

7 DAY DEVOTIONAL

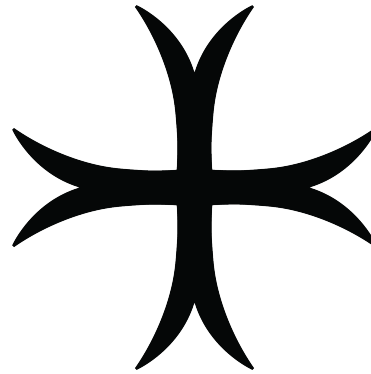
DAY ONE | FOLLOWING JESUS

BIG THOUGHT

The key to being a success is following Jesus.

Mark 1:14-20 (ESV)

14“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” 16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.”



Following Jesus

Jesus called those men to follow Him, and even today God is calling us to follow Him. God desires that we would live for Him and follow His teachings. Have you ever played the game follow the leader? The game consists of one person who is the leader and the rest of the players are the followers. When the leader does something, the rest of the players have to follow exactly what the leader does. This game is fun if you are the leader, and not always as fun for those following the instructions. Most people don't want to be a follower, they rather be the one in charge, the one to call the shot, run the show.

Let me ask you a question. What does it mean to follow Jesus? The word FOLLOW in the dictionary means – To seek to attain; to copy after; to go after; to engage

When Jesus asks us to follow Him; He wants us to go after Him with all of our heart.

Matthew 6:33 (ESV) – “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

AS WE FOLLOW JESUS –

- We love like Jesus!
- We forgive like Jesus!
- We care like Jesus!
- We live like Jesus!

QUOTE

“Fans will try and make Jesus one of many. Some fans may even make Jesus the first of many. But when Jesus defines the relationship he makes it clear; he wants to be your one and only.”

– Kyle Idleman

FOLLOWING JESUS CONSISTS OF –

- The desire to follow Him.
- Having faith in Jesus and who He is.
- Accepting the offer of eternal life that He extends to us.
- Growing in your relationship with Jesus.

James 4:8 (ESV) – “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

Following Jesus is what being a Christian is all about. To be a Christian is to be united to Christ, to walk with Him, to imitate him. Following Jesus is more than just believing in Jesus. It means following the path of the cross. I want to encourage you to follow Jesus like you’ve got nothing to lose, because when you follow Him, you have everything to gain.

Matthew 10:38 (ESV) – “And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

As you grow closer to Jesus, your life will reflect Him more clearly, and people will be able to see who Jesus is by the life you live. When you follow Jesus, life changes from ordinary to extraordinary.

John 14:23 (ESV) – “Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

Following Jesus is making a very personal individual decision. It is a choice every human is offered and must choose through faith. God intended for everyone from every nation to accept His son. Once you have made the decision to follow Jesus, you become one of His disciples. The word disciple actually means to learn or follow.

Remember this, everyone is following something or someone. The most important person to follow is Jesus Christ. Following Jesus in everyday life means becoming more like Jesus every day. Jesus is calling you to follow Him.

How are you going to respond?

7 DAY DEVOTIONAL

DAY TWO | A GOD FIRST LIFE

BIG THOUGHT

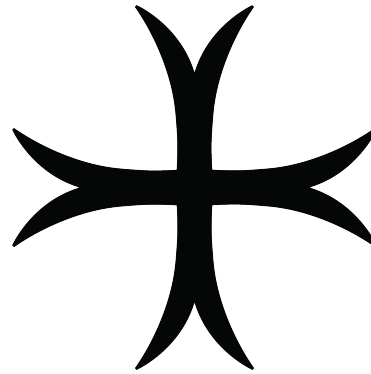
You will never ever be in second place by choosing to put God first every day.

Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 22:37 (ESV)

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”



A God First Life

Putting God first is so important in your life. It is the foundation of growing your relationship with Him. Do you know that God desires to be first in your life? He longs to spend time with you every day. You are His child, and He loves you so much. You are His son or daughter. Just like He knows you, He wants you to know Him personally. Your life foundation needs to be built on Him.

Matthew 7:24-27 (ESV) –“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

When you put God first, you are building your house (your life) on the Rock, the Rock of Christ. The Bible says in

WHEN WE LIVE A GOD FIRST LIFE –

- We put Him first above everything else.
- We focus on Him.
- He is our rock, our foundation.

QUOTE

“When you put God first, ALL other things fall into place. Keep Him first!”

THINK ON IT –

- Put God first and build your foundation on the one and only true Rock!

Ephesians 2:20, that Christ Jesus is the cornerstone that we are to build our foundation on. Jesus is our Cornerstone, our essential piece, our core; He is our strong foundation! As you spend time with Him and grow in your relationship with Him, your foundation grows deeper and gets stronger. There are times in our lives that we can put other things before God like... ourself, our friends, our job, sports, or Social Media.

God wants to be the center of your life. He wants to be at the core of who you are. I want to challenge you to put Him first, to make Him the priority and focus every day in your life. When you put God first, all other things fall into place.

Matthew 6:24 (ESV) - “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Matthew 6:21(ESV) - “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

STORY – The Leaning Tower of Pisa

Scientists travel every year to the city of Pisa in Northern Italy to measure the buildings slow descent. They report that the 179-foot tower built in 1173, moves about one-twentieth of an inch per year. It is now 17 feet out of plumb (alignment). Recent renovations may have saved the 810 year old tower and prevented it from collapsing. Pisa means marshy land. Did you know that the tower began to lean before the builders completed building it? In fact, the foundation is only 10 feet deep! The Leaning Tower of Pisa leans, because it is built on faulty foundation.

In life, if God isn't your number one priority, your foundation will be faulty and unsteady. Your foundation needs to be built on the Word of God. When your foundation is built on God, it will be strong and able to withstand anything that may be thrown at it.

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DAY THREE | PRAYER

BIG THOUGHT

Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.

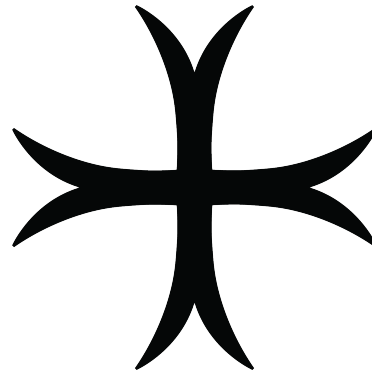
- Billy Graham

James 5:16 (ESV)

James 5:16 (ESV) - "...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

Matthew 7:7 (ESV)

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."



Prayer

Prayer is simply having a conversation with our Heavenly Father. It is us staying connected with God, and God staying connected with us. Every day we need to be communicating with God through prayer.

STORY – The Courier

A man who worked as a courier for a photo lab got a message instructing him to pick up a package at an unfamiliar company with a long difficult name. He looked upward and exclaimed, "God, where am I supposed to go?" Just then he received another message, this time with the customer's exact address. A man nearby witnessed this scene. Raising his arms to the heavens, he cried, "Why don't you ever answer me?"

Do you ever wish that prayer worked like that? You pray and instantly a voice gives you the answer you're looking for! Sign me up! It doesn't always work that way, but that doesn't mean that God isn't listening.

Psalm 145:18 (ESV) – "The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."

PRAYER IS TALKING AND LISTENING TO GOD, SIMILAR TO HOW YOU HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH A FRIEND.

QUOTE

“There is power in prayer.”

THINK ON IT –

- Take a few minutes to pray (talk) to God. He is waiting to hear from you.
- Something that I have told people for years is to set an empty 7-Up bottle next to their bed, and let it be a reminder that when they wake up in the morning to give God the first seven minutes of their day.

See, God is always there and is always listening. Don't ever feel like God isn't listening to you. Don't ever feel like God is not concerned about your prayers or your cries. He is concerned about everything. When you pray, He hears you.

As you seek the Lord, the Lord will answer your prayers. He is waiting for you to seek Him and spend time in His presence. He wants your attention.

In God's Word, He gives an example of how to pray. It is called “The Lord's Prayer”.

Matthew 6:9-13 (ESV) — “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

I love this prayer. It is a wonderful outline to use for your personal prayer life. God is your Heavenly Father. His will is going to be done. His will is perfect. He forgives us, and you need to forgive those who have hurt you or done you wrong. God doesn't tempt you, but He makes a way for you to escape temptation and wrong.

It's important to understand that prayer is easy. The more you pray, the better you get at praying. You can pray anywhere and everywhere. Believe in the power of prayer, because prayer changes lives; it changes circumstances; it makes impossible situations possible; it gives hope to the hopeless and brokenhearted.

It is important to pray to God every single day. Invite Him into every part of your life.

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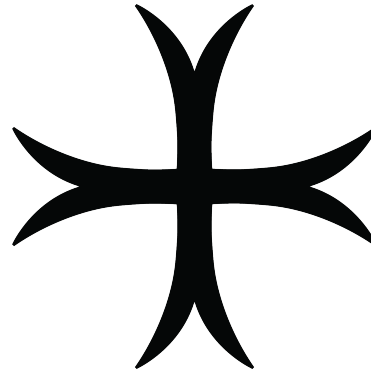
DAY FOUR | PLANTED IN GOD'S HOUSE

BIG THOUGHT

Don't be a part-time Christian who demands a full-time God. Be planted in God's house, so you can flourish.

Psalm 92:12-13 (ESV)

"The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God."



Planted in God's House

Psalm 92:12-13 (ESV) - "The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God."

I love how the Bible says in verse 12, the righteous flourish like a palm tree. Palm trees can flourish in all types of conditions...hot, cold, desert, even during hurricanes.

In 1979, Hurricane Fredricks winds blew thousands of pine trees down and hundreds of oak trees, but what was incredible was that the palm trees remained rooted and intact. Palm trees are known for their flexibility. During a hurricane, they will bend, almost completely to the ground, but they will not break. After a storm, the palm tree straightens back up and is even stronger than before the storm happened. The palm tree has a deep root system that goes down until it strikes water. Of all the trees on earth, the palm tree breaks the tree bands that are placed around it when it is a young tree. Other trees allow the bands to grow into them. The palm tree in many historical cultures were seen as symbols of flexibility, strength and victory.

Psalm 84:10 (ESV)

“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

QUOTE

When circumstances around you are dismal, depressing or defeating, there is another reality that you can plug into. The reality of Heaven is cheering you on. You'll never hear Heaven talk of defeat. You have to be planted before you can flourish. God wants you planted in a church family, so that you can truly grow and develop into all God has for you!

THINK ON IT –

- Are you committed and planted in God's house?
- What are some things you need to change in order to be or stay planted, so your life can flourish?

Remember, when Jesus was making His entry into Jerusalem, the crowd laid down palm tree branches as He entered the city. They laid down palm tree branches symbolizing that Jesus is our strength! He has already won the victory!

John 12:13 (ESV) - “So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!’”

Psalm 92 says that when you are planted in the house of God (in the church), you will be blessed. The word planted means being stationary or being permanent. When something is planted, it doesn't move around. It is in a fixed location. Remember, nothing blossoms without being planted. We really only have 2 choices, we can be planted or unplanted. Another way we could say it is you can live life by design or by default.

Hebrews 10:25 (ESV) - “...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” -

I am grateful that when my family and I gave our lives to Jesus Christ, He changed us forever. My father made a decision to bring us to church every week. He made church a priority in our family. The result of this was God's keeping power in my life.

Life is about choices, and the choices we make affect what we do and how we live. The enemy is always looking to maneuver you out of a place of God's power into a weak and vulnerable position. When you get into a spiritual battle, the enemy will try to pull you away from church, because church is a place of power. When you get up on a Sunday morning, and the enemy starts giving you all sorts of reasons why you should stay home from church, that's when you should hustle and make sure you get out that door and into church. You can't let the enemy make you forsake the place of power.

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DAY FIVE | ALIGNMENT

BIG THOUGHT

If you are spending time with the wrong people, you won't meet the right people.

Proverbs 27:17 (ESV)

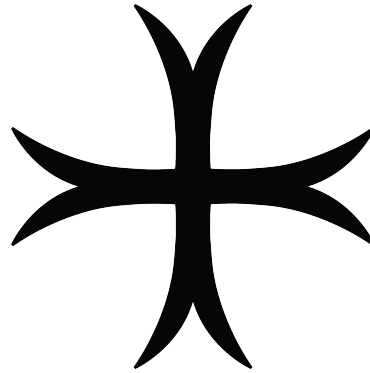
"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."

Facts on the Science of Friendships:

They can extend life expectancy.

Friendships lower the chances of heart disease.

They ignite the part of the brain that makes us feel good.



Alignment

Friends influence you, for better or worse, more than you think.

Proverbs 27:17 "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."

Your friends will either lead you in the right direction or wrong direction. It is important to choose wisely who you will spend your time with.

What impact have your friends had on you lately? It really does matter which friends you are spending time with. Good friendships and the right alignments increase your sense of belonging and purpose, boost your happiness, reduce your stress and improve your self-confidence and self-worth. The right relationships help you get through the difficult times in life. If you change your atmosphere (the atmosphere of who you hang out with), you can change your future. If you want to win in life, then you have to change your atmosphere and have the right, positive alignments in your life.

READ

In the Old Testament, read the book of Jonah for the whole story.

QUOTE

“Choose your friends wisely, for they will determine the direction your life goes.”

Proverbs 17:17 (ESV)

“A friend loves at all times...”

Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV)

“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

STORY –

In the book of Jonah, we see where Jonah was called by God to go to the people of Nineveh and tell them about the Lord. Jonah had no desire to go to Nineveh, because the people were very wicked. Instead of obeying God, he boarded a ship going in the opposite direction. He chose to run from the Lord. To get his attention, the Lord sent a huge storm that frightened the crew, causing them to panic and throw all of their cargo into the sea, keeping the ship afloat. When the storm wasn't calming, the captain went to find Jonah. They discovered that he was running from God and the cause of this great storm. They cast lots and threw Jonah overboard. Immediately, the storm ceased. Let's go back to the beginning of the book of Jonah.

Jonah 1:5 (ESV) - “Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep.”

When you hang out with the wrong people, you will lose what is most valuable to you. The people on the ship lost their valuables and goods, because of the very fact that Jonah was on the ship. Be careful who you are hanging out with.

Proverbs 12:26 (ESV) - “One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.”

What this verse means, is that it is important to be very careful how you pick your friends, because they can lead you in the wrong direction. Think about not having the right alignments in your life. What can happen? If a car is not aligned right, the tires will wear out very quickly. By not aligning the onboard airplane system correctly, an airplane could crash or even get lost. If you don't align a broken bone properly, you risk not being able to have full use of that leg or arm. Alignment is very important!

READ

.....
In the New Testament, read Mark 2:1-12 for the story of the paralyzed man.

Psalm 73:24 (ESV)

.....
"You guide me with your counsel..."

We always need God's counsel in our lives regarding our relationships. Some relationships are for a season, some for a reason, and some for a lifetime. Choose wisely the people you allow into your life.

THINK ON IT –

-
- Do you have good alignments in your life?
 - What will you do to ensure that you have the correct alignments in your life?

In Mark 2:1-12 we see the story of the man who was paralyzed. He had friends who brought him to see Jesus, but when they got there, the house was so full of people, that they couldn't get the man to Him. The Bible tells us that they brought the paralyzed man up to the roof, made a hole, and lowered him and his bed down to Jesus. When Jesus saw the faith of his friends, he told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. He then said, Mark 2:11, "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." The man got up, picked up his bed and left healed! The paralytic man had some incredible friends. He had the right alignments. It was those right relationships that got him to Jesus, who brought his healing.

Psalm 32:8 (ESV) "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."

As we pray about the right alignments, God will help us. The people we are hanging out with should be making us better. Who you spend your time with has a great impact on your life. You can't hang out with chickens and expect to soar like the eagles. Remember, successful people find other successful people. Find friends that will make something out of their lives. Ten years from now, no one will care who was the coolest or most popular. The higher you go the tighter your circle has to become.

Think About This: You are wondering whether your car needs an alignment. First, look at all the tires on your car. If there is uneven tire wear, then this is an indicator that your car is out of alignment. Or your car seems to be drifting to one side, even when you are driving straight. It is normal wear and tear from driving. Hanging out with the right people is important. Like our cars, we want to ensure that we are walking straight on the path that God has for us. This is why we have to take inventory of our relationships. We always need to pray and ask God for his strength. Pray for the right alignments in life, because who you do life with is important.

7 DAY DEVOTIONAL

DAY SIX | ELEVATE YOUR LIFE

BIG THOUGHT

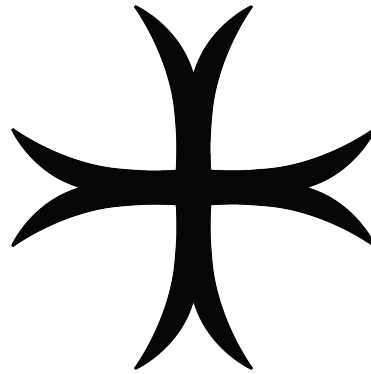
Elevate your life by elevating your thinking.

John 10:10 (ESV)

Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Think Higher

When you choose to elevate your life, your thinking must change. In order to go to the next level, it will require a different level of thinking. It is time to think higher (elevate your thinking).



Elevate Your Life

Don't let small thinking cut your life down to size. Think big, aim high, act bold. You and I were created to live life on a higher level. With Jesus in our lives, as our Lord and Savior, we can live this elevated life that He desires for us to live. In order to do this, we have to think His way, not our way.

To elevate means to lift something to a higher position; or to raise something to a more important level. If you want to Go UP, you have to elevate your thinking and give up your way and follow God's way. If we elevate our thoughts, we can elevate our life.

You're not what you think you are, but what you think, you are!

Psalm 108:5 (ESV) – "Be exalted, O God above the heavens! (Elevated) Let your glory be over all the earth!"

When we elevate God, He elevates us. It's that simple.

1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV)

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 8:37 (ESV)

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

THINK ON IT –

- Our thoughts determine our outcome!
- Be mindful of the thoughts you are thinking, and remember, God wants you to think higher!
- Let’s think like Him!

Matthew 6:33 (ESV) – “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Deuteronomy 30:19 (ESV) – “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,”

Let’s choose life, by thinking right. Our minds are powerful, and our thoughts shape who we are and who we become. Always strive to elevate your thinking. We all want to have a good life. We desire to live to our full potential. This can happen when we are elevating our thinking by not thinking our way, but thinking God’s way.

Romans 12:2(ESV) – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Changing the way we think changes our perspective which changes how we act in the world. Your thoughts shape your life. We are to take every thought captive.

2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) – “...and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

What you choose to see determines your reality. If we shift our focus to seeing things God’s way and elevate our thinking, we will go to a new level in our lives.

The word of God helps us to elevate our thinking. We want our life to go in the right direction, and that direction is dictated by right thoughts. So we have to be careful what we are thinking about. You can’t control what anyone else does or says or thinks, but you can control what you think. Don’t let your thoughts control you, you control your thoughts.

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DAY SEVEN | WITH GOD ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

BIG THOUGHT

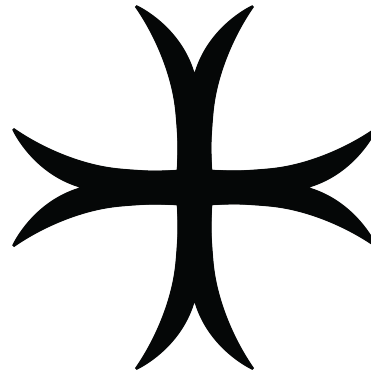
The fact that with God all things are possible is proven by the fact that God created the entire universe out of nothing.

Matthew 19:26 (ESV)

“But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.”

God Can Do the Impossible

- God can do anything!
- God can change any situation.
- God can turn anything around for good.



With God Anything is Possible

Do you ever find yourself facing a seemingly impossible situation? It might be a relationship that seems broken or a financial issue that’s overwhelming. With God there’s always hope, no matter what it looks like. Nothing is impossible with God. His power makes all things possible.

Luke 1:37 (ESV) - “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

This is the theme of the Word of God. With God ALL things are possible. It doesn’t say some, or a few, but all - ALL things. God is a good God. He is love. He is a God that restores and revives. He can do the impossible. It is because of Him, all things are possible. There is nothing too difficult for Him. Think about this for a moment - when you read that all things are possible, what comes to mind? Are you filled with hope, faith, expectation, and power? If not, you should be. He’s a good, good God. He loves you unconditionally, and He wants the best for you.

QUOTE

“Don’t put limits on God. He is limitless. He can do the impossible.”

Philippians 4:13 (ESV)

“I can do all things through him (Christ) who strengthens me.”

THINK ON IT –

- Do you believe that with God all things are possible?
- What have you allowed in your life to stop you from believing that God can do the impossible for you?

Remember, God has no limitation; He has all power and authority. This means, there is nothing that He can’t do. There’s no person He can’t save. There’s no marriage He can’t put back together. There’s no need He can’t meet. There’s no sickness He can’t heal. There’s no financial situation He can’t turn around. There’s nothing impossible for God!

God can and will do the impossible. Our job is to believe and take action. People stop believing God every day; they give up. Don’t stop believing, don’t give up, trust God. Fight to remain faithful, and stay in the game of life. Don’t let the enemy win.

Galatians 6:9 (ESV) - “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Put your hope, faith, and trust in the God of the impossible. Stay faithful, don’t give up, and see what God will do!

STORY - Chess is a game that was created by a King in India in the 6th century. It is a two-player board game on a checkered board with 64 squares arranged in an 8x8 grid. Each player begins the game with 16 pieces: 1 king, 1 queen, 2 rooks, 2 knights, 2 bishops, and 8 pawns. Each of the 6 piece types move differently, but the king is the most important of all. There are 400 different positions after each player makes 1 move a piece. There are 72,084 positions after 2 moves a piece are made. There are 9 million + positions after 3 moves a piece. The main object of the game is to trap the opponent’s king, so that it cannot move without being lost. If a player’s king is threatened with capture, it is said to be in check, and the player must remove the threat of capture on the next move. If this cannot be done, the king is said to be in checkmate, and the game is over.

Much like chess, God will always reposition you to win, because THE King, Jesus, doesn’t lose. God can do the impossible!