## Beth-Rapha Ministries Int'l

## *The House of Healing*

## 109-09 Farmers Boulevard

## St. Albans, New York 11412

## Pastor Varrett John Kennedy, *Senior Minister*

## “THE YEAR OF TRANSFORMATION AND RESTORATION”

## {DEUTERONOMY 30; ROMANS 12:1-2; EPHESIANS 5:15-20}

##  2023 Beginning of the Year Consecration Daily Devotionals

## *(Meditations Written by the late Oswald Chambers)*

## *Sunday, January 15:* The Dilemma of Obedience

#### Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. —[1 Samuel 3:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Samuel+3%3A15)

God never speaks to us in dramatic ways, but in ways that are easy to misunderstand. Then we say, “I wonder if that is God’s voice?” Isaiah said that the Lord spoke to him “with a strong hand,” that is, by the pressure of his circumstances ([Isaiah 8:11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+8:11)). Without the sovereign hand of God Himself, nothing touches our lives. Do we discern His hand at work, or do we see things as mere occurrences?

Get into the habit of saying, “Speak, Lord,” and life will become a romance ([1 Samuel 3:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+3:9)). Every time circumstances press in on you, say, “Speak, Lord,” and make time to listen. Chastening is more than a means of discipline— it is meant to bring me to the point of saying, “Speak, Lord.” Think back to a time when God spoke to you. Do you remember what He said? Was it [Luke 11:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+11:13), or was it [1 Thessalonians 5:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+5:23)? As we listen, our ears become more sensitive, and like Jesus, we will hear God all the time.

Should I tell my “Eli” what God has shown to me? This is where the dilemma of obedience hits us. We disobey God by becoming amateur providences and thinking, “I must shield ‘Eli,’ ” who represents the best people we know. God did not tell Samuel to tell Eli— he had to decide that for himself. God’s message to you may hurt your “Eli,” but trying to prevent suffering in another’s life will prove to be an obstruction between your soul and God. It is at your own risk that you prevent someone’s right hand being cut off or right eye being plucked out (see [Matthew 5:29-30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5:29-30)).

Never ask another person’s advice about anything God makes you decide before Him. If you ask advice, you will almost always side with Satan. “…I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood…” ([Galatians 1:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1:16)).

## *Monday, January 16:* Is My Sacrifice Living?

## Abraham built an altar…; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar… —[Genesis 22:9](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Genesis+22%3A9)

This event is a picture of the mistake we make in thinking that the ultimate God wants of us is the sacrifice of death. What God wants is the sacrifice through death which enables us to do what Jesus did, that is, sacrifice our lives. Not— “Lord, I am ready to go with You…to death” ([Luke 22:33](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+22:33)). But— “I am willing to be identified with Your death so that I may sacrifice my life to God.”

We seem to think that God wants us to give up things! God purified Abraham from this error, and the same process is at work in our lives. God never tells us to give up things just for the sake of giving them up, but He tells us to give them up for the sake of the only thing worth having, namely, life with Himself. It is a matter of loosening the bands that hold back our lives. Those bands are loosened immediately by identification with the death of Jesus. Then we enter into a relationship with God whereby we may sacrifice our lives to Him.

It is of no value to God to give Him your life for death. He wants you to be a “living sacrifice”— to let Him have all your strengths that have been saved and sanctified through Jesus ([Romans 12:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Roman+12:1)). This is what is acceptable to God.

## *Tuesday January 17:* Prayerful Inner-Searching

#### May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless… —[1 Thessalonians 5:23](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=1+Thessalonians+5%3A23)

“Your whole spirit….” The great, mysterious work of the Holy Spirit is in the deep recesses of our being which we cannot reach. Read [Psalm 139](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139). The psalmist implies— “O Lord, You are the God of the early mornings, the God of the late nights, the God of the mountain peaks, and the God of the sea. But, my God, my soul has horizons further away than those of early mornings, deeper darkness than the nights of earth, higher peaks than any mountain peaks, greater depths than any sea in nature. You who are the God of all these, be my God. I cannot reach to the heights or to the depths; there are motives I cannot discover; dreams I cannot realize. My God, search me.”

Do we believe that God can fortify and protect our thought processes far beyond where we can go? “…the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)). If this verse means cleansing only on our conscious level, may God have mercy on us. The man who has been dulled by sin will say that he is not even conscious of it. But the cleansing from sin we experience will reach to the heights and depths of our spirit if we will “walk in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7). The same Spirit that fed the life of Jesus Christ will feed the life of our spirit. It is only when we are protected by God with the miraculous sacredness of the Holy Spirit that our spirit, soul, and body can be preserved in pure uprightness until the coming of Jesus-no longer condemned in God’s sight.

We should more frequently allow our minds to meditate on these great, massive truths of God.

## *Wednesday, January 18:* The Opened Sight

#### I now send you, to open their eyes…that they may receive forgiveness of sins… —[Acts 26:17-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+26%3A17-18)

This verse is the greatest example of the true essence of the message of a disciple of Jesus Christ in all of the New Testament.

God’s first sovereign work of grace is summed up in the words, “…that they may receive forgiveness of sins….” When a person fails in his personal Christian life, it is usually because he has never received anything. The only sign that a person is saved is that he has received something from Jesus Christ. Our job as workers for God is to open people’s eyes so that they may turn themselves from darkness to light. But that is not salvation; it is conversion— only the effort of an awakened human being. I do not think it is too broad a statement to say that the majority of so-called Christians are like this. Their eyes are open, but they have received nothing. Conversion is not regeneration. This is a neglected fact in our preaching today. When a person is born again, he knows that it is because he has received something as a gift from Almighty God and not because of his own decision. People may make vows and promises, and may be determined to follow through, but none of this is salvation. Salvation means that we are brought to the place where we are able to receive something from God on the authority of Jesus Christ, namely, forgiveness of sins.

This is followed by God’s second mighty work of grace: “…an inheritance among those who are sanctified….” In sanctification, the one who has been born again deliberately gives up his right to himself to Jesus Christ, and identifies himself entirely with God’s ministry to others.

## *Thursday, January 19:* What My Obedience to God Costs Other People

#### As they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon…, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. —[Luke 23:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Luke+23%3A26)

If we obey God, it is going to cost other people more than it costs us, and that is where the pain begins. If we are in love with our Lord, obedience does not cost us anything— it is a delight. But to those who do not love Him, our obedience does cost a great deal. If we obey God, it will mean that other people’s plans are upset. They will ridicule us as if to say, “You call this Christianity?” We could prevent the suffering, but not if we are obedient to God. We must let the cost be paid.

When our obedience begins to cost others, our human pride entrenches itself and we say, “I will never accept anything from anyone.” But we must or disobey God. We have no right to think that the type of relationships we have with others should be any different from those the Lord Himself had (see [Luke 8:1-3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+8:1-3)).

A lack of progress in our spiritual life results when we try to bear all the costs ourselves. And actually, we cannot. Because we are so involved in the universal purposes of God, others are immediately affected by our obedience to Him. Will we remain faithful in our obedience to God and be willing to suffer the humiliation of refusing to be independent? Or will we do just the opposite and say, “I will not cause other people to suffer”? We can disobey God if we choose, and it will bring immediate relief to the situation, but it will grieve our Lord. If, however, we obey God, He will care for those who have suffered the consequences of our obedience. We must simply obey and leave all the consequences with Him.

Beware of the inclination to dictate to God what consequences you would allow as a condition of your obedience to Him.

## *Friday, January 20:* Have You Ever Been Alone with God? (1)

#### When they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples. —[Mark 4:34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Mark+4%3A34)

**Our Solitude with Him.** Jesus doesn’t take us aside and explain things to us all the time; He explains things to us as we are able to understand them. The lives of others are examples for us, but God requires us to examine our own souls. It is slow work— so slow that it takes God all of time and eternity to make a man or woman conform to His purpose. We can only be used by God after we allow Him to show us the deep, hidden areas of our own character. It is astounding how ignorant we are about ourselves! We don’t even recognize the envy, laziness, or pride within us when we see it. But Jesus will reveal to us everything we have held within ourselves before His grace began to work. How many of us have learned to look inwardly with courage?

We have to get rid of the idea that we understand ourselves. That is always the last bit of pride to go. The only One who understands us is God. The greatest curse in our spiritual life is pride. If we have ever had a glimpse of what we are like in the sight of God, we will never say, “Oh, I’m so unworthy.” We will understand that this goes without saying. But as long as there is any doubt that we are unworthy, God will continue to close us in until He gets us alone. Whenever there is any element of pride or conceit remaining, Jesus can’t teach us anything. He will allow us to experience heartbreak or the disappointment we feel when our intellectual pride is wounded. He will reveal numerous misplaced affections or desires— things over which we never thought He would have to get us alone. Many things are shown to us, often without effect. But when God gets us alone over them, they will be clear.

## *Saturday, January 21:* Have You Ever Been Alone with God? (2)

#### When He was alone…the twelve asked Him about the parable. —[Mark 4:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Mark+4%3A10)

**His Solitude with Us.** When God gets us alone through suffering, heartbreak, temptation, disappointment, sickness, or by thwarted desires, a broken friendship, or a new friendship— when He gets us absolutely alone, and we are totally speechless, unable to ask even one question, then He begins to teach us. Notice Jesus Christ’s training of the Twelve. It was the disciples, not the crowd outside, who were confused. His disciples constantly asked Him questions, and He constantly explained things to them, but they didn’t understand until after they received the Holy Spirit (see [John 14:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14:26)).

As you journey with God, the only thing He intends to be clear is the way He deals with your soul. The sorrows and difficulties in the lives of others will be absolutely confusing to you. We think we understand another person’s struggle until God reveals the same shortcomings in our lives. There are vast areas of stubbornness and ignorance the Holy Spirit has to reveal in each of us, but it can only be done when Jesus gets us alone. Are we alone with Him now? Or are we more concerned with our own ideas, friendships, and cares for our bodies? Jesus cannot teach us anything until we quiet all our intellectual questions and get alone with Him.

## *Sunday, January 22:* Called By God

#### I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." —[Isaiah 6:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Isaiah+6%3A8)

God did not direct His call to Isaiah— Isaiah overheard God saying, “…who will go for Us?” The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God’s call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends upon my spiritual attitude. “Many are called, but few are chosen” ([Matthew 22:14](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22:14)). That is, few prove that they are the chosen ones. The chosen ones are those who have come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and have had their spiritual condition changed and their ears opened. Then they hear “the voice of the Lord” continually asking, “…who will go for Us?” However, God doesn’t single out someone and say, “Now, you go.” He did not force His will on Isaiah. Isaiah was in the presence of God, and he overheard the call. His response, performed in complete freedom, could only be to say, “Here am I! Send me.”

Remove the thought from your mind of expecting God to come to force you or to plead with you. When our Lord called His disciples, He did it without irresistible pressure from the outside. The quiet, yet passionate, insistence of His “Follow Me” was spoken to men whose every sense was receptive ([Matthew 4:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4:19)). If we will allow the Holy Spirit to bring us face to face with God, we too will hear what Isaiah heard— “the voice of the Lord.” In perfect freedom we too will say, “Here am I! Send me.”

## *Monday, January 23:* Do You Walk In White?

#### We were buried with Him…that just as Christ was raised from the dead…even so we also should walk in newness of life. —[Romans 6:4](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Romans+6%3A4)

No one experiences complete sanctification without going through a “white funeral” — the burial of the old life. If there has never been this crucial moment of change through death, sanctification will never be more than an elusive dream. There must be a “white funeral,” a death with only one resurrection— a resurrection into the life of Jesus Christ. Nothing can defeat a life like this. It has oneness with God for only one purpose— to be a witness for Him.

Have you really come to your last days? You have often come to them in your mind, but have you really experienced them? You cannot die or go to your funeral in a mood of excitement. Death means you stop being. You must agree with God and stop being the intensely striving kind of Christian you have been. We avoid the cemetery and continually refuse our own death. It will not happen by striving, but by yielding to death. It is dying— being “baptized into His death” ([Romans 6:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+6:3)).

Have you had your “white funeral,” or are you piously deceiving your own soul? Has there been a point in your life which you now mark as your last day? Is there a place in your life to which you go back in memory with humility and overwhelming gratitude, so that you can honestly proclaim, “Yes, it was then, at my ‘white funeral,’ that I made an agreement with God.”

“This is the will of God, your sanctification…” ([1 Thessalonians 4:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4:3)). Once you truly realize this is God’s will, you will enter into the process of sanctification as a natural response. Are you willing to experience that “white funeral” now? Will you agree with Him that this is your last day on earth? The moment of agreement depends on you.

***Tuesday, January 24:* The Voice of the Nature of God**

**I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" —**[**Isaiah 6:8**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Isaiah+6%3A8)

When we talk about the call of God, we often forget the most important thing, namely, the nature of Him who calls. There are many things calling each of us today. Some of these calls will be answered, and others will not even be heard. The call is the expression of the nature of the One who calls, and we can only recognize the call if that same nature is in us. The call of God is the expression of God’s nature, not ours. God providentially weaves the threads of His call through our lives, and only we can distinguish them. It is the threading of God’s voice directly to us over a certain concern, and it is useless to seek another person’s opinion of it. Our dealings over the call of God should be kept exclusively between us and Him.

The call of God is not a reflection of my nature; my personal desires and temperament are of no consideration. As long as I dwell on my own qualities and traits and think about what I am suited for, I will never hear the call of God. But when God brings me into the right relationship with Himself, I will be in the same condition Isaiah was. Isaiah was so attuned to God, because of the great crisis he had just endured, that the call of God penetrated his soul. The majority of us cannot hear anything but ourselves. And we cannot hear anything God says. But to be brought to the place where we can hear the call of God is to be profoundly changed.

## *Wednesday, January 25: The* Call of the Natural Life

#### When it pleased God…to reveal His Son in me… —[Galatians 1:15-16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+1%3A15-16)

The call of God is not a call to serve Him in any particular way. My contact with the nature of God will shape my understanding of His call and will help me realize what I truly desire to do for Him. The call of God is an expression of His nature; the service which results in my life is suited to me and is an expression of my nature. The call of the natural life was stated by the apostle Paul— “When it pleased God…to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him [that is, purely and solemnly express Him] among the Gentiles….”

Service is the overflow which pours from a life filled with love and devotion. But strictly speaking, there is no call to that. Service is what I bring to the relationship and is the reflection of my identification with the nature of God. Service becomes a natural part of my life. God brings me into the proper relationship with Himself so that I can understand His call, and then I serve Him on my own out of a motivation of absolute love. Service to God is the deliberate love-gift of a nature that has heard the call of God. Service is an expression of my nature, and God’s call is an expression of His nature. Therefore, when I receive His nature and hear His call, His divine voice resounds throughout His nature and mine and the two become one in service. The Son of God reveals Himself in me, and out of devotion to Him service becomes my everyday way of life.

## *Thursday, January 26:* “It Is the Lord!”

#### Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" —[John 20:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+20%3A28)

“Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink’” ([John 4:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+4:7)). How many of us are expecting Jesus Christ to quench our thirst when we should be satisfying Him! We should be pouring out our lives, investing our total beings, not drawing on Him to satisfy us. “You shall be witnesses to Me…” ([Acts 1:8](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:8)). That means lives of pure, uncompromising, and unrestrained devotion to the Lord Jesus, which will be satisfying to Him wherever He may send us.

Beware of anything that competes with your loyalty to Jesus Christ. The greatest competitor of true devotion to Jesus is the service we do for Him. It is easier to serve than to pour out our lives completely for Him. The goal of the call of God is His satisfaction, not simply that we should do something for Him. We are not sent to do battle for God, but to be used by God in His battles. Are we more devoted to service than we are to Jesus Christ Himself?

## *Friday, January 27:* Vision and Darkness

#### When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. —[Genesis 15:12](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Genesis+15%3A12)

Whenever God gives a vision to a Christian, it is as if He puts him in “the shadow of His hand” ([Isaiah 49:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+49:2)). The saint’s duty is to be still and listen. There is a “darkness” that comes from too much light— that is the time to listen. The story of Abram and Hagar in Genesis 16 is an excellent example of listening to so-called good advice during a time of darkness, rather than waiting for God to send the light. When God gives you a vision and darkness follows, wait. God will bring the vision He has given you to reality in your life if you will wait on His timing. Never try to help God fulfill His word. Abram went through thirteen years of silence, but in those years all of his self-sufficiency was destroyed. He grew past the point of relying on his own common sense. Those years of silence were a time of discipline, not a period of God’s displeasure. There is never any need to pretend that your life is filled with joy and confidence; just wait upon God and be grounded in Him (see [Isaiah 50:10-11](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+50:10-11)).

Do I trust at all in the flesh? Or have I learned to go beyond all confidence in myself and other people of God? Do I trust in books and prayers or other joys in my life? Or have I placed my confidence in God Himself, not in His blessings? “I am Almighty God…”— El-Shaddai, the All-Powerful God ([Genesis 17:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+17:1)). The reason we are all being disciplined is that we will know God is real. As soon as God becomes real to us, people pale by comparison, becoming shadows of reality. Nothing that other saints do or say can ever upset the one who is built on God.

## *Saturday, January 28:* Are You Fresh for Everything?

#### Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." —[John 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=John+3%3A3)

Sometimes we are fresh and eager to attend a prayer meeting, but do we feel that same freshness for such mundane tasks as polishing shoes?

Being born again by the Spirit is an unmistakable work of God, as mysterious as the wind, and as surprising as God Himself. We don’t know where it begins— it is hidden away in the depths of our soul. Being born again from above is an enduring, perpetual, and eternal beginning. It provides a freshness all the time in thinking, talking, and living— a continual surprise of the life of God. Staleness is an indication that something in our lives is out of step with God. We say to ourselves, “I have to do this thing or it will never get done.” That is the first sign of staleness. Do we feel fresh this very moment or are we stale, frantically searching our minds for something to do? Freshness is not the result of obedience; it comes from the Holy Spirit. Obedience keeps us “in the light as He is in the light…” ([1 John 1:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1:7)).

Jealously guard your relationship with God. Jesus prayed “that they may be one just as We are one” — with nothing in between ([John 17:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17:22)). Keep your whole life continually open to Jesus Christ. Don’t pretend to be open with Him. Are you drawing your life from any source other than God Himself? If you are depending on something else as your source of freshness and strength, you will not realize when His power is gone.

Being born of the Spirit means much more than we usually think. It gives us new vision and keeps us absolutely fresh for everything through the never-ending supply of the life of God.

## *Sunday, January 29:* Recall What God Remembers

#### Thus says the Lord: "I remember…the kindness of your youth…" —[Jeremiah 2:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Jeremiah+2%3A2)

Am I as spontaneously kind to God as I used to be, or am I only expecting God to be kind to me? Does everything in my life fill His heart with gladness, or do I constantly complain because things don’t seem to be going my way? A person who has forgotten what God treasures will not be filled with joy. It is wonderful to remember that Jesus Christ has needs which we can meet— “Give Me a drink” ([John 4:7](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+4:7)). How much kindness have I shown Him in the past week? Has my life been a good reflection on His reputation?

God is saying to His people, “You are not in love with Me now, but I remember a time when you were.” He says, “I remember…the love of your betrothal…” ([Jeremiah 2:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+2:2)). Am I as filled to overflowing with love for Jesus Christ as I was in the beginning, when I went out of my way to prove my devotion to Him? Does He ever find me pondering the time when I cared only for Him? Is that where I am now, or have I chosen man’s wisdom over true love for Him? Am I so in love with Him that I take no thought for where He might lead me? Or am I watching to see how much respect I get as I measure how much service I should give Him?

As I recall what God remembers about me, I may also begin to realize that He is not what He used to be to me. When this happens, I should allow the shame and humiliation it creates in my life, because it will bring godly sorrow, and “godly sorrow produces repentance…” ([2 Corinthians 7:10](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+7:10)).

## *Monday, January 30:* Am I Looking To God?

#### Look to Me, and be saved… —[Isaiah 45:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Isaiah+45%3A22)

Do we expect God to come to us with His blessings and save us? He says, “Look to Me, and be saved….” The greatest difficulty spiritually is to concentrate on God, and His blessings are what make it so difficult. Troubles almost always make us look to God, but His blessings tend to divert our attention elsewhere. The basic lesson of the Sermon on the Mount is to narrow all your interests until your mind, heart, and body are focused on Jesus Christ. “Look to Me….”

Many of us have a mental picture of what a Christian should be and looking at this image in other Christians’ lives becomes a hindrance to our focusing on God. This is not salvation— it is not simple enough. He says, in effect, “Look to Me and you are saved,” not “You will be saved someday.” We will find what we are looking for if we will concentrate on Him. We get distracted from God and irritable with Him while He continues to say to us, “Look to Me, and be saved….” Our difficulties, our trials, and our worries about tomorrow all vanish when we look to God.

Wake yourself up and look to God. Build your hope on Him. No matter how many things seem to be pressing in on you, be determined to push them aside and look to Him. “Look to Me….” Salvation is yours the moment you look.

## *Tuesday, January 31:* Transformed by Beholding

#### We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image… —[2 Corinthians 3:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=2+Corinthians+3%3A18)

The greatest characteristic a Christian can exhibit is this completely unveiled openness before God, which allows that person’s life to become a mirror for others. When the Spirit fills us, we are transformed, and by beholding God we become mirrors. You can always tell when someone has been beholding the glory of the Lord, because your inner spirit senses that he mirrors the Lord’s own character. Beware of anything that would spot or tarnish that mirror in you. It is almost always something good that will stain it— something good, but not what is best.

The most important rule for us is to concentrate on keeping our lives open to God. Let everything else including work, clothes, and food be set aside. The busyness of things obscures our concentration on God. We must maintain a position of beholding Him, keeping our lives completely spiritual through and through. Let other things come and go as they will; let other people criticize us as they will; but never allow anything to obscure the life that “is hidden with Christ in God” ([Colossians 3:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3:3)). Never let a hurried lifestyle disturb the relationship of abiding in Him. This is an easy thing to allow, but we must guard against it. The most difficult lesson of the Christian life is learning how to continue “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord….”

## *Wednesday, February 1:* God’s Overpowering Purpose

#### I have appeared to you for this purpose… —[Acts 26:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Acts+26%3A16)

The vision Paul had on the road to Damascus was not a passing emotional experience, but a vision that had very clear and emphatic directions for him. And Paul stated, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” ([Acts 26:19](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26:19)). Our Lord said to Paul, in effect, “Your whole life is to be overpowered or subdued by Me; you are to have no end, no aim, and no purpose but Mine.” And the Lord also says to us, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go…” ([John 15:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:16)).

When we are born again, if we are spiritual at all, we have visions of what Jesus wants us to be. It is important that I learn not to be “disobedient to the heavenly vision” — not to doubt that it can be attained. It is not enough to give mental assent to the fact that God has redeemed the world, nor even to know that the Holy Spirit can make all that Jesus did a reality in my life. I must have the foundation of a personal relationship with Him. Paul was not given a message or a doctrine to proclaim. He was brought into a vivid, personal, overpowering relationship with Jesus Christ. [Acts 26:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+26:16) is tremendously compelling “…to make you a minister and a witness….” There would be nothing there without a personal relationship. Paul was devoted to a Person, not to a cause. He was absolutely Jesus Christ’s. He saw nothing else and he lived for nothing else. “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” ([1 Corinthians 2:2](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2:2)).

***Thursday, February 2:* Leave Room for God**

**When it pleased God… —**[**Galatians 1:15**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Galatians+1%3A15)

As servants of God, we must learn to make room for Him— to give God “elbow room.” We plan and figure and predict that this or that will happen, but we forget to make room for God to come in as He chooses. Would we be surprised if God came into our meeting or into our preaching in a way we had never expected Him to come? Do not look for God to come in a particular way, but *do look for Him*. The way to make room for Him is to expect Him to come, but not in a certain way. No matter how well we may know God, the great lesson to learn is that He may break in at any minute. We tend to overlook this element of surprise, yet God never works in any other way. Suddenly—God meets our life “…when it pleased God….”

Keep your life so constantly in touch with God that His surprising power can break through at any point. Live in a constant state of expectancy and leave room for God to come in as He decides.

## *Friday, February 3: Look* Again and Consecrate

#### If God so clothes the grass of the field…, will He not much more clothe you…? —[Matthew 6:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+6%3A30)

A simple statement of Jesus is always a puzzle to us because we will not be simple. How can we maintain the simplicity of Jesus so that we may understand Him? By receiving His Spirit, recognizing and relying on Him, and obeying Him as He brings us the truth of His Word, life will become amazingly simple. Jesus asks us to consider that “if God so clothes the grass of the field…” how “much more” will He clothe you, if you keep your relationship right with Him? Every time we lose ground in our fellowship with God, it is because we have disrespectfully thought that we knew better than Jesus Christ. We have allowed “the cares of this world” to enter in ([Matthew 13:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13:22)), while forgetting the “much more” of our heavenly Father.

“Look at the birds of the air…” ([Matthew 6:26](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:26)). Their function is to obey the instincts God placed within them, and God watches over them. Jesus said that if you have the right relationship with Him and will obey His Spirit within you, then God will care for your “feathers” too.

“Consider the lilies of the field…” ([Matthew 6:28](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:28)). They grow where they are planted. Many of us refuse to grow where God plants us. Therefore, we don’t take root anywhere. Jesus said if we would obey the life of God within us, He would look after all other things. Did Jesus Christ lie to us? Are we experiencing the “much more” He promised? If we are not, it is because we are not obeying the life God has given us and have cluttered our minds with confusing thoughts and worries. How much time have we wasted asking God senseless questions while we should be absolutely free to concentrate on our service to Him? Consecration is the act of continually separating myself from everything except that which God has appointed me to do. It is not a one-time experience but an ongoing process. Am I continually separating myself and looking to God every day of my life?

## *Saturday, February 4:* Look Again and Think

#### Do not worry about your life… —[Matthew 6:25](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Matthew+6%3A25)

A warning which needs to be repeated is that “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches,” and the lust for other things, will choke out the life of God in us ([Matthew 13:22](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+13:22)). We are never free from the recurring waves of this invasion. If the frontline of attack is not about clothes and food, it may be about money or the lack of money; or friends or lack of friends; or the line may be drawn over difficult circumstances. It is one steady invasion, and these things will come in like a flood, unless we allow the Spirit of God to raise up the banner against it.

“I say to you, do not worry about your life….” Our Lord says to be careful only about one thing— our relationship to Him. But our commonsense shouts loudly and says, “That is absurd, I must consider how I am going to live, and I must consider what I am going to eat and drink.” Jesus says you must not. Beware of allowing yourself to think that He says this while not understanding your circumstances. Jesus Christ knows our circumstances better than we do, and He says we must not think about these things to the point where they become the primary concern of our life. Whenever there are competing concerns in your life, be sure you always put your relationship to God first.

“Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” ([Matthew 6:34](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:34)). How much trouble has begun to threaten you today? What kind of mean little demons have been looking into your life and saying, “What are your plans for next month— or next summer?” Jesus tells us not to worry about any of these things. Look again and think. Keep your mind on the “much more” of your heavenly Father ([Matthew 6:30](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+6:30)).

## *Sunday, February 5:* Do You See Your Calling?

#### …separated to the gospel of God… —[Romans 1:1](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=31&search=Romans+1%3A1)

Our calling is not primarily to be holy men and women, but to be proclaimers of the gospel of God. The one all-important thing is that the gospel of God should be recognized as the abiding reality. Reality is not human goodness, or holiness, or heaven, or hell— it is redemption. The need to perceive this is the most vital need of the Christian worker today. As workers, we have to get used to the revelation that redemption is the only reality. Personal holiness is an effect of redemption, not the cause of it. If we place our faith in human goodness we will go under when testing comes.

Paul did not say that he separated himself, but “when it pleased God, who separated me…” ([Galatians 1:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1:15)). Paul was not overly interested in his own character. And as long as our eyes are focused on our own personal holiness, we will never even get close to the full reality of redemption. Christian workers fail because they place their desire for their own holiness above their desire to know God. “Don’t ask me to be confronted with the strong reality of redemption on behalf of the filth of human life surrounding me today; what I want is anything God can do for me to make me more desirable in my own eyes.” To talk that way is a sign that the reality of the gospel of God has not begun to touch me. There is no reckless abandon to God in that. God cannot deliver me while my interest is merely in my own character. Paul was not conscious of himself. He was recklessly abandoned, totally surrendered, and separated by God for one purpose— to proclaim the gospel of God (see [Romans 9:3](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+9:3)).