

## Homework:

These 14 devotions come from a daily devotional from the book *More Precious Than Silver* by Joni Eareckson Tada

Each day you will:

1. Pray
2. Read the devotional
3. Turn the devotional over and on the back
4. Answer the following 5 questions;
  - What is God/Devotional saying to me?
  - What is God doing through me regarding this time/devotional?
  - What other scriptures come to mind that affirm these thoughts?
  - What action and commitment do I need to take based upon the above questions?
  - Who am I going to share these truths with before tomorrow (Every other day it must be a different person i.e. 14 devotionals divided by every other day = 7 people)?
5. Pray again

## Day 1 DEVOTIONAL

### Getting What We Don't Deserve

*"The Lord is compassionate and gracious...he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."*

Psalm 103:8,10

Do most people get what they deserve out of life? Some would say the drunk driver who breaks his back in an auto accident does. And so does the promiscuous adult who contracts AIDS; the rebellious teenager who becomes pregnant; the drug user who fries his brains. These people do suffer the consequences of their actions.

But that's not the rule of thumb. Most people don't get what's due them. And I'm glad! Because do we really want God to give us what we deserve? At first blush we think we're entitled to health and wealth. We assume we've got coming to us those inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But dig a bit deeper. We're leaving out something important. It's our sin. And sin is not just some pious word reserved for religious conversations. It's not just a concept that we throw into our prayers when it's time to confess. Your sin, my sin is something that is a stinking offense to God.

You see, God is the One who's got rights here. He has every right to permit the full impact of our willful disobedience to harm us. If we got what was due us, we would be annihilated. But-whew-that's not the way He works. Instead, God chooses to deal with us in mercy, love, and forgiveness just like the Scripture for today says.

What do you think you deserve today? Think you're entitled to a few luxurious minutes of complaining? Think your problems give you a right to resent? Want some time off from obeying God? Is that what you're entitled to?

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*When I get just a glimpse of myself as You must see me, Lord, I'm stunned. Stripped of my facades, pretenses, and camouflaging makeup that keep others and myself from seeing me for who I really am, I'm not a pretty sight. But I am overwhelmed by Your tender mercies.*

## Day 2 DEVOTIONAL

### A Little Bit of Hanging

*“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word. You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.” — Psalm 119:67-68*

A Civil War story is told of a woman who sought the favor of Abraham Lincoln on behalf of her soldier son who, apparently, committed an act of treason. A war court found her son guilty and sentenced him to hanging. The mother, undaunted by the news, scraped and clawed all the way to the top to gain the ear of the President. Lincoln was taken with the woman’s tenacity, as well as devotion to her family. After reviewing the soldier-son’s case, Lincoln gave him a pardon. Nevertheless, he hesitated to rejoice with the mother, saying, “Your son may be free, but I still wish we could give him a little bit of hanging.”

Lincoln had it right. Nothing drives home the sweetness of freedom like the bitter taste of a little bit of punishment. Nothing reinforces the blessings of a pardon like standing on the block with the noose around your neck minutes before. The same is true with suffering. When we go through hellish circumstances, God gives us a small taste of the hell we actually are saved from — suffering is, in fact, “a little bit of hanging.” It is hell’s splash-over, giving us a bitter but small taste of the real thing. The result? Our salvation tastes all the sweeter. The blessings of eternal pardon are driven home. “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold” (Psalm 119:71-72).

If we never “went through hell” on earth, how could we possibly appreciate all that God has saved us from? As today’s verse reminds us, it is good that we’ve been afflicted; from it, we learn of God’s decrees, his law is more precious, we stop straying from his side, and we make obedience to him our goal.

Have you experienced “a little bit of hanging” lately? Memorize today’s verse and savor it as your declaration of pardon.

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*It is good that I have been afflicted in the following ways, Lord...*

## Day 3 DEVOTIONAL

### You're Not Normal

*"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" — 1 Samuel 16:7*

When I speak, my message is often about how God has helped me grow leaps and bounds using my wheelchair. However, one time after I gave that message, a woman approached me and said, "Joni, don't worry. One day you'll be normal just like us." She missed the point.

I wasn't offended by the woman's comment so much as saddened that she was making the mistake described in 1 Samuel 16:7. She was looking on the outward appearance. She inferred that I envied her ability to stand. In her view, "normal" meant having a body that "worked," even if it was slightly overweight with a touch of arthritis.

We Christians need to shift our thinking and "...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 Corinthians 4:18). God is concerned about unseen things like patience, sensitivity, faith, goodness, perseverance, and self-control. We are "normal" in God's eyes when we demonstrate endurance and long-suffering, when we keep looking to the unseen things. This is the normal Christian life. You can live it whether you're 5.2" standing or 4.3" sitting. You can live it whether you have varicose veins from walking or atrophied muscles from being paralyzed.

I will not be normal some day; I am normal right now. And so are you if you abide by 2 Corinthians 4:18, fixing your eyes on what's eternally important. Take a look in your heart to check whether it's "time" is correct.

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*Lord, so many of my thoughts are caught up in the here and now that I forget if I can see it, it's temporary. Enable me to fix my gaze on what's important, the eternal.*

## Day 4 DEVOTIONAL

### A Family Affair

*“He answered: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind;’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*  
— Luke 10:27

*“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”*  
— John 13:34-35

Notice a difference in these two verses? It’s subtle, but powerful. In Luke, Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. In John, Jesus is not talking about our neighbors, but our brothers and sisters in the faith. He tells us to love fellow Christians “as I have loved you.”

How has God loved us? With everything. He held back nothing. Not even his own son. God says of his children, this is the way “you must love one another.” No holding back. No reservations or second guessing. No “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you,” but “loving your brothers and sisters as God loves them.”

We are to go the second mile for our neighbors, but we’re to go the third and fourth mile for those in the household of faith. What are the practical ways you can show love to other Christians? Listen to the advise of 1 Corinthians 13 from The Message:

*“Love never gives up... Love doesn’t want what it doesn’t have. Love doesn’t strut, Doesn’t have a swelled head, Doesn’t force itself on others, Isn’t always ‘me first,” Doesn’t fly off the handle, Doesn’t keep score... Doesn’t revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.”*

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*I want to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ so that I can love other Christians in the same way. This is how the world will know that you are real — by our love for each other!*

## Day 5 DEVOTIONAL

### Something Scary

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." — Matthew 7:21*

Does today's verse make you nervous? And what about the next verse, which states, "Many will say . . . , 'Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'" Jesus answers that question with, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers."

You might say to yourself, "If those miracle-working, demon-busting guys aren't making it with the Lord, what about me?" Ah, but don't be intimidated by people who seem to be on some higher spiritual plain. If God's not impressed with them, we shouldn't feel insecure around so-called miracle workers either.

Now, don't get me wrong. Bona fide miracles are going on. But if all you hear is, "Lord, we did this," "Lord, we did that," "Lord, look at what was done over here by us..." realize that God is not swayed by showy drama. He's not impressed with all the "we's." Neither is he impressed when we recount to him all our good works, all that we've done. Such things are never a passport into heaven.

The one who quietly perseveres and does the simple, everyday will of the Father will enter the kingdom.

And what is God's will? To be like Jesus. To let Him shine through you in a patient, loving, and enduring way. Whatever you do, whatever you are, as long as you're like Jesus, you're in God's will. That's not such a scary idea after all, is it?

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*Lord, thank You that I don't need to put on a show to impress You or anyone else. Thank You that my task is to imitate You in every way I can everyday of my life. Help me today to do just that.*

## Day 6 DEVOTIONAL

### The Rose

*"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys."*  
Song of Songs 2:1

Some people claim the rose is the crown jewel of the garden. It's one of my favorites, and I enjoy capturing its intricacies with paint and brush. For all these reasons and more I was touched by a poem sent to me a couple of years. Written by a missionary, it's called "The Rose."

It's only a tiny rosebud -- a flower of God's design;  
But I can't unfold the petals with these clumsy hands of mine.  
The secret of unfolding flowers is not known to such as I --  
The flower God opens so sweetly in my hands would fade and die.  
If I cannot unfold a rosebud this flower of God's design,  
Then how can I think I have wisdom to unfold this life of mine?  
So I'll trust in Him for His leading each moment of every day,  
And I'll look to Him for His guidance each step of the pilgrim way.  
For the pathway that lies before me my Heavenly Father knows --  
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments just as He unfolds the rose.

As the poem suggests, we can't grow the moments of our lives any more than we can peel back the petals of a rose. As we look to His leading each moment of the day, we can trust Him to unfurl each hour just as He unfurls the rose. Little wonder the Lord is called the Rose of Sharon. Like that glorious flower, we just can't get enough of watching His glory unfold in our lives.

Can you trust God to unfold a lovely plan for your life? Can people see Jesus more clearly in you as you bloom? What changes do you need to make to be able to answer "yes" with confidence?

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*Sun and shower, bud to flower, a rose is like my heart — I lay it bare, unfurl with care, each fragile fold, each part. Rose of Sharon, I take care in offering my praise — It's yours for pleasure, yours forever, a flower for your vase.*

**Day 7**  
**DEVOTIONAL**

**A Blinding, Wonderful Light**

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." — 1 Peter 2:9*

The other day, I was telling my friend Doug Vinez how, on Saturday mornings, when I was a kid, my neighborhood friends and I would hop on the streetcar and head to the Ambassador Theatre. We would load up on Peanut Chews and stake out seats midway up the aisle.

Doug told me about an old theater he used to visit. This one had no lobby. You walked through the glass doors, and within a few feet, you would pass through a curtain and bump up against the back row. When the movie was over, there was no vestibule to ease oneself out of darkness and back into daylight. He described how kids would walk outside, rub their eyes, and almost bump into lampposts — the light was a jolt to their senses.

Doug added, "I almost forgot about that theater until I read 1 Peter 2:9." When I asked him to explain the connection, he said, "As a Christian, I forget what a blinding jolt it was to be taken out of darkness and placed in light."

He's right. We Christians can hardly recall the blinding reality of being translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. One minute we were heading to hell; the next, heaven. One minute we were dead in our sins; the next, alive unto God. If we really thought about it, we would be overwhelmed, rubbing our eyes and exclaiming, "What a jolt this is!"

May your heart never become so familiar with darkness that you forget the night-become-day reality of life in the Lord. The Lord Jesus has saved you, and it's a change about which you must never become complacent.

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*Lord of light, thank You for giving sight to me when I was blind to my own sin and for removing me from the darkness of my lost state.*



## Day 8 DEVOTIONAL

### Be A Blessing

*“I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”*

— Genesis 22:17-18

Make me a blessing, make me a blessing,  
Out of my life may Jesus shine;  
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray,  
Make me a blessing to someone today.

Would you like to have assurance that you are enjoying the Lord’s favor? There is a way to know, and it’s simpler than you might realize.

The clue is in the Scripture for today. God was in essence saying, “Abraham, I am blessing you so you in turn can bless all nations. They will receive something through you, and it is in this way that you will know that my hand of favor is upon you.”

For us, the surest evidence that the Lord’s hand of blessing is upon us comes when others are blessed through us. When we encourage friends and family in the midst of our trials, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God’s hand of favor is on us. The best part is that those who are being blessed are at the same time being drawn closer to the Lord.

To be blessed by God means being drawn deeper, higher, and further into his heart. Being blessed means feeling his favor, his pleasure, and his delight. It means understanding him in his ways. What a gift to pass on to others!

Is the joy of your relationship with Jesus overflowing to those around you? Is their walk with him different because of you? Is their prayer life growing because of you? Has their witness gone up a notch because something about you has rubbed off on them? If so, rest assured. God’s blessing is on you.

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*Lord, the best blessing you can ever bestow on me is Jesus. Help me to get to know him. In turn I’ll pass on the blessing that results to others.*

## Day 9 DEVOTIONAL

### Carrying Burdens

*"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*  
Galatians 6:2

I don't often have the chance to physically help other people, but when I do, I love it. Nowhere do I feel more useful than at the airport.

I have to pack what seems like half a hospital when I go anywhere. Even after my friends and I check in all this stuff at curbside, we still have a pile of carry-on luggage which includes lots of the usual paraphernalia plus a duffel bag with emergency medical equipment. The challenge is to carry everything from curbside to the plane. This is when I get to "carry another's burden." On the foot pedals under my legs goes the duffel bag. The briefcase goes on my lap, purses are slung over the handles of my wheelchair, coats or sweaters land on my lap. Airline tickets are squeezed between my leg and the side of my chair. I look like a bag lady. But I don't mind. It gives me a chance to carry someone else's burden.

That's what Galatians 6:2 tells us to do. It's good advice whether we bear actual physical burdens or emotional and spiritual ones. Galatians 6 says we should do this on a regular basis and not be so puffed up with pride that we fail to offer a helping hand.

And we are to do so to fulfill the law of Christ, which is a law of love. Love obliges us to be compassionate. Maybe under the old covenant God's people made a habit of laying burdens on one another, but under the new covenant, we don't lay them on, we take them off. So why don't you find somebody today who could use a hand. It will give you an opportunity to lighten the load of another and lighten your heart at the same time.

"God did not write solo parts for very many of us. He expects us to be participants in the great symphony of life."  
Donald Tippett

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*Today, God, everyone I encounter will be bearing some burden. Help me to discern what those are and which ones I can help to carry.*

(Draper's Book of Quotes page 557)

## Day 10 DEVOTIONAL

### Divine Coincidences

*“So he reasoned... in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.” — Acts 17:17*

Is there such a thing as honest-to-goodness coincidences? Of course. Are they planned by God? Of course. Wait a minute. Can the two go together? Of course!

Take today's verse. Some of those window-shoppers who just happened to be meandering through the marketplace that day Paul was preaching ended up becoming believers. Yet the coincidence of their leisurely stroll, examining cantaloupe and chatting with neighbors that day was no coincidence, for believers have been chosen “before the creation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

The trick? No trick at all. With God, all things are possible. Even bonafide coincidences. God arranges for natural events to occur at specific times to further his ends. In other words, he plans coincidences. How or to what extent will be one fascinating feature of heaven! In the meantime...

It's no mistake that your car broke down and that kindly stranger helped you. It's no accident that at lunchtime the same young man keeps coming by your office door hawking sandwiches. The people you meet, the neighbors you live near, the folks who sit in the pew in front of you are there by divine appointment. Why? So that you might fulfill God's purpose: to make him real to all those around you.

Have fun doing that today in every “coincidence.”

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*Lord, to me it's mind-bogglingly complicated, but, oh, so natural. Thank you for placing the people that you do in my life. Energize me to fulfill your purpose in each divine coincidence — help me to make you oh, so real to each and every person.*

## Day 11 DEVOTIONAL

### Drifting

*“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away” — Hebrews 2:1*

Do you recall, as a child, riding your rubber mat on the gentle waves of the ocean? I remember the warm sun and the rocking motion almost sending me off to sleep. In fact, I once did just that. When a giant swell woke me up, I raised my head and realized with horror how far from shore I had been carried away. A strong current had caught me and carried me down the beach. I don't know how it happened... and so quickly! I didn't realize how far I had drifted away until the moment I saw that great distance between me and my family further up the beach.

Drifting can be dangerous. Always, always there are currents pulling at us. Always we are swimming upstream, against the tide. There is always the temptation to drift, and we never realize how far we are carried away until we see Christ... until we see the others from whom we have parted. It is possible for any of us to drift spiritually or morally. No one is immune. Think of the powerful currents in your life that would carry you along unless you “kept at the oars” to control the direction. There is the current of social opinion or fad. There is a current of personal desire, of doing the things you want to do. Lust is a powerful undertow. Materialism is a relentless tug.

Following God does not come easy. Today, anchor yourself with a recommitment to keep at the oars, to keep rowing against those strong undertows. Let's not be lollid to sleep and carried away.

Someone has said, “Sow a thought, reap an action... sow an action, reap a habit... sow a habit, reap a character.” Drifting from God starts in small ways with little thoughts. To keep the current of your thoughts in line, find a King James Bible and look up 2 Corinthians 10:5. Can your thoughts be controlled? Who gives you the power to do so?

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*Lord, you are a lighthouse for me, a center point, a high tower. I can always tell whether or not I'm drifting by looking to see how close, or how far from you I am. Keep me anchored near you.*

## Day 12 DEVOTIONAL

### Imitate Who?

*“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” — 1 Corinthians 11:1*

I just got off the phone with my friend Bunny. We haven't seen each other in ages, but I said, “Bun, you wouldn't believe how often I think about you. For instance, I get into a situation and I say to myself, Lord, what would Bunny do? What would she say to this person?” I could tell she was blushing; so I quickly added, “Oh, I'm not imitating your holiness. Just how you get there!”

This is what today's verse is all about. The apostle Paul's comment to the Corinthians could be construed as self-deifying. He sounds almost presumptuous. Is he comparing himself to Christ? No, Paul is not asking us to imitate his righteousness, for there is only one that is holy and he is the Lord. Paul is asking us to imitate the choices he makes, to model his discernments, and his response to certain people and situations. Paul knew that his fellow Christians would soon find themselves facing the sort of persecution he was already experiencing. As their spiritual father, he wanted them to ask, “What would Paul do if he were facing this mob? What would he say to my accusers?”

We imitate the methods and manners of the Christians who serve as our examples. The Christ-likeness, the holiness and righteousness will then be added. God wants us “...be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

Who is looking up to you as an example? A child? A grandchild? A fellow student? Your neighbor or co-worker? The new woman at church? If you are growing in Christ, know this: somebody is watching and learning. Somebody is thinking of you, What would he do? What would she say? How can you be an example? Read 1 Timothy 4:12 again and go out and live it in sight of others.

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*Lord, maybe it's best that I don't know who's watching and learning from me. All I need to know is that I want to imitate you. As I do, others will observe how I do it and be inspired to live the same way. May I be responsible today to this high calling.*

## Day 13 DEVOTIONAL

### The Light of the Mind

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet ...”* — Psalm 119:105a

I once visited a nursing home back in New Jersey run by Marvin van Dyke, a dear Christian friend. The place was brightly lit, beautifully decorated, and very clean. The ladies in the kitchen prepared a wonderful luncheon for us and Marvin invited several of the nursing home residents to join us. One of the attendees was his former pastor, the Rev. Herrmann Braunlin. This beloved man of God had pastored Hawthorne Bible Church for over 30 years, but Alzheimer’s disease had robbed him of any ability to communicate, recall, or think clearly.

Nevertheless, Rev. Braunlin came to the luncheon impeccably dressed in suit and tie, his hair neatly combed and shoes shined. Marvin introduced us and the pastor smiled, greeting me warmly. He didn’t talk much, though. He spent most of the time wandering around the room and looking out the window. Once in a while he would turn to me or one of my friends and the vacant look in his eyes would clear for a moment; he would shake our hands and ask, “Hello there, and what’s your name?”

Marvin, to my surprise, asked Rev. Braunlin to say the blessing over our meal. Without flinching, the elderly pastor rose from his seat at the table, leaned on his hands and began, saying, “Oh, gracious heavenly Father, we bow before you this day to humbly ask your blessing on these, our friends, and upon this meal which has been prepared by the hands of servants who love you. Strengthen us and endue us plenteously from on High with every grace and blessing so that we, too, might serve you with whole and devoted hearts. In the Name of Christ our Lord, Amen.” My friends and I looked at each other in amazement. It was as though the room had filled with light from heaven.

After his prayer, Rev. Braunlin sat down. The vacant gaze returned. But the light did not go out.

God’s Word is a light not only to our path, but to our thinking. Hide it in your heart today and you will never walk in darkness.

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*Light of the world, illumine my mind and brighten my path. May I never walk in darkness as long as your word lights up the way.*

## Day 14 DEVOTIONAL

### A Fearless Request

*“Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”*

— Ephesians 6:19-20

The scene is a prison cell in Rome. Paul has been in chains for over two years. He’s tired, his shackles are heavy, and his leg irons bite into his ankles. As he sits in prison, he’s most likely thinking of the many missionary travels he’s yet to take, of the distant lands yet to hear the gospel. Perhaps he’s thinking of the fledgling churches in Philippi, Galatia and Colossae that need his encouragement. He has one chance to write his friends in Ephesus. With all these needs on his mind, he picks up his pen, so to speak, and asks them to pray.

Yet among all the pressing problems out on the field, among all his wants and wishes, what does Paul ask them to pray about? That his aches and pains might ease? That Caesar might grant him a pardon? That the charges against him might be dropped? That God might send -- as he did for Peter -- an angel to miraculously fling open the prison doors? No. In the last chapter, in the concluding sentences, Paul sums up his most important prayer request: that he might remember to share the gospel whenever he opens his mouth; that God might give him fresh words in witnessing; and that God might empower him to declare it fearlessly.

Today, look at the needs in your life as opportunities to share the gospel. Ask the Spirit to prompt you whenever you open your mouth. Ask him to give you fresh words to suit the occasion. Most of all, ask the Spirit to give you courage, to help you declare it fearlessly (if an apostle needed courage to be bold in witnessing, you must need it, too!).

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*Lord, so often my prayer requests involve relief and release from problems. Help me to “stay in my chains” today and follow Paul’s lead as I declare your gospel fearlessly.*