



14-Day Devotional

GUIDE



“Come, let us bow
down in worship, let
us kneel before the
Lord our Maker.”

– *Psalm 95:6*

Dear Church:

God is doing great things at the Church at BattleCreek. Our faith family is hungry to see the hand of God moving in our lives, our homes, our families and our church.

One of the things we're celebrating is the grand opening of our new worship center. That was a big step for us, and there will be many more, including additional campus expansions.

Taking these steps requires bold faith, freshness in our walk with Christ, and a commitment to bring our tithes and give our offerings.

God has given us His favor to make a greater impact on our community and around the world. We must respond by being ready, faithful and willing to embrace the opportunity.

Our goal, of course, is to proclaim the gospel both near and far. What happens at our home base here will help us develop people to make disciples of all nations.

What you'll find inside:

All of the following devotionals were written by someone at The Church at BattleCreek. They are sharing their stories, struggles and situations to help build up the body of Christ.

Each day begins with a verse, includes an illustration or personal story, has a few life-application questions and concludes with a prayer.

For parents, please read each devotional first. Then, depending on the ages of your children, feel free to change the illustration or substitute a similar story from your own family's experiences. The main thing is to have fun, learn together and talk over the Word with your kids.

Here are a few other pointers to help you get the most out of the material:

- 1. Start with prayer.**
Ask God to speak to you during your time with Him.
- 2. Be ready to receive.**
Think about how God may want to change areas of your life.
- 3. Dig deeper.**
Take a look at the entire chapter for the verse that goes with each devotional.

*Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted
among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.*

Psalm 46:10

DAY 1

A New York Minute

The Verse

Mark 6:31: *Jesus said, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."*

The Illustration

We typically try to get our kids in bed at 8:30. It's not always possible, especially on Sunday nights. That's when our community group meets.

By the time we pick up the kids at church after feasting and fellowshiping with our friends, it's usually at least 9 by the time we get everyone tucked in.

The other night it was actually closer to 9:30. I tucked in our oldest son and headed downstairs to see what was on TV. I found a baseball game on ESPN. It was the final game at 85-year-old Yankee Stadium. To any baseball fan, this was a big deal.

Knowing how much my oldest son loves baseball, I didn't want him to miss the moment. And personally, I wanted us to share this memory together. So even though it was way past bedtime, I retrieved him from bed to watch the last inning or two in our "big chair."

It may seem trite, but I wonder how many special moments we miss with God when we're wrapped up in our schedules, the rigidity of our routines, or other interests.

I know that God always wants to talk with us. And like I did with my son, I believe our Heavenly father and His Son Jesus are constantly wooing all of us to come and sit with Him, too.

Think About It

1. Take an honest assessment of how much effort you spend seeking the Lord. How are you doing? Where can you add 10 minutes a day?
2. Recall some great moments you've had with God. What did you learn? What do you think made your heart ready to hear from Him?

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, please pull me close to You. Help me to separate myself from the things that separate me from You. Show me when You're speaking. Give me ears to hear You and a heart to know You more. Thanks for loving me so much. Amen."

The Verse

Psalm 147:3: *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

The Illustration

I have been chewing on a phrase for quite some time. It is “walking wounded.” The thought or idea is that we all have wounds that must be addressed in His power and His grace. God gives us that power in our time of need.

Some people’s wounds are deeper than others. Some people appear to have no wounds. Some people are crippled by their wounds. Some become bitter from their wounds.

Some wounds give birth to ministries. God can allow the pain we suffer to be used for His glory. But we have to realize it is our choice what we do with the wound and the pain.

We can become mad at God or question Him about what He’s doing. Just as there is much pain in childbirth before getting the prize of a newborn miracle, there can be pain in birthing new things and new levels of God in our lives.

In my own life, I uncovered some self-inflicted wounds from unforgiveness. Matthew 6 scared me when I read it. “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” I could not approach God with unforgiveness.

I realized I had no right to hold things against others and I was hindering my upward relationship with God by not forgiving someone. That week I went to the person and worked it out and boy was it a breakthrough for me personally.

I have never been the same and I hope I never go back to that spot where I was blocking my relationship with Him.

Think About It

1. What about you. Where have you been wounded?
2. Have you asked God to heal those past hurts?
3. Do you need to ask God for the courage to go and get right with someone?

Prayer

“Jesus, thank you for shining a bright light on the things in my life that are holding me back from You. Thank you for helping me deal with these wounds in a constructive, Christ-like way. Please heal all my wounds – even the ones that I didn’t cause and I can’t fix myself. Please give me wholeness and strength in every part of my mind, soul, body and spirit.”

The Verse

Zephaniah 3:17: *The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.*

The Illustration

“Lord, I have come to spend some time with You tonight,” I said in a humble manner. “I have no agenda. I have no schedule, just You and me,” I said with an open spirit ready to hear Him speak to me.

God says to me in such a loving voice filled with peace and joy, “Son, do you know how proud I am of you today? I reply, “You are?” And He says, “Yes.” So my mind begins to wonder about the things I had done that day that He could possibly be proud of me for doing.

So I said confidently, “You must have seen me witnessing to my neighbor, no it must have been that I went to church today, or maybe You saw me give my lunch to the homeless man?”

God said, “No, son.” I sat there for a moment still trying to think of what it must be that made my Father so proud of me that day. “Oh yeah,” I said, “You must have seen me praying with my friend at church for Your healing in their life.”

God chuckled for a moment and said, “You are not getting it are you? I sat there in a stupor, knowing I was in His presence and knowing that He is proud of me but for what?”

Could it be that I prayed for an hour and thirty minutes non-stop? Finally, very puzzled I asked, “God, I don’t know what it is. Can you tell me?”

He replied, “Son, I am most proud of you because you came to Me to crawl up into My lap and just be with Me. That’s what matters most.”

Think About It

1. What does God really want from you?
2. Why is God more concerned with the condition of our heart than what we do for Him?
3. Have I realized that how I serve Him can only flow from how well I know Him?

Prayer

“O Lord, I ask You to start teaching me how to actively recognize and worship Your presence. Help me to remember how much You want to spend time with me and how much I need that time with You. Please show me Your presence and Your glory working in me and around me.”

The Verse

Lamentations 3:57: *You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear."*

The Illustration

I'm a part of a men's Bible study group that meets over lunch. During that time, someone shared a testimony about their failures as a young adult and how God had to kill off – so to speak – their character flaws to continue the work He had begun in him.

Immediately, the Spirit reminded me of what God had been trying to kill in me – selfishness. It encompasses so much more than simply getting this or that.

It's also about the way I think, my attitude, my expectations of others, my fears and inhibitions and ultimately how much I'm trusting God in each of these areas.

As I walked through my own personal reflection, God also convinced me of the fact that I needed to surrender completely to Him.

I thought I had, but He began showing me areas of my life where that wasn't true. I didn't trust Him with my fears. I didn't trust Him to heal my hurts.

So I confessed my lack of faith and made a decision to totally surrender. And now I make that decision every single day with newfound meaning.

At the end of the day, it's not about me. It's not about what I'm afraid of. It's about trusting God in such a way that I have complete and perfect confidence in His willingness and power to handle my life, those who are in it and all of the things around me.

Think About It

1. Ask God to show you areas of your life that you haven't totally surrendered to Him.
2. Are there fears that you don't want to face? Are there worries that you haven't let go?
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a revelation of where you need transformation inside.

Prayer

"God, I want you to kill the fearful me, the selfish me, the anxious me – all the ways that keep me from truly knowing Your peace and joy. Show me the areas where I do not trust You enough and I will confess them. Today, I surrender to Your will for my life and I trust You with all of it."

The Verse

1 Samuel 17:45: *David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied."*

The Illustration

1 Samuel 17 is one of the most powerful passages in the Bible, especially as we see how David looked at his circumstances with wild faith that God would give him what he needed to kill the giant.

My wife recently had a malignant brain tumor removed. Today she is looking at a giant that is failing slowly by the power of God.

Our faith in Him is just like the sling that David used to launch the stone that killed Goliath. We have faith that all the instruments God has given us (prayer, scripture, doctors, medicine and treatments) will come together to conquer this cancer giant.

The evil one comes to destroy, but because of Christ, our foe is fighting a losing battle. Our victory already came through what happened on the cross.

We continue to trust in Him daily to help us show the world His great glory. It is very important for us to show people that God's Spirit within us gives us the grace, strength, joy, and peace to endure.

In a short while, my wife will be cancer-free. We praise God that He provides the rest, healing and restoration we need along the way.

Think About It

1. What is your giant today?
2. Who are you trusting to fight your battle?
3. Have you asked God to increase your faith and trust in Him?

Prayer

"Father, it is my deepest desire that You continue to show us Your love and healing power. Please do not stop there. Please show the world Your glory through this situation no matter the outcome. I am privileged to walk with You daily and to see Your power in my life."

The Verse

Matthew 18:15-16: *If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

The Illustration

The other day an issue arose in an organization I belong to. My first instinct was to turn to my friends and ask, “Does that bug you, too?”

However, a Christian friend had recently challenged me to talk with the person involved in any offense before speaking with others.

So I went to the woman who caused the commotion. It didn’t go well. I spoke clumsily, and the only way I could tell her what I really thought sounded rude.

Since I got myself into such a mess, I was forced to pray. The Lord gave me the phrase “speaking the truth in love.” I knew He could instruct me how to talk with this woman if I was willing to listen.

If I could speak to her in love, I could resolve the problem. If I instead spoke with my friends, I would sow seeds of discord in the organization. While I might look “right,” I would be putting down the other woman.

When I was home, I looked up the phrase the Lord had brought to my mind in prayer – Ephesians 4:15: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

Seeing the phrase in context instructed me even more. Following His way takes me on a path of healing and unity and causes me to look like Jesus.

Think About It

1. Have you gossiped recently? How could you have handled the situation differently?
2. What might be some unpleasant consequences to handling problems God’s way? What are some favorable consequences?
3. What motivates you to do things God’s way? How can you grow in your obedience?

Prayer

“Lord, I pray that you will give me a desire to follow Jesus in all of my relationships. Help me see myself growing to be like Christ as I do things Your way. Forgive me when I fail. Thank you for every opportunity You give me to grow up in Christ.”

The Verse

Matthew 10:16: *Jesus said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."*

The Illustration

My husband and I play Labyrinth after the children go to bed. It's not nearly as complicated as chess, but it's still a strategy game.

The goal is to find a set of treasures that are revealed to you one at a time. To accomplish this goal, you move a section of the board to create a path you need.

My husband began to win every game. I was having difficulty making paths, and he seemed to always breeze just where he wanted.

After two months of play, I figured something out – he was intentionally messing me up! When he didn't need to move the board to reach his treasure, he would play his piece to mess up my path.

I decided to play his way. After a few games, I finally won. In fact, I began to win more often. I became a better opponent, and this was where God spoke to me.

In this world, I have a real opponent, who is the enemy of God. Satan does not play fair; he is a cheater. I will never be a worthy opponent if I am limiting myself to being nice.

Begin to resist him, and you will grow in your warrior skills. Ephesians 6:10-20 will tell you all about the armor you need for battle.

Think About It

1. Do you have people in your life who are enemies? What can you do to follow Jesus' words in Luke 6:27-28: "But I tell you who hear Me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."
2. In what way is Satan seeking to devour you? What are the traps he lays for you? What can you do to resist the enemy in this area of your life?

Prayer

"Father, teach me to imitate Jesus in the way He treated those who abused him. And help me to see my true enemy, wherever he lurks, and to resist him. Help me to recognize his roars. Thank you for your grace and your protection over me. Amen."

The Verse

Galatians 5:25: *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

The Illustration

I was recently introduced to Rock Band by Wii. The game's objective is to play or sing according to the notes or words in perfect timing to earn points.

While rocking out, my youngest daughter started to jump around playing the part of a rock star on stage. As she danced around the room wildly, the song and game abruptly stopped and the screen displayed the words "Out Of Control."

Once she calmed down, my son plugged in all the proper inserts again and the rest of us waited several minutes for the program and song selection to reboot.

Here was someone who knew the song yet hadn't stayed within the boundaries that the game's white cord allowed.

Aren't we like that sometimes? We know what the word of God says, yet we become so comfortable and secure in our own abilities that we whirl out of connection with our power source, the Holy Spirit.

When we get "out of control," our actions don't just hurt ourselves. With my daughter, she brought an abrupt, albeit temporary, halt to our family fun.

It is our responsibility to ask the Father to keep our hearts tender toward Him and His direction. The consequence of being unplugged and unaware can be devastating.

Think About It

1. Are there areas of my life that are unplugged and "Out of Control?"
2. What are the clear signs that I am walking in the control of the Holy Spirit and plugged into the power source? Refer to Galatians 5:16-26.

Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank you for Your Holy Spirit that lives in me. Thank You for not leaving me to my own ways. Show me in Your word what You have for me. I want spiritual eyes to see. I ask that my daily life will display You and draw those around me to You."

The Verse

Nehemiah 4:14: *After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."*

The Illustration

My grandfather passed away in 1995. I was in my early 20s, and it was essentially the first time I ever had to deal with the death of a loved one.

I spent many spring breaks and weekends with granny and granddad on their farm when I was growing up. And if you know anything about farm life, when the lights go out, it gets really quiet and really dark out in the country.

But there was something else I noticed about life on the farm. Since it was so quiet at night, I could always hear granny and granddad talking before they hit the sack.

They weren't just talking to each other, they talked to God together. I could hear them praying for me and my sister and the rest of our family by name. What a late-night lift!

My dad was actually at my grandfather's side when he passed away. Before he took his final breath, he turned to my dad and said this, "Always pray for your family."

Those words came as no surprise since I had already heard him living them out. Now I'm doing the same.

Think About It

1. Do you remember a family member who made a spiritual mark on your life?
2. What are your family's greatest needs right now? Have you given them to God?
3. Where can you incorporate more prayer into your family life?

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, thank you for this special gift called prayer. Thank you that I can bring anything and everything to You. I cover my family with Your armor. I know it will protect us from every battle and from every fiery dart of the enemy. Thank you for keeping us safe in Your presence."

The Verse

Psalm 119:76: *Now let Your unfailing love comfort me, just as You promised me, Your servant.*

The Illustration

One of my daughters came in and said, “Did you hear what happened to Steven Curtis Chapman?” His three-year-old daughter was accidentally run over by a car driven by her big brother, Caleb.

Steven and his wife sat down with Good Morning America a few months later to share their heartache and how they were handling it. Two details stood out.

After the incident, Caleb began to run around aimlessly in a state of shock. His big brother chased him, tackled him and held him in his arms.

Then, as Steven was whisking his daughter off to the hospital, he yelled out the window to his heart-broken 17 year-old-son, “Will Franklin! Your father loves you!”

It was, at its deepest level, a story of amazing grace displayed in a moment of utter despair. And through their pain and loss, they still opened up the window to their souls to show others how Christians hang on to Christ in good times and bad.

Their openness helps us understand what it means to be real, relevant and relational at church, with our community groups and before the eyes of a watching world.

Think About It

1. Am I willing to endure trials to impact others for eternity?
2. Am I willing to be transparent in pain or joy during my own life?
3. Have I counted the cost of ministry, or is it something that just seems glamorous?

The Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I am Yours to do with what You choose. I want my life to be a transparent picture of who You are and who You are to me. I turn over my loved ones, my desires, my material possessions, my fears and insecurities to You.”

The Verse

Deuteronomy 11:18-19: *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

The Illustration

My kids watched a show on TV where the parents went out and bought tents so that their family could have something special to do in the backyard during the summer.

I love fishing. I love nature. But I was never a Boy Scout. And is there really a compelling reason to sleep under the stars when ceiling fans and central air are only steps away?

My kids didn't press me about purchasing a tent for us, too, but I could see how cool they thought it was. So we went to Academy where we landed one of the 5-person models – a moderately sized tent that I thought I could actually set up.

It took about an hour, and it wasn't too hard. We loaded up sleeping bags, a flashlight and our snacks. Right before we went out though, I ran to the computer to print Psalm 111 from biblegateway.com. (I didn't want the moisture in the air outside swelling up our Bible like a balloon).

As we gathered in the tent, I broke out the scripture first. Surprisingly, they were all ears. We read the passage, and I asked them questions about it. In all, our big Bible talk lasted about five minutes.

I think that's what God wants from us as parents. He wants us to be creative and to take advantage of the opportune times we have to teach our kids about Him. If we show them how much the Bible matters to us, I fully believe they'll embrace it too. That's God's plan.

Think About It

1. Does your family read the Bible together?
2. How are you working to give your children a faith foundation?
3. If you're not a parent, would you consider teaching in the preschool, elementary or student areas at church?

Prayer

“Dear God, thank you for the opportunities You give me to make an impact on the world around me. Please make me sensitive to the needs of my spouse, my children, my friends and the people at work. Use me for Your glory. And please give me boldness to speak about You. Amen.”

The Verse

Psalm 57:9: *I will praise You, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing of You among the peoples.*

The Illustration

Isn't it funny how new friends have a way of messing things up for you? Back in 2003, I crossed paths with Adam Pray from church and a friend of Pastor Alex's – Craig Miller.

From the start, these two intruders pressed me about whether I'd ever been on a mission trip. My answer was "no," but I really didn't have a reason why, other than the fact that I'm really comfortable with all the creature comforts of home.

They challenged me to take a step of faith and to let God do something new in my life. Can you say "Brazil?"

To their credit, they didn't take me to the Amazon jungle. It was a populated city with buildings, businesses, schools, churches, houses, electricity, running water, you get the picture.

What I learned was how close I could get to God when I was away from all the distractions of my daily routine – TV, the internet, email, Blackberry, newspapers and the phone.

I also saw an open door to the gospel like I had never seen in the states. In the town of Descalvado, I could literally talk to strangers in the stores about Christ, and they listened.

All told, I've now made a total of four trips to Brazil. I saw signs, wonders and salvations on every trip. If you've never traveled to tell someone about Christ, it all starts with saying "yes" to the Savior who came a long way for you, too.

Think About It

1. Have you felt God pulling on your heart to go somewhere?
2. Do you have a passport? You can apply for one at almost any post office.
3. What other barriers can you eliminate to help you be more prepared to "go"?

Prayer

"Lord Jesus, I know that You'll use my life to touch others wherever and whenever I simply make myself available to You. So here goes, Lord, send me. Give me a vision of where You want me to go, whether it's across the street or across the globe."

The Verse

Psalms 112:4: *Even in darkness light dawns for the upright – for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.*

The Illustration

Six years ago my wife left her job to be a stay-at-home mom. It was a mutual decision and we had complete peace.

She had always made more money than me, so this wasn't something we took lightly. At the time, it reduced our income by nearly 60 percent. But we had always lived within our means, so we were prepared for the drastic cut.

About three months later though, the company where I work almost went bankrupt. Layoffs were not a matter of if, but when. In one day, my department went from 60 people to 15. By God's grace, I survived.

And what I didn't see coming was how much He could bless me during such a turbulent time for my employer. I was promoted and got three raises over the next year. I was really amazed at God's goodness.

I'm no fan of \$4 gas or what seems like \$1 more for nearly every item at the grocery store these days, but here's what I've learned: God takes care of those who follow His word.

And yes, that means bringing our tithes and giving our offerings. "Giving" is what God is all about, and He wants us to have the same heart.

So don't despair, no matter how bad the economy gets. Just make sure that your investments are in God's economy – the safest place of all.

Think About It

1. What does the Bible say in Malachi chapter 3 about tithing?
2. What does 2 Corinthians 9:6 say about sowing and reaping as it relates to giving?
3. Are you ready to trust God enough to give offerings beyond your tithes?

Prayer

"Jesus, Your word says that every good and perfect gift comes from You. So I thank you for every blessing you've brought into my life. Help me to remember that everything I have belongs to You. Give me wisdom to be a good steward of the resources You have placed into my hands."

The Verse

Psalm 42:2: *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

The Illustration

Today I sit here and think about the importance of a sacred prayer space. My eyes were opened in 2005 to a ministry that showed me how to become more intimate with my Savior.

I had operated in a fast-paced life with three children, a job and my church responsibilities. And I was not willing to slow down to pay attention to my quiet time with God.

There are many places I frequent now to let God speak to me. The peace and solitude of a quiet environment is so powerful. This world does not allow us the opportunity to shut down and relax in His presence unless we choose to intentionally get alone with Him.

Earlier in 2008, my wife was diagnosed with a brain tumor. The blow was more than we could bear. After days of walking in fear, raw emotion and more questions than our mind and bodies could endure, we went to a place that has become so special to me.

That place is a Catholic church that I used to know. There is an altar and many reminders of God's presence. The church is open 24/7 so our visit at 8 p.m. disturbed no one.

As God planned it, it was just my wife and I. The lights weren't on. I felt like we were supposed to throw our burdens down, so with a physical motion through the air we cast them on the altar.

Guess what? God did a miracle. We sat there as the lights inside were dark, but the stained glass came alive from the outside lights. It is simply a moment we will never forget. We walked from our special prayer space with a peace that only God could provide.

You don't have to have a chapel or a church to find God. But I would strongly encourage you to find a prayer space where you meet with Him. It can be on your front porch, back yard, your favorite chair, or a personal space in your house where you like to relax.

It needs to be a quiet place where you can block out the world. The big thing is that you have to choose to quiet the world and get with Him. Bring your Bible, a journal and a pen. And sometimes you need nothing more than to just show up with an open heart.

Think About It

1. How can my life and my attitudes be different if I make more time to hear from God?
2. Look up and meditate on the significance of what it says in Mark 1:35.
3. Make a list of several places where you can get alone with God.
4. Schedule an appointment with God for tomorrow. Then, follow through.

Prayer

"Dear God, I need so much more of You. I know that I've only begun to scratch the surface. Please wake me up on the inside to discover the depth of Your love for me."

Our Mission

*Glorifying God by helping
all people, of all ages,
all the time, advance in
their journey with Jesus.*