

A romantic couple, a man and a woman, are shown in profile, facing each other and about to kiss. The woman has long brown hair and is wearing a white top. The man has short brown hair and is wearing a grey jacket with a white and brown striped scarf. They are both smiling. The background is a bright, hazy sky with a mountain range visible at the bottom. The overall tone is warm and intimate.

ME & GOD, NOT ME ALONE

A 5-DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR
GROWING CLOSER TO GOD



Intro:

Do you feel like you are carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders? There comes a point when we have two choices—let the weight crush us because it's too much to bear, or realize we weren't made to carry the weight and that we can give it up to God. Is the lingering uncertainty around you creating worry, stress, or anxiety? We've put together a 5-day devotional to help you find joy despite your circumstances and grow closer in your relationship with God, reminding you that you are not in this alone.

Before we begin I want you to do 3 things:

1. Pick a time and place where you can spend each day uninterrupted so that you can give your full attention to God.
2. Tell a friend or family member that you are doing this and ask them to keep you accountable.
3. Read the prayer below before starting each devotional.

Daily Prayer:

Lord, I am here. You are good, and I want to feel your love more deeply. Lord, open my heart to feel your presence in these moments together. Use this time to teach me something. Remind me I am not alone. Help me to fix my eyes on You, God, so that I can see the beauty around me. I ask that you fill my heart with joy and speak truth into my life. Lord, use this time to change me for the better. I love you, and I want you in my life.

5-Day Outline:

1. Choosing Faith Over Fear by Rachel Earls
2. Community Pillars by CPT Harold Earls
3. Time Alone with God *by* Rachel Earls
4. Worshiping with Your Life by Captain Harold & Rachel Earls
5. Let God Lead You by CPT Harold Earls

Day 1 | CHOOSING FAITH OVER FEAR

By Rachel Earls

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. — John 16:33 (ESV)

I had just turned 24 and had only been married for ten months when my husband set off to pursue his dream of climbing Mount Everest, leaving me behind. Was I scared? Yes. Absolutely terrified. My mind was full of “what if” questions. What if I lost the love of my life? What if I ended up a single parent? It was all-consuming and not something I could ignore. I quickly realized I couldn’t live in that mindset for the next 63 days, because fear is like acid: it will eat at you and break you down bit by bit. Where we allow fear to live, we let Satan flourish. Satan loves to use fear to turn our eyes away from God.

In a moment of clarity, I realized that everything circling in my mind was completely out of my control. I knew that if I didn’t want fear to drive my story, then I had to replace it with faith. Faith is trusting that God is bigger than our fears and that God is always good.

When we choose faith over fear, it doesn’t automatically get rid of our human emotions. In the garden of Gethsemane right before Jesus was arrested and then nailed to a cross, He cried out to God, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.” The very human side of Him did not want to endure the pain and suffering that was ahead. His emotions were real, but then He said, “yet not as I will, but as you will.” Those 9 words are what faith over fear means. Faith is trusting that there is something better despite our circumstances, and that God’s will is better than our own. Let the words of John 16:33 bring you peace, as you recognize that God has already overcome the world.

Your fears can drive you to a deeper faith if you’re willing to give up control. When you make that choice, God will meet you in your need. You can rejoice in knowing you are not facing anything alone, but instead with a good Father who will carry you if you only ask. So let me ask you this: what fears are suffocating you right now? Are you willing to choose faith over fear today?

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” —Psalm 23:4

Daily Prayer:

God, replace my fear with faith today. I release it to you, because I know that you are greater. Lord, let your peace wash over me and calm my every nerve. Help me to have the faith to say, “not my will, but yours be done.” I trust you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Day 2 | COMMUNITY PILLARS

By CPT Harold Earls

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

As a platoon leader in the Army, I learned that leadership has three basic pillars—leading down, leading horizontally, and leading up. In other words, leading down to the soldiers I am in charge of, leading horizontally to my fellow peers, and then leading up the chain of command by influencing higher-level decisions. Great leaders are able to do all three. The same rule of three holds true in being part of a healthy Christian community: we share community down, mentoring—We share community down, mentoring others more novice in their walk with Christ. We share community horizontally, spending time in fellowship with our friends. We share community up by having spiritual role models and mentors develop and guide us in paths they’ve already traveled. The question to ask yourself is which pillar is lacking substance? Is there one that gets more bandwidth than the others?

All three are equally important, but we tend to get off-kilter, often weighing the horizontal “friend” pillar more than the others. In reality, though, growth and fulfillment in your faith happen most abundantly when they’re balanced. A healthy, God-centered community is found by surrounding yourself with people from all ages and walks of life, but who are all heading in the same spiritual direction. Some are ahead of you, some alongside you, and some behind you, but all are walking on the same path. This is how you stay on course. This is the type of community God intended.

Galatians 6:2 tells us we were not meant to carry our burdens alone. And Romans 12:4-5 shows us we are all uniquely different, just like the part of the body; yet in order to function properly, we need each other. Each of us has something he or she can teach someone else, and all of us should be eager to learn from each other’s wisdom. Humans were meant to have community, not just friends. Don’t mistake the two. If you desire to grow closer to God, you must grow closer to community.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. — Romans 12:4-5 (NIV)

(BONUS) Practical Application: The Mentor and the Mentee

The Mentor: If you think God may be calling you to mentor someone else, consider practicing these two simple steps as a way of getting started.

- 1) Be a good friend. A major part of being a mentor is just being present and listening. You don’t always need to have the right things to say. Start by being a good friend; the life advice will come to you over time.
- 2) Encourage others through social media. When you share your words and life experiences on social media, you may unknowingly be mentoring all sorts of people who might be struggling with similar challenges. So start expanding on that community pillar today!

The Mentee: I personally like to call it a sensei. We’re all a little bit like the karate kid in need of a karate master like the old, white-haired Mr. Miyagi in the *Karate Kid* movie. If you’re looking for a mentor, just ask. I guarantee you there is someone, if not 2-3 people, that you look up to in your extended community. Ask one or all of them if they would mentor you from time to time. They most likely will be honored and humbled that you thought of them. Take time right now and think of 2-3 potential mentors. Now take one more step and email, text, or call them. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”



Daily Prayer:

Lord, I desire community. I pray you will bring the right people into my life to speak wisdom and truth over me. I also pray you would open my eyes to see someone you are leading me to mentor. Don't let me hold back out of fear or the feeling I am not good enough, but remind me I too am an important part of the body of Christ. Let community flourish around me as you intended. I love you, Lord, Amen.

Day 3 | TIME ALONE WITH GOD

By Rachel Earls

But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. — Luke 5:16 (ESV)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” —Romans 15:13 (NIV)

I want you to think of one person that you love a lot. I'm not talking about someone you admire from a distance, or a celebrity you're infatuated with. I'm talking about someone who you know on a very personal level.

I'll go first. I choose my husband. When I was first getting to know him, I was eager to spend as much time with him as I could. *I didn't need* to stay up til the wee hours of the night learning knew things about him, but I sure wanted to and that's because I loved him.

I think it's safe to say the common thread for all of us is that strong relationships are built on quality time. I remember one summer at church camp when the worship leader explained that having a relationship with God is similar to having a relationship with your mom or best friend. Just as you would give that person your undivided attention, rush to share the latest details about your life, and listen to what he or she has to say, you should also do the same in your relationship with God. Relationships don't form on their own. If you're wondering why you don't have a stronger relationship with God, you first need to ask yourself if you've put in the time. If the only effort you're putting in are half-hearted prayers you say as quickly as you can before a meal, then you're going to have a half-hearted relationship, too.

In the Bible, we repeatedly see Jesus going out to be alone with God and pray. At my church camp growing up, we had a daily Tag Time, which was the name we used for time alone with God. Try setting aside your own Tag Time, using it to pray, journal, worship, or just sit and listen, as long as you are intentional. The purpose of alone time with God is to shift your focus away from things of the world that are fleeting, and directly to Jesus, who is the source of joy.

One of the greatest ways you can change your life is to choose joy every day. And that is only possible by being in God's presence. Joy is different from happiness. Joy is found by being fully dependent on God and letting Him live in your heart despite any circumstance or trial. The best way we can face our stress, anxiety, and worry is with a heart of joy that comes from the hope of God. The first verse I made a point to memorize when I gave my life to Christ was Romans 15:13, because that is how I wanted to live each day of my life, overflowing with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Will you choose joy today and every day forward by choosing an intentional relationship with the Lord?

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, double-minded people! —James 4:8

Daily Prayer:

Lord, I want to be near you, and I know that takes effort. My heart and attention are Yours. Give me the discipline to be intentional with my time with you. I invite you into every aspect of my life. Thank you for relentlessly pursuing a relationship with me. I choose joy today and always, knowing that despite my circumstances, I have hope and a God who loves me unconditionally. I am ready to know you more. In your loving name, Amen.

Day 4 | WORSHIPING WITH YOUR LIFE

By CPT Harold & Rachel Earls

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. —Romans 12:5-8 (NIV)

We are busy people. From the moment we all went to school, started making friends and having relationships, got a job or had kids, our days quickly filled up with work, to-do lists, and activities. None of that is bad, but once you've divided up your time into each task that needs your attention, you will likely find yourself giving God your attention for only a few moments a day.

While reading your Bible, praying, and singing songs of praise are all aspects of worship, we should not stop there. Worshiping God can and should be continual and present in all aspects of our lives. That means you can worship God when you are working, doing school work, playing a sport, or spending time with your loved ones. Worshiping with your life starts with being in tune with the Holy Spirit living inside you. Once you do that, you can look at the talents and blessings God has given you and use them for good. God did not give you gifts for you not to use them. If you're a Teacher, you can worship God by using your knowledge and understanding to love on God's children. He placed you in the classroom for a purpose. If you're an executive assistant, you can worship God by being diligent, responsive, and helpful. God wants us to show up for one another, and we can do that by using the gifts he has given us. Remember in everything you do there is an opportunity to be a shining light that points to God.

It doesn't matter whether we have been given great talents, abilities, wealth, or very little. What matters to God is whether we make good use of what we have been given. This is how we can worship Him, no matter how busy or quarantined we are. Worship is a lifestyle. It's an all-the-time thing, not a sometimes-once-per-day thing. It's not just on Sundays, but on Tuesdays, too. It's not just when you get all dressed up, but also when you're wearing pajama pants on a Zoom call. It's not just when your church friends are around, but also when you're surrounded by the unchurched. It's when you're sleeping in order to recharge so you can crush the next day. It's when you're brushing your teeth and looking in the mirror thanking God for the day. It's about a posture that is fixed on Jesus. I guarantee you will grow closer to God if you actively worship Him with your life, because you will begin to see Him in all things. Take a moment to think about how you can worship God through your daily activities.

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. — Romans 11:36

Daily Prayer:

God, thank you for the gifts you have given me. Teach me to worship you with my life, acknowledging your presence in all things big and small. Show me how to honor you through my daily routines, not missing any opportunity to shine your light and love. Use me for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 5 | LET GOD LEAD YOU

By CPT Harold Earls

In his heart a man plans his way, but the Lord determines his steps. —Proverbs 16:9 (ESV)

I AM A DREAM CHASER. But for me, it has come at a cost. I often pursue my dreams—determined to make them happen—without first seeking God’s guidance or checking to see whether He is keeping up with the trail I’m blazing. I often don’t allow God into the decision-making process at all after he puts that initial passion in my heart. This can easily lead to a prideful heart and selfishness. I would like to share with you a simple but powerful story about my wife that shifted my mindset on pursuing my dreams.

My wife has always had a passion for film and recording videos. When she was a little girl, she would make homemade cooking videos and call them “The Rachel Show.” When she was in high school, she was on the video production team, dreaming of one day being a news anchor. Later when we were engaged, she would record videos of us on her phone and talk to an imaginary audience to explain to them what we were doing. It was clear God had put that passion in her heart. While she did not end up pursuing a job as a news anchor, God used her passion to lead her to something even more aligned with her heart.

Rachel has always said, “I will go wherever He wants me.” During my last year at West Point, her dream took an unexpected turn. I suggested, “why don’t you make a video and post it on YouTube?” On a whim, she did. It went viral. Today, more than 1,285 videos later, she has a thriving online community where she uses her passion to make a difference in other people’s lives. Rachel is a dream chaser, too, but the difference is that she looks to God for guidance in every step and always allows Him to lead. Proverbs 16:3 states, “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” She knows that God has been and will continue leading her, not the other way around. And the most beautiful part of all is that God is not done with her story.

You see, God puts passions in our hearts to open the way, but He will also guide us every step of the way when we trust Him with the gifts we have been given. So follow your passions with determination, listening to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit guiding you, and being expectant that God will work in ways you cannot imagine.

Proverbs 18:16

A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great.

Isaiah 58:11

*The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.*

Daily Prayer:

God, I come to you ready to set my pride aside. I want You to lead my story. Give me the faith it takes to step out of my own comfort zone and surrender the plans I’ve made for my life. Give me rest in knowing that when you lead me, you will also provide like a spring whose waters never fail. Help me seek your loving guidance with each step I take. Search my heart and rid it of my selfish desire for control. If it is your will, weave my passions and dreams into something beautiful. I love you, Lord. Amen.