

START NEW[®]

31-DAY

FAITH & WORK DEVOTIONAL

**A COLLECTION OF
2-MINUTE MULTIPLIERS
THAT HELP YOU SEE JESUS
IN YOUR WORK**

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INTRODUCTION

This 31-day collection of my *2-Minute Multipliers* helps you see Jesus all around you AND apply His teachings to your work or venture.

My prayer is that your relationship with Jesus would form every aspect of your life. That His Spirit would encourage your spirit every day in every way.

That you would see Jesus at work around AND in you AND through you.

The more you realize you are His forever, the more confident you'll become in making decisions. In facing struggles. In sharing truths about Him.

The more others will trust in the same God who loves and forgives them, too.

The world wants hope. Jesus is the One and Only source of true Hope. You are the way that Hope gets shared.

Share well!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Bill

DAY 1 RED

The color screams “Look at me.” Power. Authority. In control. Or wannabe.

I can’t picture Jesus in it.

It’s also the name of the man who collects my trash. The only red he wears colors the hair on his head.

He and his wife run a mom-and-pop shop. Pickup truck outfitted with double-decker side rails hauling a long bed box trailer. The entire extended volume filled to the brim like a container of oversized black marshmallows.

Ours is the acquaintance-ship blossoming out of simply saying hello. Now, if I’m outside, Red will stop and come over. Strike up a conversation.

Last week he told me how he shot a 7’ long 6” diameter rattle snake out near a ranch where he picks up refuse. “The snakes are out. Be careful.” Suggested I put snake shot in my .22. He doesn’t have to tell me twice.

Red’s life consists of taking away the peelings of potatoes and jugs of sour milk. Dirty diapers and discarded detergent boxes. A variety of unwanted leftovers that smell to high-heaven, as my grandma would say.

I don’t want his job.

Red and Tiffany captured the garbage business in our little 90-home subdivision by offering an unbeatable rate. No one with a typical dinosaur-size hydraulic-smashie thing quad-axle can compete.

“How many homes in here do you have a contract with now?” “60!” “Good for you. Good for you.”

Hard to beat the economy of an old pickup truck and open-air trailer and someone willing to work sunup to sundown.

I’m limited to eight black trash bags a week. But when you get to know Red, he’s always willing to slip an extra-large marshmallow into his trailer.

He’s not into power. Just serving.



Today’s Scripture

Mark 10:43-45

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.



Today’s Question

How would you approach your work differently if you approached it as a servant rather than a boss? Does being a servant mean you have no authority? Or is it more a matter of how you use your authority?

DAY 2 EXPERT

For the past hour I've been listening to my wife teach math to one of her students online.

She's using terms and phrases I no longer comprehend. I did once. Made it through Calculus in college. But absence makes the heart forgetful.

It's sort of like listening to a foreign language where I never learned all the vocabulary. "¿Dónde está el baño?" is all I've got.

God-talk and Christianity discussions work the same way for a number of people I've run into.

They only know God as some "out there" concept. Formal and impersonal.

Or as a self-defined heart-based idea. Warm and fuzzy.

They learned of him in a rules-based religion. Do this. Don't do that.

Or experienced such an abundance of church-hurt that her soul shuts down whenever anything even remotely sounds churchy.

In his search for love and acceptance, he creates a minimal-laws, all-loving god. DIY feels safer. Less complicated.

He could use an expert in grace. She could use an everyday friend who knows an everyday Jesus.

Someone who appreciates grace only works when earning or deserving or claiming are not options.

Someone in tune with their own brokenness. Someone intimately aware of their own failings.

Someone ok with a demanding God who met His own demands by sending His Son. For them.

Someone more in love with their neighbor than himself. Willing to listen. Really listen. Without discounting. Or forcing. Or prematurely correcting.

Perhaps she needs an expert in grace. Perhaps she needs you. You know Jesus.



Today's Scripture

Romans 8:1,2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death.



Today's Question

Which of my staff need grace from me due to a family situation or circumstances beyond their control? Commit also to pray for him/her every day this week.

DAY 3 PEARL

Yesterday as I was trying to chisel out a piece of broken pvc pipe compliments of #snovid21, a random thought popped into my mind: I should sharpen my chisels.

Conviction set in especially since I've never sharpened my chisels. Not since I bought them in the late '80s. Yes - over 30 years of my chisels getting along on their own.

Upon googling "sharpening Bahco 8032 Ergo Chisels" I discovered my chisels hail from elite chisel genes.

Marry up the facts that master woodworkers love them AND Bahco no longer makes them, and you've got yourself chisel gold. As in each chisel is worth \$130-\$250 on eBay. Seriously.

They'll need a separate paragraph in my will.

Jesus once told a story about how the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. (Matthew 13:45,46)

The parable speaks of the incredible value of being part of Jesus' Kingdom. It's more valuable and more important than anything else in your life. It's worth liquidating everything - if that's what it took to get in.

Fortunately, it's not. We get in by invitation. Hand-delivered by Jesus.

We don't have to buy it or pay it off monthly like a gigantic credit card bill.

We don't have to make a case for why we should be chosen. Or forgiven. Or blessed.

Jesus simply chooses us and gives it to us. Freely.

Many get the invitation but choose not to accept it. They don't see the value in it. They think the chisels are just old tools not worth much.

Or they prefer to keep being king or queen of their own kingdom. Trying to earn their way. Appease God. Or pretend He doesn't exist. All dead-ends.

When you look at Jesus, what do you see? When you hear His words of grace,

what do you hear?

How valuable is Jesus to you? I suspect it has to do with how valuable you think you are to Him.

You're worth more than the greatest pearl ever found. You're worth more than a fancy chisel in a workshop. You're worth Him selling everything - including Himself - to get you a front-row seat to eternity.



Today's Scripture

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.



Today's Question

Choose one of your colleagues or staff. What's one way you can show them how valuable they are today? Commit to do that before noon.

DAY 4 HOTDOGS

I love hotdogs.

Some brands rise above the others. Some brands definitely won't get me as a repeat customer. But if it looks like a hotdog, chances are, I'm buying.

A parishioner told me once of visiting a hotdog plant. Watching what all went into the ballgame-campfire-convenience-store-menu-staple led him to never eat a hotdog again.

I've never been, so I'm still eating.

I'm not denying lots of cow and pig parts find a new home in my frankfurter. I'm not naive enough to think my Oscar Mayer or Hebrew National or Ball Park is as pure as the ribeye steak I'll grill tomorrow.

Doesn't matter. I love - daresay, *will always love* - hotdogs.

It's nice to know God feels the same way about us.

Lots of stuff I'd rather not show up on the ingredients list goes into making my life. The same goes for your life.

Stupid mistakes that ruin relationships and dissolve families.

Intentional self-serving decisions wrapped in an outer skin of "love" as if selfishness isn't the main ingredient.

Secret lives we hope no one discovers and seek to self-justify when they do.

God looks at us. Knows the fillers and normally-trash-heap parts in my particular recipe. Yet sees only Jesus. His perfection. His obedient nature. His totally selfless demeanor.

And loves us. Always. Forever. Unconditionally.

He just loves us. Like I love my hotdogs.

Pass the ketchup, would you?



Today's Scripture

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.



Today's Question

What messy, hotdog-like argument or conflict at work (or family) needs you to apply grace to today? Ask God for the confidence and words to do just that.

DAY 5 NEVER

Emotional words are the engine that spins conversation into a roller coaster ride.

Words like “Always” and “Never” hint at extreme feelings of love or bitterness.

“You always give great presents,” vs. “You always yell at me.” “You never compliment me,” vs. “You’re never late.”

Neither are totally accurate. Neither paint a 100% true story. Both serve as an emotional hint of something deeper going on inside.

God’s use of “never” and “always” hint at His never-ending love for us. Thankfully they’re always 100% accurate.

- He’ll never bring the devastation of a world-wide flood again (Genesis 9). His steadfast love never ceases. His mercies never end (Lamentations 3).
- He is the bread of life who feeds us so that we will never go hungry or thirst and never be cast out of His family (John 6).
- He gives us eternal life so that we will never perish nor be snatched out of His hand (John 10).
- He always does things that please His Father (John 8). He never lies (Titus 1).
- He is always interceding for us (Hebrews 7). He’ll never blot our names out of His book of life (Revelation 3).
- He is always with us, to the very end of time (Matthew 28). He’ll never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13).
- He always leads us to victory (2 Corinthians 2).

You and I tend to use “never” and “always” to make an emotional point. Your Father God uses them to make an eternal point. For you.



Today’s Scripture

Hebrews 7:25

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.



Today’s Question

Notice today when you use the words “never” or “ever.” In what more accurate way could you express your frustration so that people don’t get overwhelmed by your emotion?

DAY 6 HUMBLE

Leadership in a crisis - a situation that overturns the norm, creating new norms that range from fleeting to evermore - requires humility.

Humility because tomorrow's details are unknown. When yesterday's normal will return is anyone's guess. The longer it stays away, the more likely a new normal will take charge.

Humility willingly admits its limitations, especially in prophesying the future.

Lack of facts about the future, however, should never lead to paralysis. Pausing, yes. Pause to consult. Pause to plan and prepare. Pause to lean on those with greater knowledge, broader experience, and perhaps more years. Please do.

But ultimately, humility still acts.

Crises cannot be stopped. They can only be managed. Which requires action.

Humility is not helpless. It is character born of suffering, as Paul says in Romans 5, refined through endurance, and clothed in hope.

Humility adopts not a victim posture but stands tall, willingly leading through to a better future.

Humility is confident, for she follows Jesus. To a cross, but out of a tomb, securely in the grasp of His never-leaving Spirit.



Today's Scripture

Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.



Today's Question

Where have you been humbled lately? Did it refine you or bloat you? Consider today how God's Spirit often appears most audible in times of humility.

DAY 10 SPEAKING OF THE RESURRECTION

I'm guessing talking about the resurrection with your friends is not a regular occurrence. Perhaps because the topic doesn't come up naturally. Or perhaps you're unsure how to explain it if it did.

While not necessarily excited about it, you and your friends probably agree your current body will only last so long. Alzheimer's, glaucoma and carcinoma are already lurking in the shadows.

Your buddy will likely nod at this point.

At the same time, your dying body's got a soul that lasts forever.

Most of your neighbors will also agree that there's more than meets the eye when it comes to you being you. You're more than just a body with red hair and long limbs. There's something immeasurable and intangible.

The Bible calls that distinguishing reality your soul. Everyone's got one. And it will never die.

Timeless and eternal, your soul provides the philosophical machinery that leads to discussions of beauty and value. It's what feeds your longing for something more, for stories of good, for evil never winning.

Your soul is a trace of your divine origins. It brings a taste of hope to that part of you that's dying.

Resurrection addresses both your eternal and your dated, promising a day where dying doesn't exist. A day where you'll still be you without traces of disease or disappointment.

Resurrection really is relevant. Especially when dying is so real.



Today's Scripture

Acts 4:19-20

But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."



Today's Question

Who in your life is wrestling with the end of life? Commit to reach out to them today. Consider telling them, "As you approach the end of life, I am praying that the resurrection of Jesus gives you incredible peace knowing that one day, you'll get a new body without any pain or suffering."

DAY 11 COMFORTABLE

On the last hole of the evening, I encountered some deer. As in a herd of deer. As in 25 of them.

They were lounging around the 18th green. Didn't even budge as I walked through. Simply nodded their heads as I headed for my chip.

Probably thought how bad my game was - missing the green from that distance and all.

They obviously had encountered my type before. Knew how safe living on a golf course is if you're a deer. And lots of other deer have moved in as well.

They were settled in. Comfortable with life. Not a care in the world.

Some seasons of life overflow with deer moments.

No washed-out sections of the road that jar you. No worries about being washed up since you're young and got your A-game.

Marriage is good. Family is happy. Everyone loves you at work.

Other stretches seem empty of such no-care deer.

Fears and worries make you skittish. Mentions of finances give you a tick.

Your marriage struggles like a sailboat sailing upwind at the hand of an inexperienced captain.

Your work lacks joy. Or satisfaction. Or a sense of accomplishment.

Take heart. Such seasons are not unique to you.

Nor does their presence mean God has left you. Or no longer loves you. Or has forgotten you even exist since He's so busy with more important things.

God reminds us in our struggles that "...I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

God secured this promise through Jesus' death and resurrection.

My future will always include Him at my side. Will always include Him

protecting and providing, giving and guiding. Especially when the journey is upwind.

Makes me feel like one of those deer with his buddies on a golf course where hunting's not allowed. All comfortable with life.



Today's Scripture

Acts 17:26-27

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.



Today's Question

What particular struggle do I need God's comfort for today? Ask God to give you His strength and confidence.

DAY 12 RATIONING

My near-empty propane tank finally received propane last Friday. 11 days after it was originally scheduled.

Our ticket ended up on the bottom of the delivery pile since we weren't totally empty like many in our region. They needed it sooner than we did.

When the truck left, I checked the gauge. It only registered half-full. Seems they're rationing the propane to ensure everyone gets some.

Scarcity does that to us. When faced with a shortage we short share.

We reign in. Penny-pinch. Conserve. Water down. Dial back.

Lower the thermostat. Enter the coupon code. Close the hands sooner so there's some leftover for us.

Such behavior reflects wise stewardship. To a point.

God gives us commodities that never run out. Especially when shared with others.

His forgiveness is limitless.

His presence has no time-limit.

His generosity exceeds our imagination.

When we give His forgiveness...

When we love unconditionally like Him...

When we generously share the dollars and goods He's showered upon us...

Our giving God promises to keep our tanks full. To always provide us enough.

"...Whoever sows generously will also reap generously...You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion..." (2 Corinthians 9:6,11)

Our broken world has enough fear and scarcity already. Be different.

Be a tank full of courageous generosity. Every day.



Today's Scripture

2 Corinthians 9:6,11

...Whoever sows generously will also reap generously...You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion...



Today's Question

What do you struggle the most to be generous with? Money? Time? Love? Ask God to open your eyes - and your heart - to be generous in that area this week.

DAY 13 WATERMELON

My grandson and I visited a fruit stand yesterday. It's a seasonal mom and pop at the intersection of Highway 29 and Farm to Market Road 1431.

Their tomatoes define tomato-ness. Their peaches, peach-ness.

We went hoping for a watermelon depicting watermelon-ness. We were not disappointed.

Ezra wanted a red one. Red they had. Humongous it was. "Most of them are around 40 pounds," beamed the young man behind the jars of pickled okra. Proud like the dad of a newborn son.

We went home with enough watermelon for days.

Fruit stand trips invariably introduce you to people who know well our dependence on a force outside us.

His tomatoes were late this year. Not of his own doing. Had something to do with the rain. As did the watermelons in dire need of Weight Watchers.

Most of us don't experience an intimate connection between income and nature. Those who do appreciate how "controlling our own destiny" is naïveté at best.

We are the actors. We are not the authors.

Remember to thank the Author for the role He's gifted you in the life you live. A role with its share of suffering, no doubt. But a role filled with meaning and purpose when acted in Jesus.



Today's Scripture

Psalm 147:7-9

Sing to the Lord with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp. He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.



Today's Question

How would your work be different if you focused on what you have some control over - namely, yourself - and let go of what you didn't? If you rested in God's control rather than force yours?

DAY 15 STEWARD

Steward sits well on a stool. No arm chair for him.

Not sexy by far. Not powerful like a leader or owner. Feels at best second-rate.

Someone who answers to another. Someone who manages the assets of another. Someone under another. Following another.

Definitely not The Other.

A good steward desires not the owner's seat. She humbly embraces her servant role.

Stewards realize their stuff is not their own. They work hard. Yes. They plan hard. Yes. But they've seen stuff come and stuff go. In a blink of an eye or beat of a heart.

They've inventoried their good fortune versus the next door neighbor's. Nothing that different between the two: college degrees, long tenure, decades of experience.

One laid off. The other not.

Nothing that different between the two... except the outcomes. Right place and right time, it appears. Some would say lucky.

Perhaps more Providential. With a capital P. Meaning some One provided it to you. Some One chose for you to manage it. Some One decided you could handle whatever it is.

We tend to believe our good fortune - small to large - is our doing. Our grit and determination. Our moving the chess pieces just so.

Foolishness. Utterly.

When you realize you don't own anything and appreciate how everything - literally everything - is a gift and privilege...

How all of life is a giant journey of receiving...

How all you have and the experiences you encounter all flow back to a giving God...

That's a steward. That's your calling in Jesus.

Steward well.



Today's Scripture

Matthew 25:21

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'



Today's Question

Whether you are a founder or an employee, a stay-at-home parent or a student in college, you steward God's gifts. Abilities and resources He's placed under your control. Which do you find easier to steward: people or things? Ask Him to give you wisdom so that you manage His people and His things His way today.

DAY 16 DUST

The horizon out my window appears fuzzy. Normally crisp hills and sharp trees now hazy and out-of-focus, like the manual setting on my old Canon AE-1.

My wife told me it's Sahara Desert dust. Sand of the African continent variety.

Evidently, it started preparing for the trip last weekend and like a hurricane finally made landfall in the Gulf Coast yesterday. Decided the hill country needed a visit, so here it is - bringing no joy.

Pastors and dust run into each other principally at funerals. We recite God's words from Genesis 3 reminding Adam's offspring from dust we came and to dust we will return, compliments of our founding relatives.

Our work is dusty. Our lives get dusty. Our end will be dusty. Literally.

If you choose cremation, you'll transform into about one pound of dust for every 29 pounds of breathing. Remove the water and you're more Sahara than not.

The New Testament mentions dust mainly with shaking it off sandals. A modern-day washing your hands of the situation and moving on.

When the relationship ends, dust is the metaphor. When the water leaves, dust is all that remains.

Had Jesus remained in the tomb post Easter morning He, too, would have contributed to the soil and sand of the landscape round Jerusalem.

Instead, in the near future He'll gather up all the dusty remains that used to be us and mold them back into perfect you's and perfect me's.

No more shaking it off. No more waterless outcomes. Just crisp hills and sharp trees.

Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.



Today's Scripture

1 Thessalonians 4:13,14

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.



Today's Question

Where has death's dust made you lose sight of Jesus and lose hope in the process? Which near-death relationship could use a resurrection? Ask Jesus to remove the dust from your eyes and heart so that His life reigns through you.

DAY 18 PASSIVE

I was taught early on that good writing should not be passive, as this sentence obviously is. Things that have stuff done to them should be discarded for things that are able to do stuff.

(The rule embedded in me so deeply that writing the two preceding sentences almost exploded my head.)

Passive evokes images of weak-willed players who sit back and let life happen. As opposed to those who take charge and make life happen.

Passive paints pictures of milquetoast people in the middle of the herd and back of the plane, constantly being walked over and through. As opposed to out front iron backbone and granite chin types who pilot the plane and stand up for themselves.

Passive is not type A. It's type Z.

Yet passive occupies the center seat in the message of Jesus.

He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. He was whipped and ridiculed and crucified so that we would not be. He was raised from the dead so that we would be.

Moments of His life demonstrated His divine authority. Raising Lazarus. Walking on water. Healing sick children and lame men and hurting women. Multiplying five loaves and two fish into lunch for 8,000+.

But the success of His life revolved around passive. Letting weak-willed people crucify Him. Letting His iron backbone Father raise Him.

His true identity and purpose revealed most in His passivity.

Our true identity and purpose follow suit.

In baptism, we are tied to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The total history of Jesus given to us because of something done to us.

In the Lord's supper, we receive the body and blood of Jesus passively hidden in the bread and wine. The communion of saints becoming our communion because of something done for us.

Even the faith that grabs hold of the life of Jesus is itself given to us by our Father in heaven. He wants it understood that our relationship with Him is all His doing. We were born into the family, remember? Not our will or choosing.

Pay attention to the passive verbs in the Bible. Celebrate the verses where we just sit back and let God do His thing to us, in us, and through us.

If passive is so important in the divine scheme of things, maybe it's also important in the human scheme of things? Maybe having stuff done to us isn't all bad.



Today's Scripture

Ephesians 2:4,5

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.



Today's Question

How have your friends shown you love and acceptance? How could you do the same for friends and colleagues today?

DAY 19 FAVOR

End well.

Most people I know want that. Whether retiring from a job or from life.

No one wants people to be thankful you've left the building. To be excited to never see your face again. To utter "Glad he's gone."

You want to go out on a high. To finish the race with a final kick that pushes you over the finish line.

What's the best way for that to happen? Try harder? Train more?

What about staying faithful? Committed to your promises? Aligning your behaviors with earlier words?

The above certainly help. Faithfulness and integrity leave a great wake in your life. Especially amongst those who occupy days and years with you.

Life in Jesus isn't meant to be a slog, though. Ending well can easily become a never-ending hamster wheel wondering when God will let you off for a snack. Or replace you with a nicer furry pet.

Which is why I love how most worship services I attend end. They end well.

I hail from a strain of Christianity that sends me into the world not telling me to do more. Or behave better. Or strive higher.

I'm sent with a simple blessing.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace."

32 words of promise. 32 words of grace. 32 words reminding me God's favor is my source for ending well.

His love for me fills me with love. His promise and provision empower me to faithfulness. Daily.

The Aaronic blessing offers words of rest and hope that carry me across the finish line for a great ending.

Each day. Every week. All the years of my life.

God's favor is key to ending well. Thanks to Jesus.



Today's Scripture

Numbers 6:23-27

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.



Today's Question

In what area of work do I need to hear "Stop doing and rest!"? Ask God's Spirit to remind you of that throughout the day.

DAY 21 BROWN

My dad was brown. At least that's what we used to say.

Dad was 1/2 Mexican Indian and 1/2 Anglo landowner. The Mexican Indian won out cosmetically. Brown he was.

On the Hex color gradient, Dad might have been Russet (#7F461B), Tawny (#7E481C), or even Peanut (#795C32). I'd love to say he was Tortilla (#997950) since tortillas were his fav. That pale brown-wannabe shade wouldn't even make honorary mention.

Although strong as wood in character, he wasn't Hickory (#351E10) or Walnut (#43270F) or Pecan (#48260D). Not even Cedar (#4B3A26). All pigments a shade too dark.

Same for Gingerbread (#5C2C06) and Caramel (#613613) and Chocolate (#2B1700). He loved his sweets, but the Anglo DNA watered down their flesh impact.

Brown is a difficult word to pin down. Especially when used for people. Especially when considering the abundance of people of Indian or African or Middle Eastern origin. Not to mention those south of our border.

Brown and black seem weak and too broad of a stroke.

When working with churches in Panama, I ran into a number of people combining Chinese with Jamaican and French. A rich gorgeous Brown-Gold. Almost a tawny meets russet meets I'm-not-sure-what. I haven't found it on the Hex chart.

Colors provide beauty and variety in a broken world. Especially when used for people. The sheer variety of human color speaks of a Creator who loves shades and tones and tortillas.

When the choices overwhelm us, we default to broad brushstroke descriptors. Easier to generalize.

When the Creator worked His magic, He defaulted to more nuance than we can imagine. Easier to specialize.

When Dad looked at us boys, he never saw brown. We hailed from a Germanic

mom and other father, who produced more beige and pinkish progeny.

Didn't really matter to Dad. Never really mattered to us. We were always good with having a brown Dad. He was always good with having peach tortilla boys.



Today's Scripture

Acts 17:26

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.



Today's Question

Be honest - how does a person's skin color affect how you treat them? How you give them authority? How you follow them at work? Confess the times that color hinders you showing love or submission to the people in your life. Ask Jesus to change that in your heart.

DAY 22 SQUIRRELS

Living in the Llano uplift of the Texas Hill Country my home sits amidst granite outcroppings. Small to large boulders. Some with moss. Some without. Some solo. Some Divinely stacked.

Those Divinely stacked function as condos for critters. A family of black ground squirrels rent out the address 15 feet off the corner of my back porch.

Come summer, I'll spy them on their stomachs under my patio table eating the black fruit off of our Texas Persimmon trees. No one taught them manners. They'll leave the pits and stains for me to clean up.

For some reason, this doesn't bother me. I'm not sure if it's the setting. Or that I love the trees and how they provide. Or that this is the first time I've been around black ground squirrels.

Whatever. They're in my "give grace" column.

There are people in my life who reside in that column as well. I've never really autopsied it but I suspect it depends on the mood I'm in or experiences I've had.

There are others who never start out in that column. It's like I banished them to the "earn grace" part of the ledger from where they may or may not ever relocate. Good luck.

For some reason, this doesn't bother me. But it should. It really should.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'" - Matthew 18.32-33

Jesus needs to work on me. I should give people more grace than I give squirrels.



Today's Scripture

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.



Today's Question

Perhaps you struggle with forgiving others because you don't really believe Jesus has forgiven you of every wrong in your life from when your life began through when your life ends. What sin is so great that you are unwilling to let go of it and receive His forgiveness? Let go of it now. Turn from it. Rest in His grace for you.

DAY 23 ROOF

Storms happen.

My most memorable was a whiplash windstorm with Noah-nightmare rains that did a sardine-can-opening number on a 10-foot-wide section of our metal roof. Right over the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves home to 30 years of seminary and home-schooling.

A dear couple from the neighborhood came over at midnight. Stayed until 4 am as we pack-saddled the books upstairs to safe storage. Prayed over us as they left.

The next day brought giant dehumidifiers and fans attacking the water seeping from the walls. Monday ushered in the insurance adjuster, who demonstrated how you live out your Christian faith in your vocation. His was a calming presence.

The lessons were many:

- How easy it is to freak out when the porch roof goes flying off as you and your wife are standing under it.
- How hard it is to make rational decisions in the midst of traumatic circumstance.
- How emotionally draining such events are for days and beyond.
- How Jesus showed up throughout the event.

The routine statement by my insurance agent replays the most: “The roof is one of the most important parts for protecting your home.”

In other words, everything inside the house owes its well-being to the roof.

It’s probably worth considering today. What roof are you living under? What are you relying on for protection in Noah-weather - be it natural, financial, relational...

Jesus has been my roof for about as long as I can remember. But that’s hard to remember in the midst of thunder and wet vac exercises.

One never knows when your roof will go peeling off. One always knows Jesus never will. Best to remind oneself of that every day before the storm hits.



Today's Scripture

Psalm 107:28

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.



Today's Question

You might encounter a storm today. Perhaps you sense one already brewing. Where do you need Jesus to hush the waves and calm your heart? Spend time meditating and receiving His promise of eternal protection.

DAY 26 #LOFTYGOALS

Our staff started a #loftygoals Slack channel. A repository for the things we'd love to be able to see or do one day as a network.

Partly because new staff with new views joined the team. Partly because digital seasons superglue our vision into the here-and-now. Our eyes and hearts need travel trailer trips beyond our computer screens.

But also, because we know Jesus wants everyone to know Him. We would love to contribute bigly to heaven's population.

What #loftygoals would you love for your family? For your children and their children?

Is there a skill you'd love to learn? A house you hope to build? A marriage you hope to rebuild? (Marriage rebuilds are always the best.)

What makes your #loftygoals "un"? Unreachable. Unreasonable. Unrealistic. Unimaginable.

"Un" words suck the life out of the room. And the home. And the heart.

The Bible routinely turns "un" into real. No way into "Yes!" Can't be done into "Of course."

Not when you want something your way in spite of God's way. Not when you're the puppet master and Jesus, the marionette.

But when your heart lives under His heart?

Psalm 37:4,5 say it like this: 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.

Translation? Pursue the #loftygoals God has for you and your family.

Pursue His desires of peace and unity. Honor Him with your work and worship. Adopt His goals for your body and your stuff.

Help more people get to know Him. Help more people receive His life-changing love.

There's no "un" in #loftygoals that flow from God's heart.



Today's Scripture

Psalm 37:4,5

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.



Today's Question

What desires for your job or for your family have you kept secret from God? What hopes and dreams have you kept to yourself as if God is not interested in them? Choose one from each category. Write them down and spend time praying about them now.

DAY 27 SHELF LIFE

I just ate an Altoid that's been hibernating for the past year in my briefcase.

I know it was legit. It looked like an Altoid. Smelled like an Altoid. It had snuggled into a crack in the same compartment the Altoid tin calls home.

Definitely tasted like an Altoid.

My wife would have thrown it out. She's okay with leftovers, but leftover unwrapped mints who have traveled across country numerous times since only-God-knows-when? No.

Unsurprisingly, the Altoid retained its 'curiously strong' demeanor. Intense peppermint taste and aroma that makes me sneeze. Something about tickling the trigeminal nerve.

Altoids remind me of those divine wads of wisdom found in the Old Testament book of Proverbs.

Not that Proverbs cause me to sneeze. But each time I pop one in my mouth I'm amazed at how 'curiously strong' it is.

Mints like "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid." (12:1)

"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." (11:25)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (9:10)

And my eternally tasty favorite, "There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden." (30:18,19)

Life consists of moving from point A to point B. In nature. In relationships. With God.

Even when I understand the science of motion, the mystery of why and how draws me to an all-knowing Creator.

That hibernating Altoid tasted as fresh as the day it was born. Even more so the mints of Proverbs. Try a few today.



Today's Scripture

Proverbs 14:26

Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.



Today's Question

What legacy are you leaving in work? In your family? God's Word offers an eternal legacy, compliments of Jesus. Spend time reflecting on how fearing (respecting) God's being brings security for both you and the generations to come.

DAY 28 CERTAIN

Will he say yes?

Will she say yes?

Will I get the job?

Will the cancer win?

Will our marriage last?

Will the kids still love me?

When can I take off the bag?

Will there be enough money?

Will she be able to walk?

Will I make it through?

Will he have Downs?

When will they call?

How will it all end?

How do I get in?

Behind every question lives uncertainty. Perhaps. Maybe. Unknown.

Behind every uncertainty lives a need to be known by the God who knows.

“He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.” Psalm 147:4

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.” Luke 12:7

The all-knowing God knows you. And loves you. Every. Single. Day.

You can be certain of that.



Today's Scripture

Psalm 139:1-3

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.



Today's Question

While God knowing everything about you might cause you fear, when Jesus is your Savior, it brings security and peace. You breathe more deeply. What parts of your life are you especially thankful God knows about? Offer all of your thoughts to Him today.

DAY 29 PAST

Our past trumps our future because it happened already.

I own memories of a wedding day. I can scroll back to three children being born. My recent construction of a new house recalls the previous four I lived in.

Over 36 years of actual happenings in the previous three sentences. All anxiety-producing. All sources of joy.

Past times of joy snuggle in the treasure chest. They tend to jump out on their own, carrying their emotions on their sleeve. You show them off to friends and family, inviting them to twirl around in the middle of the room.

Past times of loss reside in isolation cells supposedly locked down for fear of harm they could render. Too often they wrestle the key away from the guard and parade through the living room uninvited. You try to look away.

Living in the past is only normal. God created us to remember. Minds that work are able to recall. They recollect reality.

The challenge is when reality is populated with monuments of pain. Such monuments clamor for attention.

Into such reality God placed monuments of His grace and presence.

A rainbow replacing storm clouds. Seawater held aside for easy passage. Fiery temperatures kept at bay. Hungry lions unable to attack. Water turned into wine. Angry waves stilled. Blind men seeing. One last supper. The execution of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus. The Church universal moving through history until Jesus returns.

When your memories include the above ones, even memories of pain and loss take on a grace-sheen. Even despair stumbles its way to joy. An abundance of Divine grace monuments puts your pain ones into perspective.

Living in yesterday becomes debilitating when past sins become hammers for pounding our children or spouse. When past pain eats away endlessly at our present.

Invite Jesus into your past today. He understands pain. He gets punishment.

He has a way of turning them into a wonderful future.



Today's Scripture

Psalm 25:7

Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, Lord, are good.



Today's Question

What yesterday do you need to let go of so that today is more manageable? What past pain do you need Jesus to take from you so that today starts out lighter? Give both of those to Him now.

DAY 30 SKUNK

Stepping outside last night reminded me I live in the country with critters. A definite black-with-white-stripe odor wrapped me up like an invisible fog.

I immediately started looking around. Wondering if he was within spraying distance. (Skunks are always “he’s.”)

Then my mind took me on a fear-journey. What if I got sprayed? How would I get the smell off me? Where would I sleep?

(No way I’d be allowed back in bed for a season. Which probably means in the garage? In a sleeping bag? That would be cold and painful...)

In a matter of seconds, I was an outcast in my workshop worrying about blankets and hard surfaces and going hungry and...

Smells. Sights. Words. Noises. Amazing how many things slingshot us to a Disney World of worry without ever leaving home.

A Bible verse my wife routinely shares with me - it’s her prayer over our family and me - comes from the Old Testament book of Zephaniah. Chapter 3 verse 17.

“The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

For some reason I resonate with the “he will quiet you by his love” promise.

An image of a big burly dad hugging a scared child. Wrapping her in arms as big as her waist. Surrounding her with a heart that would sacrifice itself for her well-being. Whispering simple words that still and calm and fill with courage.

Zephaniah’s picture of our Father God speaks of strength and joy. Of compassion and celebration. Boisterous in His expressions of love. Able to back up with action.

The skunk was an imaginary journey over in seconds. Life often takes us on real journeys resulting in garage banishments lasting for years.

Remember your God who is in your midst when you find yourself smelling awful and sleeping on hard cement. Let Him quiet you with His love. With His Son.



Today’s Scripture

Psalm 30:11

You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy...



Today’s Question

Where do you need God’s loud singing in your life? Receive His beautiful words in your heart right now.

DAY 31 DRILLING

The electric company chose today to drill holes for new electric poles in our neighborhood. Into granite.

When they drilled for our pole a few years ago it was a multi-day affair. Day 1 saw the drilling crew give up about four hours in. Day 2 brought the arrival of a mega granite mauler. He didn't convince our granite to give up the ghost until Day 3.

Drilling through granite creates an unnatural sound that moves through windows and walls causing panic that an air conditioner is going out. It's like a dull headache that takes you a while to realize what's going on.

The sound originates from one of granite's core traits: it's not designed for going through. One requires granite-knowledge, often involving explosives. Especially when installing a septic tank. (Ask me how I know.)

Daily we face granite blocks that block our way.

We can simply fall back and forget about drilling. Or move the pole and drill elsewhere. Or stay with the original location and call in the granite expert.

Jesus doesn't offer one simple solution for granite obstacles. Rather He calls us to know His will. Follow His will. Trust in His provision.

Such granite-navigating flows from daily conversations with Jesus in prayer. Daily listening to Jesus while reading His Word. Daily consulting with Jesus' people.

The result is perseverance. Perseverance grounded in Jesus' advice. Perseverance grounded in believing Jesus' knows. Perseverance full of peace more than anxiety.

When trying to drill through granite today... turn off the machine. Spend some time in prayer and reading. Consult with a Jesus-mentor. Then decide your next steps. Dull headaches are no fun.



Today's Scripture

John 6:35

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."



Today's Question

Who knows Jesus in such a way that you would like some of what they have? Reach out to them and ask them how they "get quiet" and learn from Jesus throughout the day.
