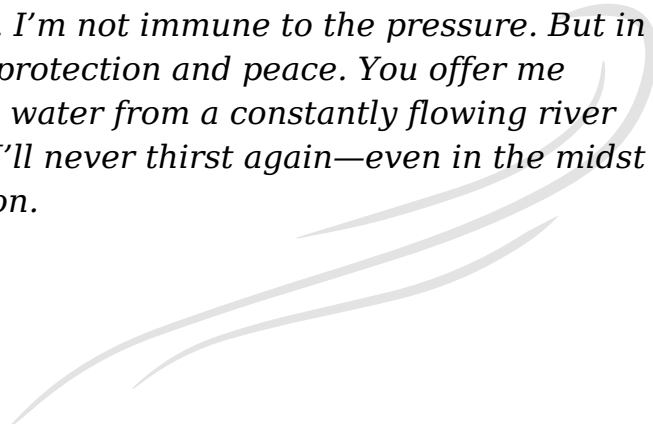
*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.*

*The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

*Come, behold the works of the Lord,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.
“Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”*

*The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

*Father, you are my fortress. You are my refuge and strength. And I need you.
Because, I confess, this world has a lot of power over me. I'm not immune to
the confusion, the chaos, and the noise. I'm not immune to the pressure. But in
the midst of it all, I know You offer me protection and peace. You offer me
restoration and goodness. You offer me water from a constantly flowing river
of grace. You offer me living water, so I'll never thirst again—even in the midst
of this hurry and urgency and distraction.*



"Be still," you say, "and know that I am God," Yes, help me be still. Help me to know—with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul—that You are my God.

I consecrate my mind to you now. Please help me answer the questions you asked.

What am I seeking that isn't you? What am I desiring, more than you?

What did you hear? What did He say?

Father, I think back to the voice of Holy Spirit. He said, "Underneath . . . there is a Force deeper and greater and more powerful than anything else. It is a Force that cannot be explained by words. It is a Force that is beyond knowledge. Come," He said, "let me help you get to know Him better."

Yes, Father, help me to get to know Jesus better. To know Him is what I want—more than anything else. And to the extent that it's not, help me. Help me release the things I'm seeking and desiring more than Jesus. I want to want to know Him more than everything else—and I need help to do that.

Amen.



The Plunge Into Healing and Wholeness

MESSAGE :

Pursuing healing isn't easy. Sometimes it feels like one of the most painful things you've ever set out to do. But it's a choice you make; it isn't done to you. You choose to plunge into deeper water, places where you know there is treasure but you can't see the depths. You don't know what lives beneath the surface of this heart of yours—though the turbulence of unresolved pain, conflict, and circumstances tosses you about.

You tire trying to stay afloat. You tire keeping your head above it all. You try to cope, using every tool you know—without even realizing you're doing it. All you can think about is keeping your head above the waves, trying to stay focused, being committed to finding shore. But what about doing something different? . . . What if there is more for you than just trying to stay afloat? What if you let yourself sink down into what lies deep, deep deep? What if you opened your eyes underwater, letting the shock of the icy cold wear away, and swimming deep down into territory you've been afraid to experience before?

Yes, it's risky. You don't know what this healing will require of you. How much time. Commitment. Patience. Perseverance. Fortitude. You wonder if you can do it, if you can let yourself pursue healing. After all, while your survival techniques are exhausting—keeping you just above the waves—they are, at least predictable. You know what this kind of swimming requires. You know the pace and effort of survival. And choosing healing? Well, there would be a cost. An unknown cost. After all, you don't know what you will find if you plunge down toward what could be treasure, or could be, just as well, a trap that snares you and further injures your heart.

Yes, I know.

And I know you struggle to trust yourself now, at least completely. And I know you struggle to trust others, at least completely, too. But, now, hear this, you will forever remain the same, unchanged, untransformed, unless you let me into your heart completely. And letting me in completely involves letting yourself be healed, no matter what it takes. And perhaps it's worth the cost.

So hear me: in the waves, in the storm, in the icy darkness of anxiety and unknown, I will be with you. I will never let you go. In the new discoveries of wounds—of revelation that feels too hard to bear, I will be your strength, I will hold you, I will catch each and every tear. In the exhaustion, the frustration, the doubt about how to keep going, how to keep your heart open and trusting and awake, I will be holding your healing heart. It will become strengthened and whole and new.

So plunge down. Into deeper waters. Plunge down, and receive wisdom and hope. Plunge down, where there is treasure. In the depths of my love, I restore all broken hearts.



EXERCISE:

We humans are always looking for more knowledge—as much as we can get. And why not? Knowledge improves our lives. We benefit from breakthroughs in health care. From technological breakthroughs. Humanity, collectively, learns so much more each and every day about ourselves and about this world and how it works—and things improve . . . *sometimes*.

But there's *always* more to learn, more to know.

You and I, though—we have the benefit of knowing one special thing. And this one thing is far bigger and far more important than all other pieces of knowledge in the world put together—the pieces we know and even the ones we don't yet know.

Two thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul wrote about it. He was an educated man. Paul too knew a lot of things. He knew a ton about the Torah and the Jewish laws. But in his first letter to the church in the ancient city of Corinth, Paul wrote about how he had decided to put aside *all* his other knowledge in order to focus this one thing. One big thing.

He wrote that he was “determined to be consumed with one topic—Jesus, the crucified Messiah.”

You know the very same “big thing” that Paul knew. So do it. And shouldn't that make us different? Shouldn't that have an impact on how we live our lives? Shouldn't that big piece of knowledge result in a few big yeses in our lives, as it did in Paul's?

If so, what are *your* big *yeses* going to be?

One big *yes* might be to do what Holy Spirit just encouraged us to do—to begin trusting the depths of Jesus' love. To begin trusting that He *can* and *will* restore your past wounds. To begin trusting that no chain is unbreakable. To begin trusting that He *can* and *will* heal your broken heart, if you let him. To be willing to dive into the risky waters of healing—to face your brokenness head-on, to confess sin boldly, to admit the ways you hurt people, and to embrace whatever else Jesus might ask of you in the name of finding more wholeness.

Holy Spirit, the very Spirit of Jesus, just encouraged us to “plunge down. Into deeper waters.” “Plunge down,” he said. “and receive wisdom and hope. Plunge down . . . *where there is treasure.*”

It might be be uncomfortable, sure. It might be daunting. But that’s okay. You were built for this. And God just promised you, “I will be with you. I will never let you go” . . . “In the exhaustion, the frustration, the doubt.”

So, let’s jump in. Let’s dive down. Because that’s the only place where we can find the treasure of peace and joy and freedom and relationship. It’s only by having the courage to jump in and dive down that we are able to begin living the full lives that Jesus made possible and promised us in John chapter 10.

Will you give Jesus your big *yes*? Will you, today, right now, say *yes* to Jesus and be willing to let Him guide you into healing?

Let’s do just that. Let’s tell Jesus what our big *yes* is—the *yes* that scares you, the *yes* that takes courage to commit to, the *yes* that requires you to trust Jesus more than yourself or anyone or anything else.

Let’s name it.

My friend, what is *your* big *yes*?

And now that you’ve said it—now that you’ve given Jesus your big *yes*—I want you to commit to action, commit to swimming, commit to going forward and pursuing that thing you’ve said *yes* to—and we will too.



How you Feel About God

MESSAGE :

There is so much beauty. All that I have made—its original plan, its intention, was beauty. It was good, complete, carefully designed. I made this world to be the place where you could live and thrive. I made it as a gift, all things a gift from Me. What you do in this world can be beautiful. How you can work. How you can play. How you can love. How you can rest. There is so much for you to explore and do, even if your circumstances don't allow it right now. Someday you will have no limits. Someday you will have nothing to hold you back. No hardship. No disease. No financial pressure. (What limits could there possibly be?)

Right now, where do you feel limited? Where do you feel held back? Where do you feel your desires are being thwarted? Where do you feel limited in receiving love, or in experiencing play, exploration and adventure? What do you feel I haven't given you that you need? What resources do you lack? How do you feel held back in what you can do?

Someday you will not feel these limits on you. This world will be made whole, and you will be made whole. There will be no sadness, no evil, no hurt. People will not make you feel unworthy, ashamed of who you are—of what you have and what you do. And right now, as you wait for this kingdom to be whole, you can ask Me what I have for you. You can ask Me for what you need. Your deepest desires. Your greatest dreams. Allow yourself to dream, son, daughter. I want to hear your dreams. I want to hear from you how you have been hurt. I want to hear from you how you are disappointed. I want to hear from you how you hesitate to mourn, feel angry, to grieve.

Do you know I can take all your pain? Do you know I can take all your suffering? Do you know I can bear all of your sadness? I am tender toward you. My heart is not hard. I am not resistant to loving you. I am not more willing to be present with someone else than I am with you. I am willing to love you. I am willing to be with you. I am willing to rescue you. I am willing to come and hold you, shepherd you, guide you toward greener pastures. I am willing to give you rest, restoration, comfort, shelter for your heart. You belong under my wings. You belong under my care. I am your Father, and I have everything you need.

Do you know I love to give you good gifts? Do you know I love to love you? Do you know I love to be with you? Do you know I love to wrap my arms around you, hold you close, and tell you who you are to me—who your identity is—all truth, all love, no lies?

You are never forgotten. You are never not known by me. I know all your struggles right now. All your worries. All your fears. I am your light in the darkness now. I am your hiding place. I am who you can count on. I am who chases you down when you feel lost. I am who knows what words to say when your heart is heavy, when you are hurting, when you struggle to lift your head. Remember that I am a God who is good. Do you believe that? Do you know that? Do you want to know that more?

Let me uncover all your reservations about Me—all your doubts about who I am. There are some things you believe about Me you don't even let yourself recognize. Let Me reveal to your heart what is getting in the way of knowing Me more. Let's start with misconceptions you have about who I am.



EXERCISE:

God wants to help us identify what's getting in the way of knowing Him more. Specifically, He wants to help us recognize any and all misconceptions we hold about who He is. I love this invitation. Because thinking rightly about God matters—it matters a lot. “The most portentous fact about any man [or any woman],” wrote A.W. Tozer, “is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.”

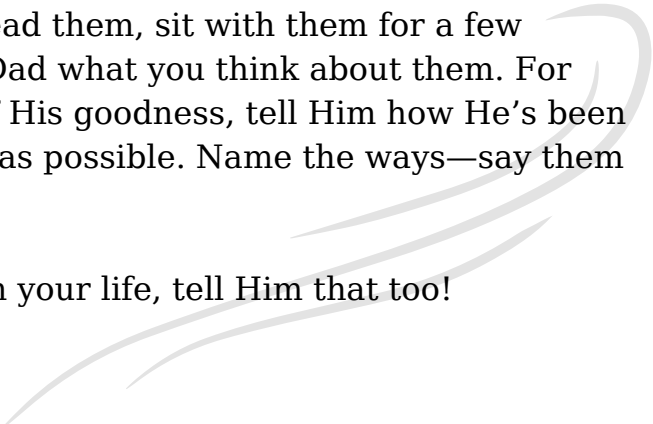
Our thoughts about who He is—his personality and character and values, and how He thinks about us and the world—those thoughts *define* our relationship with Him, because they *govern* how much life and how much love we can receive from Him. The fewer misconceptions we hold, the more life and love we can receive. So, this is an invitation from God that is too good to pass up.

In the message you just read, Holy Spirit asked us some questions about how we feel about our lives right now. He asked, “where do you feel limited? Where do you feel held back? Where do you feel your desires are being thwarted? Where do you feel limited in receiving love, or in experiencing play, exploration and adventure? What do you feel I haven’t given you that you need? What resources do you lack? How do you feel held back in what you can do?”

Underneath all these questions there are some larger, deeper questions, questions about who God is: *Do you believe He is powerful? Do you believe He cares about you? Do you believe He is good?*

Now, you will read a few verses from Scripture. These will reveal characteristics of God. And after you read them, sit with them for a few moments, and then tell your heavenly Dad what you think about them. For instance, if a particular verse speaks of His goodness, tell Him how He’s been good to you, in your life. Be as specific as possible. Name the ways—say them out loud, if you can.

And if you *haven’t* seen His goodness in your life, tell Him that too!



And, then, after you've read a particular verse or set of verses, and after you've told Him what you think about them, I want you to do something else. I want you to listen to what He says to you, about your thoughts and beliefs.

Here is John chapter 1, verses 3-4 : "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." And here is Isaiah chapter 45, verse 7 : "I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things."

Have you experienced God's awesome power? Do you know that, with Him, *anything* is possible?

If you *have* experienced His power, tell Him how. And if you haven't, tell Him that too.

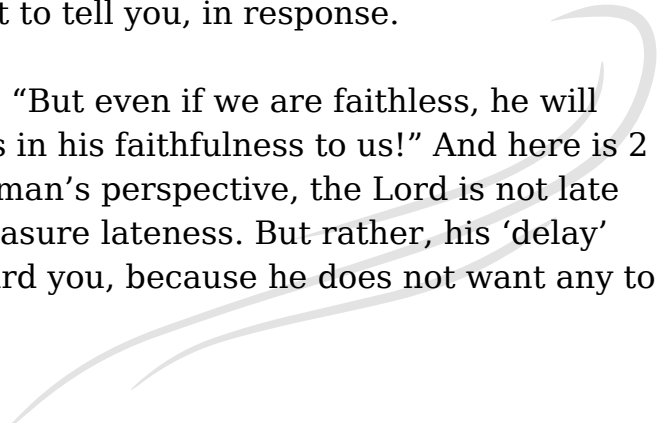
And then be still and listen for His voice. Listen for the quiet, inner voice. Listen not with your physical ears, but with your heart. Notice your thoughts as they come. Notice *which* thoughts might have been originated by Holy Spirit—God in you.

Here is Nahum chapter 1, verse 7 : "God is good, a hiding place in tough times. He recognizes and welcomes anyone looking for help, No matter how desperate the trouble."

Have you seen God's goodness in your life? Has He ever been *your* refuge? If so, how? Tell Him. And if not, tell Him that too.

And then listen for what He might want to tell you, in response.

Here is 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 13 : "But even if we are faithless, he will still be full of faith, for he never wavers in his faithfulness to us!" And here is 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9 : "contrary to man's perspective, the Lord is not late with his promise to return, as some measure lateness. But rather, his 'delay' simply reveals his loving patience toward you, because he does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance."



Have you experienced His faithfulness and patience? If you have, tell Him how. And if you haven't, go ahead and tell Him that too.

And then listen for His reply.

Here is Hebrews chapter 4, verse 16 : "So now we come freely and boldly to where love is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness."

Have you experienced God's mercy? If you have, tell Him about it. If you haven't tell Him that too.

And then listen for what He might want to say to you, in response.

Father, I see your awesome power. I know that nothing is too big for You. And I see, in that awesome power, that you . . . are . . . good. You are the source of all goodness. And I see your faithfulness and patience and mercy. I know You never forget me. And your heart is never hard; it is soft toward me. You see what I'm going through. And You understand. And You never give up on me—not ever, no matter what. When I struggle and when I'm lost, again, instead of anger or frustration, you chase me down and offer protection and healing and restoration.

You are amazing. I believe all these things about You. I know these things, and I want to know You more.

In your Son's name, Amen.



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