

# DWELL ON THESE THINGS

A Thirty-One-Day Challenge to  
Talk to Yourself Like God Talks to You

JOHN STANGE

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to Talk to Yourself Like God  
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WATERBROOK

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This book is dedicated to you if you have ever filled your mind with negative self-talk, made the mistake of preaching a false gospel to your heart, or struggled to see yourself from God's perspective.

Jesus is the solution.

Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things.

—Philippians 4:8, CSB

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# INTRODUCTION

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You've been talking to yourself today. In fact, you've been talking to yourself your entire life. You talk to yourself when you wake up each morning, when you're driving, when you're trying to fall asleep at night, and every moment in between. You even talk to yourself when other people are trying to talk to you. And you're not alone. We're all talking to ourselves, but we're not all saying—or hearing—the same things.

During the course of your life, you've probably spent many hours listening to lessons delivered by teachers, lectures given by professors, and sermons shared by pastors. I'm sure the information shared was helpful, but these people had only limited opportunities to speak to you. You have far greater opportunities to talk to yourself than they have. In fact, no one else will have the opportunity to teach, lecture, or preach to you more than you will.

So, what are you telling yourself?

What does your mind dwell on?

Would you talk to someone else the way you talk to yourself?

What messages are you preaching to your heart?

There are all sorts of messages being aimed at our hearts and minds each day. Some of these messages are true and helpful; others are hurtful, destructive, and out of line with the message God wants us to understand and embrace. What messages are you choosing to believe and repeat to yourself? When you first saw your reflection in the mirror this morn-



ing, what did your internal conversation sound like? Did you speak a message of hope to your heart or a diatribe of defeat?

What do you tell yourself when you experience physical pain, disappointment, or betrayal?

Is the message you preach to your heart reminding you of the goodness of God, or is the message you're pounding into your heart fostering a sense of discouragement and depression?

If you could see God, face to face, standing right in front of you, what do you think He would say to you? Do you think the message He would want to share with you would be similar to what you've been telling yourself, or would it be drastically different?

God does communicate with us. During the course of history, He has spoken to people in different ways. To some, He spoke audibly. To others, He spoke in dreams and visions. He spoke to His people through prophets. He spoke to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. He speaks to our hearts through His Spirit as He comforts, convicts, and imparts wisdom. And He has given us His Word, the Bible.

In this current day, we have greater access to God's Word than any generation that has come before us. But for many of us, it can be far too easy to take that access for granted. We're so used to being able to read it and study it whenever we want that we can begin treating it like an unvalued resource. This is emotionally and spiritually tragic.

If we minimize the Word of God, we'll persist in ignorance.

If we minimize the Word of God, we'll gradually adopt false beliefs.

If we minimize the Word of God, we'll give the devil a foothold in our minds.

And the icing on the cake is that we'll begin preaching a message to our hearts that's the exact opposite of the truth of the gospel. Have you already started to notice this in your own life? If so, would you like to interrupt this pattern and begin replacing the lies you've mistakenly believed with the truth?

Luke 4 tells us that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, where He remained for forty days. During that time, the devil repeatedly tempted Jesus. He tried to make Jesus submit to him. He tried to persuade Jesus to adopt a worldly mindset. He tried to influence Jesus to idolize temporary comforts, and he even had the audacity to try to make Jesus worship him. But Jesus didn't give in to the devil's schemes. He resisted him, and He exposed the ways the devil was distorting and misrepresenting the truth. Jesus did this by quoting the Word of God:

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" (verse 4)

Jesus answered him, "It is written,  
'You shall worship the Lord your God,  
and him only shall you serve.'" (verse 8)

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (verse 12)

Jesus countered the lies of the devil when He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:13, 16). He rejected the lies of Satan and responded with the truth of God. Do you think there's something we're supposed to learn from this example Jesus has set for us?

Many of us have a bad habit of beating ourselves up, catastrophizing our setbacks, and telling ourselves lies. Do any of the following sound familiar?

- “I mess everything up.”
- “I’m the worst parent ever.”
- “I’m a terrible spouse.”
- “I’m a total failure at life.”
- “My faith is so weak.”
- “I’m such a hypocrite.”
- “I must be the worst Christian.”
- “Everyone must think poorly of me.”
- “My life is totally messed up.”
- “It would be easier to be dead than to keep living my miserable life.”
- “Everyone hates me.”
- “No one respects me.”
- “I look terrible.”
- “I’m not very smart.”
- “I have nothing meaningful to contribute.”
- “There is always someone who can accomplish just about anything better than I can.”
- “My life has been a total waste.”
- “I will never do anything that’s truly meaningful.”
- “God must be punishing me.”
- “God doesn’t love me, and I don’t blame Him because I don’t even love myself.”

What would it look like if you spent the next thirty-one days replacing the lies you’ve believed about yourself with the truth the Lord has made clear in His Word? What would it

look like if you started talking to yourself like God talks to you?

I want to challenge you to do just that. In the coming pages, we're going to begin a new conversation. We're going to dwell on the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy truths God is telling us. Each day's reading begins with a truth from God's Word, followed by a narrative to give context. And while the anecdotes in the narratives are stories from my life, it is my hope that you will be able to relate to them in a way that allows you to find similar truths in your own life.

At the end of each day's reading is a "Dwell on This" challenge, which is your opportunity to change the narrative of your self-talk. You'll see that by interrupting old patterns, you can experience a dramatic transformation in the quality of your life. Are you ready to get started?

DWELL ON THESE THINGS



## DAY 1

---

You are loved more deeply  
than you realize.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

—Galatians 2:20

We want to be loved, but the true nature of love is often misunderstood. Many of the relationships we have in this world demonstrate a form of conditional love toward us that we have accepted as normal. Very early in life, we learn there are people who will “love” us if we either do something for them or give something to them. But if we stop doing or giving, their love disappears just as quickly as it came. So we keep doing and we keep giving, hoping to earn just a little more love. But in the end, this becomes an impossible cycle to sustain. Eventually we realize we don’t have the emotional energy to continue this pattern long term.

Conditional love doesn’t satisfy our hearts.

Conditional love breeds insecurity.

Conditional love isn't love at all. It's merely the utilitarian use or subtle abuse of another person, whether or not it's intended as such.

When we spend long seasons of life believing that love is conditional in nature, we eventually begin to despise others and hate ourselves. We resent the fickle ways we're treated, and we start to mistakenly believe that we may actually be unlovable.

But are you unlovable? Were you placed on this earth to be used like a commodity by other people? No. That is not God's eternal purpose for you. In fact, He makes it abundantly clear that you're loved more deeply than you realize.

When the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the churches of Galatia, he made a point to share some very personal information about himself. He wanted the events that took place in his life to demonstrate that God loves His children and displays that love in miraculous ways.

During an earlier season of Paul's life, before he came to faith in Christ and changed his name from Saul of Tarsus, he actively and intentionally persecuted Christians. He terrorized and threatened them. He helped facilitate their imprisonment and execution. But after coming to faith in Christ, he saw the wrong of his actions and declared that he wasn't the same person he once was.

I like the way Paul described his transformation: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Think about these statements for just a moment. What was Paul trying to communicate?

When Paul referred to himself as being "crucified with Christ," he was making clear that the old Paul (Saul) was dead. He wasn't the same man. His former ambitions, objectives,

and goals were no longer the governing forces in his life. Jesus rescued and transformed him. Saul had died, and Paul had been reborn through faith. He was a new creation. In fact, the way Paul spoke of his new life stressed that he was now led and empowered by Jesus. Christ lived within him and would be the One directing his steps going forward.

This change in perspective was a drastic transformation in Paul's life. His entire outlook was transformed, and the hope that he now possessed was something he would ultimately give his life for in order to share that hope with others.

What motivated his transformation? I believe Paul was moved by the love of Christ. He had directly experienced unconditional love, and now he was willing to risk his life and well-being to make the love of Christ known to those who still persisted in the ignorance of unbelief.

He continued in Galatians 2:20, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Here Paul was telling the Galatian believers that he was convinced Jesus loved him because of the sacrifice He was willing to make on his behalf.

It's one thing to say, "I love you." It's another to demonstrate that love. Jesus displayed the depth of His love by going to the cross in our place, even while we were still living as His enemies. Paul may not have witnessed Christ's crucifixion with his own eyes, but when he wrote this letter, he could still talk to people who were at the foot of the cross. He had a clear mental image of what Christ endured on his behalf. The knowledge that Jesus would bear that torture for him amazed Paul, particularly since he knew how undeserving he was to be blessed in such a way.

During an earlier season of Paul's life, he mistakenly believed he had to earn God's love. Eventually, his heart was con-



vinced that God's love had been demonstrated to him freely through Jesus, who died in his place. Paul was well aware of the life he'd once led and the mistakes he'd committed, but he was also awakened to the reality that he was loved in a deeper way than he'd once realized. The sacrificial death of Christ confirmed that.

Is this something you remind yourself about? Do you tell yourself you're deeply loved? Or, like Saul, do you mistakenly believe you have to earn God's love? How does what you believe about love make a difference in your life?

Years ago, when I first started offering pastoral counseling, a woman asked me if I'd be willing to meet with her and her husband. She was concerned about her marriage and wanted to seek outside help and counsel, so I agreed to meet with them. She expressed exasperation with their marriage. It seemed to her that no matter what she said, her husband wasn't interested in listening. He also struggled to verbalize what he was feeling. She conveyed that he was sensitive to anything that could be perceived as criticism, and when she tried to encourage him, he resisted her praise.

After I spoke with them both, it became clear to me that the husband had been struggling for decades with the fear that he was both unloved and unlovable. During his youth, a form of conditional love was regularly reinforced. He carried that misunderstanding of love into his marriage, and now he struggled to accept love, praise, admiration, and counsel from his wife. He misinterpreted every attempt she made to speak into his life as an attack on him.

If you could talk to that man, what would you say? What truth would you want him to embrace? How would you pray for him? What message do you think the Lord wants him to start preaching to his heart?

How do you think this man would live differently if he embraced the understanding that he was loved on a deeper level than he could possibly imagine and that his wife's affection wasn't tied to his actions? Is this a truth you've been speaking to your heart, or do you beat yourself up and drill in a message that you're unloved and unlovable? Are you mistakenly convinced that God's love is conditional, just like love you've experienced in so many other contexts of your life? Are you willing to begin believing that the absolute love of God is far superior to the false love you've been shown in your past?

It isn't a trite statement to say that Jesus loves you. He demonstrated His love for you when He graciously gave Himself for you. He endured ridicule, shame, and death on your behalf. Then He rose from death as the ultimate victor over every falsehood or principality that crushes your spirit and steals your hope.

You are loved more deeply than you realize. Allow yourself to start embracing this truth, and your heart will be refreshed.

When you have your next less-than-perfect day, remind yourself of the nature of Christ's love.

When you start believing the lie that you're unloved or unlovable, take a moment to contemplate why Christ endured the cross on your behalf. He didn't just tell you He loved you; He demonstrated it in dramatic fashion.

Over the next twenty-four hours, there are going to be all kinds of messages flashing through your mind. Some will align with the teaching of God's Word, and some will not. Confront the lies with the overwhelming truth of God's unconditional love for you.

## DWELL ON THIS

---

Today I will remember that in Christ I am loved more deeply than I realize.

## DAY 2

---

Walk by faith rather than  
by sight to experience  
greater joy.

Though you have not seen him,  
you love him. Though you do not  
now see him, you believe in him  
and rejoice with joy that is  
inexpressible and filled with glory,  
obtaining the outcome of your  
faith, the salvation of your souls.

—1 Peter 1:8–9

Most mornings, I drive to the gym for an hour of exercise. The gym I use has plenty of equipment, but I spend the majority of my time on a treadmill. I love it. It used to feel like a chore, but lately it's become one of my favorite activities of the day. I set the incline on the treadmill to level 11 and the pace to 2.8 miles per hour. Then I cue up a podcast, put my earbuds in, close my eyes, and walk. I spend that hour feeding my mind and heart, exercising my body, and taking a pause from walking by sight. I barely open my eyes during that hour, and I'm often surprised at how quickly the time passes.

During the rest of my waking hours, I'm primarily accus-

tomed to watching where I'm going. I double-check for traffic before I cross streets. I heavily rely on my eyes to help me determine which direction to walk. In the physical realm, that makes sense, but from a spiritual standpoint, walking by sight is tragic.

Throughout Scripture, the Lord makes it clear that He wants us to trust Him. Faith pleases Him, and He calls us to exercise it. But it can be a very difficult transition for us to learn to walk by faith when it feels as though most contexts of life demand we walk by sight.

The apostle Peter addressed this dilemma in his first epistle. Peter was one of a select group of humans who could actually say they had seen God. During the course of His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ—God the Son—walked with Peter, taught him, challenged him, and prepared him for future service and future trials. Peter's appreciation of and love for Christ grew deeper and deeper throughout his adult life. Without a doubt, as Peter penned the words of his letter, he was looking forward to the day when he would see Jesus once again.

The majority of those who read Peter's letter, both in his generation and ours, have never seen Jesus. Even though we haven't seen Him face to face, we love Him. By the intervening power of the Holy Spirit, our spiritual eyes have been opened up to see who Jesus is and recognize our need for Him in our lives.

We need His forgiveness.

We need His righteousness.

We need His comforting presence.

Peter stressed that even though our natural eyes cannot yet view our Savior, we still believe in Him. We believe that He possesses a divine nature. We believe He has satisfied God the

Father's righteous wrath against our sin. We believe that He is sufficient to meet our every need.

The apostle Peter understood the connection between faith and joy. He wrote to the early Christians, a group of believers experiencing considerable hardship—adversities such as uncomfortable jail cells, threats, and persecution—simply because they loved and obeyed Jesus. But what did Peter remind them about through this letter? He reminded them that even though they couldn't presently see Jesus with their eyes, they could still trust Him, walk with Him by faith, and experience an inexpressible sense of joy that couldn't be diminished by their difficult circumstances. Peter encouraged them to think beyond their circumstances and dwell on the fact that the day was coming when they would receive the outcome of their faith: the salvation of their souls.

Have you ever considered just how different this belief is when compared to almost everything else? In other spheres of life, we tend to believe what we see and doubt what we cannot see. When the first snow arrives during the winter and my children look out the window and say, "It's snowing!" I want to look outside and see it for myself. When a friend tells me she liked a movie, I may consider her opinion, but I don't really know if I'm going to care for the movie until I watch it myself. When I read automotive articles that tell me about a new body design for one of my favorite car brands, I doubt whether I'll appreciate the changes until I see them with my own eyes. I'm used to walking by sight, and so are you.

But again, God delights in watching our faith mature to the point that we learn that relying on our physical vision has limited benefits. Its primary use is in the successful navigation of the natural world, but we are more than just natural beings; we are spiritual beings with physical bodies (Zechariah 12:1).

And for those who know Jesus, even our current bodies are one day going to be transformed into new, glorified ones that will no longer be subject to sin or its effects (1 Corinthians 15:44–47).

We may know that to be true, but how often do we still elect to rely primarily on natural means and physical sight to navigate the experiences, seasons, and trials of earthly life? Are you convinced that literal sight is going to bring you joy? Does your attempt to control or predict every outcome bring your heart peace, or does it feed your anxiety?

Several years ago, a college student began attending the church I pastor. He was completely blind. Physically speaking, he couldn't see a thing. One of his friends would drive him to church, but other than that ride, he would get to where he was going with the help of a Seeing Eye dog. I always enjoyed spotting his dog nestled comfortably under his seat, listening while I preached.

You know what I noticed about that student? He never seemed to be in a bad mood. He joyfully greeted me on Sunday mornings, he joyfully worshipped with the rest of our church family, and he joyfully conversed with me after worship services before heading back to campus. Now, I'm sure he had plenty of moments in life when he didn't feel so upbeat, but his demeanor reminded me of something that's taught over and over again in the Bible: true joy is not dependent on physical sight. This student's blindness made it necessary for him to learn to walk by faith in a way that many people never learn. His unmistakable contentment was a living testimony that walking by sight isn't what brings joy.

Have you ever considered that one of the reasons you may be struggling to experience joy might be that you're still con-

vinced that seeing produces joy? Guess what? It doesn't. All it does is feed your desire to control what you can't control, predict what you can't predict, and rely on the work of your hands to sustain your sense of well-being. Walking by sight means trusting in your abilities instead of in Jesus. Doing so will eventually crush your spirit and prevent you from experiencing the blessings that come with learning to trust God in all circumstances.

Years ago, I met a man who was in a multiple-vehicle accident at high speed on his way home from work. For a time, it looked as though he wasn't going to survive, but by the grace of God, he lived. The accident was severe, though. Many of the man's bones were broken, his body was covered in lacerations, and he lost the ability to use one of his arms. His arm didn't have to be amputated, but it no longer functioned like he wanted it to. He never got over that accident. Every day, he cursed his life and often wished he were dead. His sense of identity was wrapped up in his physical abilities. In one breath, he would assure me of his strong faith in God, but in the next, he refused to believe that God had any redeeming purpose for his trial. He couldn't see that anything good could ever come from his challenge. I have rarely met someone so negative. It wasn't pleasant or edifying to spend any amount of time with that man, and eventually most people learned to avoid him.

If your whole sense of well-being is tied to what you can presently see, there's a part of you that will approach each day from the negative, unhealthy, faithless perspective of that discouraged man. You won't believe there can be a greater purpose for your trials. You'll embrace discouragement instead of rejoicing in the truth. You'll stay stuck in your momentary



circumstances instead of believing that the Lord has good things in store for you. But you don't have to remain stuck in sight; you can begin to trust and learn to truly believe.


If you're currently facing a painful trial, please try to remember that it's for only a season. The Lord is in control of all things, and He can strengthen you through it and show you better things in coming days.

If you're currently worried about what is up ahead, don't fear. The Lord has already told you that the outcome of your faith is the salvation of your soul. You will see this salvation if your faith is in Christ.

If you're currently convinced that you'll experience joy only once your circumstances become more comfortable or ideal, stop lying to yourself. True joy isn't found in the momentary pleasures of this world; it is found through Jesus. And even though you haven't seen Him yet, you can see what He's doing. If you can learn to love Him more than you love the decomposing treasures of this world, He will help you see things in a brand-new way, and He will teach you to truly rejoice as your heart becomes fully convinced that He is working all things for His glory and your good.

God's desire is for you to walk by faith, assured in hope and convinced that you will one day see greater things than you could possibly conceive.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews  
11:1)



## DWELL ON THIS

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*As one who has been granted a new perspective through Christ, today I will walk by faith rather than by sight to experience greater joy.*



## DAY 3

---

### Let your heart be ruled by the peace of Christ.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your  
hearts, to which indeed you were  
called in one body. And be thankful.

—Colossians 3:15

Peace is an ideal that many of us value highly, but it doesn't often feel as though it's easy to obtain. Throughout my life, I have heard world leaders, prominent politicians, self-help gurus, and various salespeople promise that they could give us the peace our hearts crave. That sounds nice, but I've never seen anyone deliver on that promise.

During his era, Alexander the Great tried to find a sense of peace or contentment through conquest. As he invaded and overtook nation after nation, he rejoiced in his ability to secure decisive victories, but eventually even that experience left him feeling empty. It has been said that after conquering much of the known world at the time, "he wept because there were no more worlds to conquer." People debate who to attribute that quote to, but regardless of whether that phrase originated with Plutarch or a Hollywood script, the point is well made. Alexander was searching to experience a level of

satisfaction that he believed could be obtained only through asserting his dominance over neighboring lands. He was wrong, and his heart never found the peace he sought.

The absence of peace is something we feel in a profound way. It influences the quality of our day and our outlook toward the future. It can affect what our minds dwell on and even hold us back from doing what the Lord has designed us to do.

For me, finding peace at nighttime is hard. I never have been a great sleeper. I'm envious of my wife and my youngest son, who both have the ability to fall asleep, on cue, every night at ten thirty. It fascinates me. It's as if their internal clocks nudge them at that very minute each evening and tell them to close their eyes and fall asleep.

I, on the other hand, get a burst of energy each evening right around the time they're calling it a night. In fact, a high percentage of my books and blog posts are composed when most people are sleeping.

Several years ago, I went through a prolonged stretch of staying awake much later than even I usually do. I would go to bed at a reasonable time (for me), but when my head hit the pillow, I could not fall asleep. For hours, I would glance frequently at my alarm clock, and as each hour ticked by, I would become progressively more irritated that I was still awake.

During those hours, my mind would swim with activity. I would think about all sorts of tasks I still needed to accomplish. I would worry about the health of the church I serve. I would envision every what-if scenario possible about calamities that could potentially happen to my family. It was unpleasant, and it persisted for quite a while.

I tried a few things to correct the problem. I started drinking decaf coffee. It didn't work. I stopped checking my cell

phone once I went to bed. That helped a little, but not enough. I listened to biographical and historical podcasts at night, and that helped a lot, but it wasn't the cure. I even took a two-day retreat to a cabin in a different part of the state. That was refreshing, but it wasn't the ultimate solution.

The vital fix came when I realized that my issue wasn't biological or circumstantial; my issue was spiritual. I was trying to control what only God has control over. I was trying to predict things only God knows. And the Lord began showing me areas of sin in my heart that I needed to repent of. My lack of sleep and the absence of peace in my life were very much connected to the fact that I was compartmentalizing the Lord while also trying my best to call the shots in my life instead of trusting Him to do so.

In Colossians 3:15, Paul spoke of true and lasting peace. He referenced the kind of peace our hearts truly crave, but we often mistakenly believe that peace can be obtained from faulty or ineffective sources. The peace we crave—and need—can be found only in Jesus. This is a truth we need to tell ourselves often. This is a truth that our controlling, sinful, worldly perspectives will regularly fight against, to our own detriment. Our desire to rule what isn't under our control leaves us feeling empty and defeated. It exposes an emotional and spiritual void.

Voids don't tend to stay vacant for long. You've probably noticed that in most groups or organizations, leadership voids tend to be filled rather quickly. This happens in governments, families, and even the local church. A coveted position doesn't remain open forever. Eventually, a dominant personality will emerge and attempt to fill it because the desire to rule is a powerful impulse that we resist handing over to others, even those we claim to trust.

God's Word encourages us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. The rule of Christ is benevolent, and His leadership can be trusted without question. Ironically, although we certainly enjoy peace, we struggle to allow ourselves to be "ruled," even by Jesus. By nature, we want to be in charge of our lives. We want to be the boss. We want to hold the reins of control. But our desire for control fights against our yearning for peace. As long as we insist on remaining in control, we won't experience the peace we crave.

As followers of Jesus who possess deep and abiding trust in Him, we're called to let His peace rule in our lives. His peace should govern our hearts. His peace should be the expression of His nature, which overshadows our emotions and cognition. We need to stop deceiving ourselves into believing that our hearts will find the rest we seek anywhere else. I think this is something Paul was trying to help us understand when he penned Colossians 3:15.

As believers in Christ, we have been called, in one body, to experience His peace together. I don't know about you, but there are plenty of people in this world, including some of my brothers and sisters in Christ, whom I struggle to get along with at times. Whether it was differing preferences or priorities, or personalities that rubbed me the wrong way, there have been relationships in which harmony felt unattainable.

Yet we are called as His family to live in peace with one another. When our hearts are being ruled by the peace of Christ, the outpouring of that reality will be the intentional fostering of unity, compassion, and trust among believers.

Additionally, as Paul stressed, we'll be divinely empowered to be thankful. A peaceful heart is a thankful heart. It exudes gratitude and can operate from a place of contentment be-

cause a peaceful heart knows that Christ already has provided all it needs and will continue to do so.

While this is the kind of lesson I'll be learning throughout my life, I'm grateful for what the Lord has enabled me to grasp so far. As I'm learning to welcome the rule of Christ's peace in my heart, I'm sleeping better. I'm still a "late bird" in many respects, but when my head hits the pillow, I entrust my desire for control, my cares, and my worries to Him. The more I actually do this, the more I learn to value the peace Christ offers me.

Is this your story too, or are you still telling yourself that you need to be the boss who calls the shots? Are you trying to control what you can't control? Are you letting your mind be dominated by what-if scenarios? Are you being robbed of sleep because your heart isn't at rest?

You will never find peace if you're trying to rule.

You will never be at rest if you're convinced you need to do God's job for Him.

But let's be honest. In one breath, it's easy for us to acknowledge our need for the peace of Christ to rule over our hearts, but in the other breath, we try to proclaim our own independence and desire for spiritual self-rule. Like Alexander discovered centuries ago, feeding our desires for conquest will never produce the inner peace we crave.

When the peace of Christ rules in our hearts, we'll be content to trust the Lord's direction and instruction.

When the peace of Christ rules in our hearts, we'll demonstrate the kind of humility that invites Him to lead and guide.

When the peace of Christ rules in our hearts, we'll be able to go through life in a state of contented appreciation for the work He has already accomplished on our behalf. He makes

us capable of and comfortable with living in a kingdom we did not build.

If the desire to obtain spiritual self-rule has been your pattern, you may need to come to a crisis point before this changes. The Lord may need to break you of your desire to war against His peace. One of the greatest blessings He might allow to come into your life is a crisis that brings you to your knees and forces you to admit that you don't have the strength or wisdom necessary to carry your burdens without Him. In that moment, you can continue to try to fight against Jesus or you can embrace the opportunity He's giving you to submit your heart over to Him.

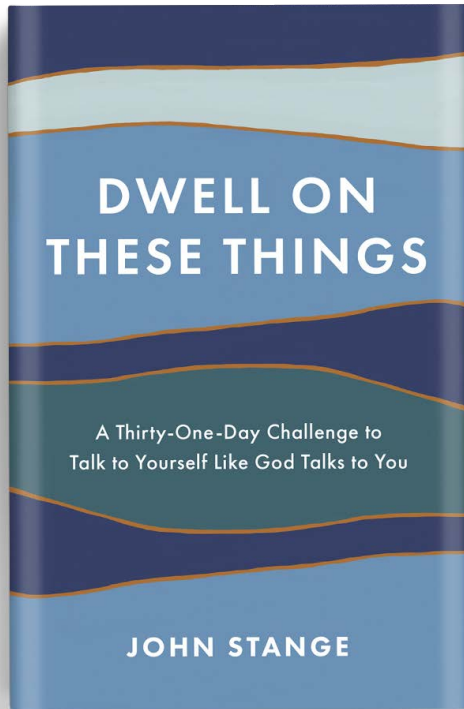
Peace is not found within yourself. You will find peace only at the source: Jesus. Peace will come when you welcome Him to reign in your life as the Lord of your heart.

## DWELL ON THIS

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*Today I will let my heart be ruled by the peace of Christ and give up my desire for spiritual self-rule.*





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