

**31 Days in Step
with Christ
with
Oswald Chambers**

Day 1

Is My Sacrifice Living?

Abraham built an altar...; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar... (Genesis 22:9)

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). 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). This is what is acceptable to God.

Day 2

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)

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). 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). 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."

Day 3

It is the Lord!

Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

(John 20:28)

Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink" (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). 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?

Day 4

Am I Looking to God?

Look to Me, and be saved... (Isaiah 45:22)

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.

Day 5

The Cost of Sanctification

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely...

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

When we pray, asking God to sanctify us, are we prepared to measure up to what that really means? We take the word *sanctification* much too lightly. Are we prepared to pay the cost of sanctification? The cost will be a deep restriction of all our earthly concerns, and an extensive cultivation of all our godly concerns. Sanctification means to be intensely focused on God's point of view. It means to secure and to keep all the strength of our body, soul, and spirit for God's purpose alone. Are we really prepared for God to perform in us everything for which He separated us? And after He has done His work, are we then prepared to separate ourselves to God just as Jesus did? "For their sakes I sanctify Myself..." (John 17:19). The reason some of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized the meaning of sanctification from God's perspective. Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the nature that controlled Him will control us. Are we really prepared for what that will cost? It will cost absolutely everything in us which is not of God.

Are we prepared to be caught up into the full meaning of Paul's prayer in this verse? Are we prepared to say, "Lord, make me, a sinner saved by grace, as holy as You can"? Jesus prayed that we might be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father (see John 17:21-23). The resounding evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the unmistakable family likeness to Jesus Christ, and the freedom from everything which is not like Him. Are we prepared to set ourselves apart for the Holy Spirit's work in us?

Day 6

The Inspiration of Spiritual Initiative

Arise from the dead... (Ephesians 5:14)

Not all initiative, the willingness to take the first step, is inspired by God. Someone may say to you, “Get up and get going! Take your reluctance by the throat and throw it overboard—just do what needs to be done!” That is what we mean by ordinary human initiative. But when the Spirit of God comes to us and says, in effect, “Get up and get going,” suddenly we find that the initiative is inspired.

We all have many dreams and aspirations when we are young, but sooner or later we realize we have no power to accomplish them. We cannot do the things we long to do, so our tendency is to think of our dreams and aspirations as dead. But God comes and says to us, “Arise from the dead...” When God sends His inspiration, it comes to us with such miraculous power that we are able to “arise from the dead” and do the impossible. The remarkable thing about spiritual initiative is that the life and power comes after we “get up and get going.” God does not give us overcoming life—He gives us life as *we overcome*. When the inspiration of God comes, and He says, “Arise from the dead...,” we have to get ourselves up; God will not lift us up. Our Lord said to the man with the withered hand, “Stretch out your hand” (Matthew 12:13). As soon as the man did so, his hand was healed. But he had to take the initiative. If we will take the initiative to overcome, we will find that we have the inspiration of God, because He immediately gives us the power of life.

Day 7

The Discipline of Spiritual Perseverance

Be still, and know that I am God... (Psalm 46:10)

Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen. Perseverance means more than just hanging on, which may be only exposing our fear of letting go and falling. Perseverance is our supreme effort of refusing to believe that our hero is going to be conquered. Our greatest fear is not that we will be damned, but that somehow Jesus Christ will be defeated. Also, our fear is that the very things our Lord stood for— love, justice, forgiveness, and kindness among men— will not win out in the end and will represent an unattainable goal for us. Then there is the call to spiritual perseverance. A call not to hang on and do nothing, but to work deliberately, knowing with certainty that God will never be defeated.

If our hopes seem to be experiencing disappointment right now, it simply means that they are being purified. Every hope or dream of the human mind will be fulfilled if it is noble and of God. But one of the greatest stresses in life is the stress of waiting for God. He brings fulfillment, “because you have kept My command to persevere . . .” (Revelation 3:10).

Continue to persevere spiritually.

Day 8

Taking the Next Step

...in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses.

(2 Corinthians 6:4)

When you have no vision from God, no enthusiasm left in your life, and no one watching and encouraging you, it requires the grace of Almighty God to take the next step in your devotion to Him, in the reading and studying of His Word, in your family life, or in your duty to Him. It takes much more of the grace of God, and a much greater awareness of drawing upon Him, to take that next step, than it does to preach the gospel.

Every Christian must experience the essence of the incarnation by bringing the next step down into flesh-and-blood reality and by working it out with his hands. We lose interest and give up when we have no vision, no encouragement, and no improvement, but only experience our everyday life with its trivial tasks. The thing that really testifies for God and for the people of God in the long run is steady perseverance, even when the work cannot be seen by others. And the only way to live an undefeated life is to live looking to God. Ask God to keep the eyes of your spirit open to the risen Christ, and it will be impossible for drudgery to discourage you. Never allow yourself to think that some tasks are beneath your dignity or too insignificant for you to do, and remind yourself of the example of Christ in John 13:1-17.

Day 9

The Servant's Primary Goal

We make it our aim...to be well pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

"We make it our aim..." It requires a conscious decision and effort to keep our primary goal constantly in front of us. It means holding ourselves to the highest priority year in and year out; not making our first priority to win souls, or to establish churches, or to have revivals, but seeking only "to be well pleasing to Him." It is not a lack of spiritual experience that leads to failure, but a lack of working to keep our eyes focused and on the right goal. At least once a week examine yourself before God to see if your life is measuring up to the standard He has for you. Paul was like a musician who gives no thought to audience approval, if he can only catch a look of approval from his Conductor.

Any goal we have that diverts us even to the slightest degree from the central goal of being "approved to God" (2 Timothy 2:15) may result in our rejection from further service for Him. When you discern where the goal leads, you will understand why it is so necessary to keep "looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). Paul spoke of the importance of controlling his own body so that it would not take him in the wrong direction. He said, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest...I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

I must learn to relate everything to the primary goal, maintaining it without interruption. My worth to God publicly is measured by what I really am in my private life. Is my primary goal in life to please Him and to be acceptable to Him, or is it something less, no matter how lofty it may sound?

Day 10

The Glory That's Unsurpassed

...the Lord Jesus...has sent me that you may receive your sight... (Acts 9:17)

When Paul received his sight, he also received spiritual insight into the Person of Jesus Christ. His entire life and preaching from that point on were totally consumed with nothing but Jesus Christ—"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul never again allowed anything to attract and hold the attention of his mind and soul except the face of Jesus Christ.

We must learn to maintain a strong degree of character in our lives, even to the level that has been revealed in our vision of Jesus Christ.

The lasting characteristic of a spiritual man is the ability to understand correctly the meaning of the Lord Jesus Christ in his life, and the ability to explain the purposes of God to others. The overruling passion of his life is Jesus Christ. Whenever you see this quality in a person, you get the feeling that he is truly a man after God's own heart (see Acts 13:22).

Never allow anything to divert you from your insight into Jesus Christ. It is the true test of whether you are spiritual or not. To be unspiritual means that other things have a growing fascination for you.

Since mine eyes have looked on Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside,
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Gazing on the Crucified.

Day 11

What to Do When Your Burden is Overwhelming

Cast your burden on the Lord... (Psalm 55:22)

We must recognize the difference between burdens that are right for us to bear and burdens that are wrong. We should never bear the burdens of sin or doubt, but there are some burdens placed on us by God which He does not intend to lift off. God wants us to roll them back on Him—to literally “cast your burden,” which He has given you, “on the Lord...” If we set out to serve God and do His work but get out of touch with Him, the sense of responsibility we feel will be overwhelming and defeating. But if we will only roll back on God the burdens He has placed on us, He will take away that immense feeling of responsibility, replacing it with an awareness and understanding of Himself and His presence.

Many servants set out to serve God with great courage and with the right motives. But with no intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ, they are soon defeated. They do not know what to do with their burden, and it produces weariness in their lives. Others will see this and say, “What a sad end to something that had such a great beginning!”

“Cast your burden on the Lord...” You have been bearing it all, but you need to deliberately place one end on God’s shoulder. “...the government will be upon His shoulder” (Isaiah 9:6). Commit to God whatever burden He has placed on you. Don’t just cast it aside, but put it over onto Him and place yourself there with it. You will see that your burden is then lightened by the sense of companionship. But you should never try to separate yourself from your burden.

Day 12

All or Nothing?

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment...and plunged into the sea. (John 21:7)

Have you ever had a crisis in your life in which you deliberately, earnestly, and recklessly abandoned everything? It is a crisis of the will. You may come to that point many times externally, but it will amount to nothing. The true deep crisis of abandonment, or total surrender, is reached internally, not externally. The giving up of only external things may actually be an indication of your being in total bondage.

Have you deliberately committed your will to Jesus Christ? It is a transaction of the will, not of emotion; any positive emotion that results is simply a superficial blessing arising out of the transaction. If you focus your attention on the emotion, you will never make the transaction. Do not ask God what the transaction is to be, but make the determination to surrender your will regarding whatever you see, whether it is in the shallow or the deep, profound places internally.

If you have heard Jesus Christ's voice on the waves of the sea, you can let your convictions and your consistency take care of themselves by concentrating on maintaining your intimate relationship to Him.

Day 13

Spontaneous Love

Love suffers long and is kind... (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Love is not premeditated—it is spontaneous; that is, it bursts forth in extraordinary ways. There is nothing of precise certainty in Paul's description of love. We cannot predetermine our thoughts and actions by saying, "Now I will never think any evil thoughts, and I will believe everything that Jesus would have me to believe." No, the characteristic of love is spontaneity. We don't deliberately set the statements of Jesus before us as our standard, but when His Spirit is having His way with us, we live according to His standard without even realizing it. And when we look back, we are amazed at how unconcerned we have been over our emotions, which is the very evidence that real spontaneous love was there. The nature of everything involved in the life of God in us is only discerned when we have been through it and it is in our past.

The fountains from which love flows are in God, not in us. It is absurd to think that the love of God is naturally in our hearts, as a result of our own nature. His love is there only because it "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit..." (Romans 5:5).

If we try to prove to God how much we love Him, it is a sure sign that we really don't love Him. The evidence of our love for Him is the absolute spontaneity of our love, which flows naturally from His nature within us. And when we look back, we will not be able to determine why we did certain things, but we can know that we did them according to the spontaneous nature of His love in us. The life of God exhibits itself in this spontaneous way because the fountains of His love are in the Holy Spirit.

Day 14

Liberty and the Standards of Jesus

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free... (Galatians 5:1)

A spiritually-minded person will never come to you with the demand—“Believe this and that”; a spiritually-minded person will demand that you align your life with the standards of Jesus. We are not asked to believe the Bible, but to believe the One whom the Bible reveals (see John 5:39-40). We are called to present liberty for the conscience of others, not to bring them liberty for their thoughts and opinions. And if we ourselves are free with the liberty of Christ, others will be brought into that same liberty—the liberty that comes from realizing the absolute control and authority of Jesus Christ.

Always measure your life solely by the standards of Jesus. Submit yourself to His yoke, and His alone; and always be careful never to place a yoke on others that is not of Jesus Christ. It takes God a long time to get us to stop thinking that unless everyone sees things exactly as we do, they must be wrong. That is never God's view. There is only one true liberty—the liberty of Jesus at work in our conscience enabling us to do what is right.

Don't get impatient with others. Remember how God dealt with you—with patience and with gentleness. But never water down the truth of God. Let it have its way and never apologize for it. Jesus said, “Go...and make *disciples*...” (Matthew 28:19), not, “Make converts to your own thoughts and opinions.”

Day 15

Our Careful Unbelief

...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. (Matthew 6:25)

Jesus summed up commonsense carefulness in the life of a disciple as *unbelief*. If we have received the Spirit of God, He will squeeze right through our lives, as if to ask, “Now where do I come into this relationship, this vacation you have planned, or these new books you want to read?” And He always presses the point until we learn to make Him our first consideration. Whenever we put other things first, there is confusion.

“...do not worry about your life...” Don’t take the pressure of your provision upon yourself. It is not only wrong to worry, it is unbelief; worrying means we do not believe that God can look after the practical details of our lives, and it is never anything but those details that worry us. Have you ever noticed what Jesus said would choke the Word He puts in us? Is it the devil? No—“the cares of this world” (Matthew 13:22). It is always our little worries. We say, “I will not trust when I cannot see”—and that is where unbelief begins. The only cure for unbelief is obedience to the Spirit.

The greatest word of Jesus to His disciples is *abandon*.

Day 16

Put God First

Jesus did not commit Himself to them...for He knew what was in man. (John 2:24-25)

Put Trust in God First. Our Lord never put His trust in any person. Yet He was never suspicious, never bitter, and never lost hope for anyone, because He put His trust in God first. He trusted absolutely in what God's grace could do for others. If I put my trust in human beings first, the end result will be my despair and hopelessness toward everyone. I will become bitter because I have insisted that people be what no person can ever be—absolutely perfect and right. Never trust anything in yourself or in anyone else, except the grace of God.

Put God's Will First. "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9).

A person's obedience is to what he sees to be a need—our Lord's obedience was to the will of His Father. The rallying cry today is, "We must get to work! The heathen are dying without God. We must go and tell them about Him." But we must first make sure that God's "needs" and His will in us personally are being met. Jesus said, "...tarry...until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The purpose of our Christian training is to get us into the right relationship to the "needs" of God and His will. Once God's "needs" in us have been met, He will open the way for us to accomplish His will, meeting His "needs" elsewhere.

Put God's Son First. "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me" (Matthew 18:5).

God came as a baby, giving and entrusting Himself to me. He expects my personal life to be a "Bethlehem." Am I allowing my

natural life to be slowly transformed by the indwelling life of the Son of God? God's ultimate purpose is that His Son might be exhibited in me.

Day 17

Getting There

...*come, follow Me.* (Luke 18:22)

Where our individual desire dies and sanctified surrender lives. One of the greatest hindrances in coming to Jesus is the excuse of our own individual temperament. We make our temperament and our natural desires barriers to coming to Jesus. Yet the first thing we realize when we do come to Jesus is that He pays no attention whatsoever to our natural desires. We have the idea that we can dedicate our gifts to God. However, you cannot dedicate what is not yours. There is actually only one thing you can dedicate to God, and that is your right to yourself (see Romans 12:1). If you will give God your right to yourself, He will make a holy experiment out of you—and His experiments always succeed. The one true mark of a saint of God is the inner creativity that flows from being totally surrendered to Jesus Christ. In the life of a saint there is this amazing Well, which is a continual Source of original life. The Spirit of God is a Well of water springing up perpetually fresh. A saint realizes that it is God who engineers his circumstances; consequently there are no complaints, only unrestrained surrender to Jesus. Never try to make your experience a principle for others, but allow God to be as creative and original with others as He is with you.

If you abandon everything to Jesus, and come when He says, "Come," then He will continue to say, "Come," through you. You will go out into the world reproducing the echo of Christ's "Come." That is the result in every soul who has abandoned all and come to Jesus.

Have I come to Him? Will I come *now*?

Day 18

Acquainted with Grief

He is...a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:3)

We are not “acquainted with grief” in the same way our Lord was acquainted with it. We endure it and live through it, but we do not become intimate with it. At the beginning of our lives we do not bring ourselves to the point of dealing with the reality of sin. We look at life through the eyes of reason and say that if a person will control his instincts, and educate himself, he can produce a life that will slowly evolve into the life of God. But as we continue on through life, we find the presence of something which we have not yet taken into account, namely, sin—and it upsets all of our thinking and our plans. Sin has made the foundation of our thinking unpredictable, uncontrollable, and irrational.

We have to recognize that sin is a fact of life, not just a shortcoming. Sin is blatant mutiny against God, and either sin or God must die in my life. The New Testament brings us right down to this one issue—if sin rules in me, God’s life in me will be killed; if God rules in me, sin in me will be killed. There is nothing more fundamental than that. The culmination of sin was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and what was true in the history of God on earth will also be true in your history and in mine—that is, sin will kill the life of God in us. We must mentally bring ourselves to terms with this fact of sin. It is the only explanation why Jesus Christ came to earth, and it is the explanation of the grief and sorrow of life.

Day 19

Held by the Grip of God

I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (Philippians 3:12)

Never choose to be a worker for God, but once God has placed His call on you, woe be to you if you “turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:32). We are not here to work for God because we have chosen to do so, but because God has “laid hold of” us. And once He has done so, we never have this thought, “Well, I’m really not suited for this.” What you are to preach is also determined by God, not by your own natural leanings or desires. Keep your soul steadfastly related to God, and remember that you are called not simply to convey your testimony but also to preach the gospel. Every Christian must testify to the truth of God, but when it comes to the call to preach, there must be the agonizing grip of God’s hand on you—your life is in the grip of God for that very purpose. How many of us are held like that?

Never water down the Word of God, but preach it in its undiluted sternness. There must be unflinching faithfulness to the Word of God, but when you come to personal dealings with others, remember who you are—you are not some special being created in heaven, but a sinner saved by grace.

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but *one thing I do*...I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

Day 20

The Conditions of Discipleship

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also...And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me...So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26-27, 33)

If the closest relationships of a disciple's life conflict with the claims of Jesus Christ, then our Lord requires instant obedience to Himself. Discipleship means personal, passionate devotion to a Person—our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a vast difference between devotion to a person and devotion to principles or to a cause. Our Lord never proclaimed a cause—He proclaimed personal devotion to Himself. To be a disciple is to be a devoted bondservant motivated by love for the Lord Jesus. Many of us who call ourselves Christians are not truly devoted to Jesus Christ. No one on earth has this passionate love for the Lord Jesus unless the Holy Spirit has given it to him. We may admire, respect, and revere Him, but we cannot love Him on our own. The only One who truly loves the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and it is He who has “poured out in our hearts” the very “love of God” (Romans 5:5). Whenever the Holy Spirit sees an opportunity to glorify Jesus through you, He will take your entire being and set you ablaze with glowing devotion to Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is a life characterized by true and spontaneous creativity. Consequently, a disciple is subject to the same charge that was leveled against Jesus Christ, namely, the charge of inconsistency. But Jesus Christ was always consistent in His relationship to God, and a Christian must be consistent in his relationship to the life of the Son of God in him,

not consistent to strict, unyielding doctrines. People pour themselves into their own doctrines, and God has to blast them out of their preconceived ideas before they can become devoted to Jesus Christ.

Day 21

One of God's Great "Dont's"

Do not fret—it only causes harm. (Psalm 37:8)

Fretting means getting ourselves "out of joint" mentally or spiritually. It is one thing to say, "Do not fret," but something very different to have such a nature that you find yourself unable to fret. It's easy to say, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7) until our own little world is turned upside down and we are forced to live in confusion and agony like so many other people. Is it possible to "rest in the Lord" then? If this "Do not" doesn't work there, then it will not work anywhere. This "Do not" must work during our days of difficulty and uncertainty, as well as our peaceful days, or it will never work. And if it will not work in your particular case, it will not work for anyone else. Resting in the Lord is not dependent on your external circumstances at all, but on your relationship with God Himself.

Worrying always results in sin. We tend to think that a little anxiety and worry are simply an indication of how wise we really are, yet it is actually a much better indication of just how wicked we are. Fretting rises from our determination to have our own way. Our Lord never worried and was never anxious, because His purpose was never to accomplish His own plans but to fulfill God's plans. Fretting is wickedness for a child of God.

Have you been propping up that foolish soul of yours with the idea that your circumstances are too much for God to handle? Set all your opinions and speculations aside and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). Deliberately tell God that you will not fret about whatever concerns you. All our fretting and worrying is caused by planning without God.

Day 22

Don't Plan Without God

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. (Psalm 37:5)

Don't plan without God. God seems to have a delightful way of upsetting the plans we have made, when we have not taken Him into account. We get ourselves into circumstances that were not chosen by God, and suddenly we realize that we have been making our plans without Him—that we have not even considered Him to be a vital, living factor in the planning of our lives. And yet the only thing that will keep us from even the possibility of worrying is to bring God in as the greatest factor in all of our planning.

In spiritual issues it is customary for us to put God first, but we tend to think that it is inappropriate and unnecessary to put Him first in the practical, everyday issues of our lives. If we have the idea that we have to put on our “spiritual face” before we can come near to God, then we will never come near to Him. We must come as we are.

Don't plan with a concern for evil in mind. Does God really mean for us to plan without taking the evil around us into account? “Love...thinks no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Love is not ignorant of the existence of evil, but it does not take it into account as a factor in planning. When we were apart from God, we did take evil into account, doing all of our planning with it in mind, and we tried to reason out all of our work from its standpoint.

Don't plan with a rainy day in mind. You cannot hoard things for a rainy day if you are truly trusting Christ. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled...” (John 14:1). God will not keep your

heart from being troubled. It is a command—“*Let not...*” To do it, continually pick yourself up, even if you fall a hundred and one times a day, until you get into the habit of putting God first and planning with Him in mind.

Day 23

The Price of the Vision

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord... (Isaiah 6:1)

Our soul's personal history with God is often an account of the death of our heroes. Over and over again God has to remove our friends to put Himself in their place, and that is when we falter, fail, and become discouraged. Let me think about this personally—when the person died who represented for me all that God was, did I give up on everything in life? Did I become ill or disheartened? Or did I do as Isaiah did and see the Lord?

My vision of God is dependent upon the condition of my character. My character determines whether or not truth can even be revealed to me. Before I can say, "I saw the Lord," there must be something in my character that conforms to the likeness of God. Until I am born again and really begin to see the kingdom of God, I only see from the perspective of my own biases. What I need is God's surgical procedure—His use of external circumstances to bring about internal purification.

Your priorities must be God first, God second, and God third, until your life is continually face to face with God and no one else is taken into account whatsoever. Your prayer will then be, "In all the world there is no one but You, dear God; there is no one but You."

Keep paying the price. Let God see that you are willing to live up to the vision.

Day 24

The Miracle of Belief

My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom... (1 Corinthians 2:4)

Paul was a scholar and an orator of the highest degree; he was not speaking here out of a deep sense of humility, but was saying that when he preached the gospel, he would veil the power of God if he impressed people with the excellency of his speech. Belief in Jesus is a miracle produced only by the effectiveness of redemption, not by impressive speech, nor by wooing and persuading, but only by the sheer unaided power of God. The creative power of redemption comes through the preaching of the gospel, but never because of the personality of the preacher.

Real and effective fasting by a preacher is not fasting from food, but fasting from eloquence, from impressive diction, and from everything else that might hinder the gospel of God being presented. The preacher is there as the representative of God—“...as though God were pleading through us...” (2 Corinthians 5:20). He is there to present the gospel of God. If it is only because of my preaching that people desire to be better, they will never get close to Jesus Christ. Anything that flatters me in my preaching of the gospel will result in making me a traitor to Jesus, and I prevent the creative power of His redemption from doing its work.

“And I, if I am lifted up..., will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

Day 25

Self-Awareness

Come to Me... (Matthew 11:28)

God intends for us to live a well-rounded life in Christ Jesus, but there are times when that life is attacked from the outside. Then we tend to fall back into self-examination, a habit that we thought was gone. Self-awareness is the first thing that will upset the completeness of our life in God, and self-awareness continually produces a sense of struggling and turmoil in our lives. Self-awareness is not sin, and it can be produced by nervous emotions or by suddenly being dropped into a totally new set of circumstances. Yet it is never God's will that we should be anything less than absolutely complete in Him. Anything that disturbs our rest in Him must be rectified at once, and it is not rectified by being ignored but only by coming to Jesus Christ. If we will come to Him, asking Him to produce Christ-awareness in us, He will always do it, until we fully learn to abide in Him.

Never allow anything that divides or destroys the oneness of your life with Christ to remain in your life without facing it. Beware of allowing the influence of your friends or your circumstances to divide your life. This only serves to sap your strength and slow your spiritual growth. Beware of anything that can split your oneness with Him, causing you to see yourself as separate from Him. Nothing is as important as staying right spiritually. And the only solution is a very simple one—"Come to Me..." The intellectual, moral, and spiritual depth of our reality as a person is tested and measured by these words. Yet in every detail of our lives where we are found not to be real, we would rather dispute the findings than come to Jesus.

Day 26

Living Your Theology

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you...

(John 12:35)

Beware of not acting upon what you see in your moments on the mountaintop with God. If you do not obey the light, it will turn into darkness. "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23). The moment you forsake the matter of sanctification or neglect anything else on which God has given you His light, your spiritual life begins to disintegrate within you. Continually bring the truth out into your real life, working it out into every area, or else even the light that you possess will itself prove to be a curse.

The most difficult person to deal with is the one who has the prideful self-satisfaction of a past experience, but is not working that experience out in his everyday life. If you say you are sanctified, *show it*. The experience must be so genuine that it shows in your life. Beware of any belief that makes you self-indulgent or self-gratifying; that belief came from the pit of hell itself, regardless of how beautiful it may sound.

Your theology must work itself out, exhibiting itself in your most common everyday relationships. Our Lord said, "...unless your righteousness *exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). In other words, you must be more moral than the most moral person you know. You may know all about the doctrine of sanctification, but are you working it out in the everyday issues of your life? Every detail of your life, whether physical, moral, or spiritual, is to be judged and measured by the standard of the atonement by the Cross of Christ.

Day 27

Arguments or Obedience?

...the simplicity that is in Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

Simplicity is the secret to seeing things clearly. A saint does not *think* clearly until a long time passes, but a saint ought to see clearly without any difficulty. You cannot think through spiritual confusion to make things clear; to make things clear, you must obey. In intellectual matters you can think things out, but in spiritual matters you will only think yourself into further wandering thoughts and more confusion. If there is something in your life upon which God has put His pressure, then obey Him in that matter. Bring all your “arguments and...every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” regarding the matter, and everything will become as clear as daylight to you (2 Corinthians 10:5). Your reasoning capacity will come later, but reasoning is not how we see. We see like children, and when we try to be wise we see nothing (see Matthew 11:25).

Even the very smallest thing that we allow in our lives that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is completely sufficient to account for spiritual confusion, and spending all of our time thinking about it will still never make it clear. Spiritual confusion can only be conquered through obedience. As soon as we obey, we have discernment. This is humiliating, because when we are confused we know that the reason lies in the state of our mind. But when our natural power of sight is devoted and submitted in obedience to the Holy Spirit, it becomes the very power by which we perceive God’s will, and our entire life is kept in simplicity.

Day 28

Coming to Jesus

Come to Me... (Matthew 11:28)

Isn't it humiliating to be told that we must come to Jesus! Think of the things about which we will not come to Jesus Christ. If you want to know how real you are, test yourself by these words—"Come to Me..." In every dimension in which you are not real, you will argue or evade the issue altogether rather than come; you will go through sorrow rather than come; and you will do anything rather than come the last lap of the race of seemingly unspeakable foolishness and say, "Just as I am, I come." As long as you have even the least bit of spiritual disrespect, it will always reveal itself in the fact that you are expecting God to tell you to do something very big, and yet all He is telling you to do is to "Come..."

"Come to Me..." When you hear those words, you will know that something must happen in you before you can come. The Holy Spirit will show you what you have to do, and it will involve anything that will uproot whatever is preventing you from getting through to Jesus. And you will never get any further until you are willing to do that very thing. The Holy Spirit will search out that one immovable stronghold within you, but He cannot budge it unless you are willing to let Him do so.

How often have you come to God with your requests and gone away thinking, "I've really received what I wanted this time!" And yet you go away with nothing, while all the time God has stood with His hands outstretched not only to take you but also for you to take Him. Just think of the invincible, unconquerable, and untiring patience of Jesus, who lovingly says, "*Come to Me...*"

Day 29

How Will I Know?

Jesus answered and said, "I thank you, Father...that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes." (Matthew 11:25)

We do not grow into a spiritual relationship step by step—we either have a relationship or we do not. God does not continue to cleanse us more and more from sin—"But if we walk in the light," we *are* cleansed "from all sin" (1 John 1:7). It is a matter of obedience, and once we obey, the relationship is instantly perfected. But if we turn away from obedience for even one second, darkness and death are immediately at work again.

All of God's revealed truths are sealed until they are opened to us through obedience. You will never open them through philosophy or thinking. But once you obey, a flash of light comes immediately. Let God's truth work into you by immersing yourself in it, not by worrying into it. The only way you can get to know the truth of God is to stop trying to find out and by being born again. If you obey God in the first thing He shows you, then He instantly opens up the next truth to you. You could read volumes on the work of the Holy Spirit, when five minutes of total, uncompromising obedience would make things as clear as sunlight. Don't say, "I suppose I will understand these things someday!" You can understand them now. And it is not study that brings understanding to you, but obedience. Even the smallest bit of obedience opens heaven, and the deepest truths of God immediately become yours. Yet God will never reveal more truth about Himself to you, until you have obeyed what you know already. Beware of becoming one of the "wise and prudent." "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know..." (John 7:17).

Day 30

Is God's Will My Will?

This is the will of God, your sanctification... (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Sanctification is not a question of whether God is willing to sanctify me—is it *my* will? Am I willing to let God do in me everything that has been made possible through the atonement of the Cross of Christ? Am I willing to let Jesus become sanctification to me, and to let His life be exhibited in my human flesh? (see 1 Corinthians 1:30). Beware of saying, “Oh, I am longing to be sanctified.” No, you are not. Recognize your need, but stop longing and make it a matter of action. Receive Jesus Christ to become sanctification for you by absolute, unquestioning faith, and the great miracle of the atonement of Jesus will become real in you.

All that Jesus made possible becomes mine through the free and loving gift of God on the basis of what Christ accomplished on the cross. And my attitude as a saved and sanctified soul is that of profound, humble holiness (there is no such thing as proud holiness). It is a holiness based on agonizing repentance, a sense of inexpressible shame and degradation, and also on the amazing realization that the love of God demonstrated itself to me while I cared nothing about Him (see Romans 5:8). He completed everything for my salvation and sanctification. No wonder Paul said that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

Sanctification makes me one with Jesus Christ, and in Him one with God, and it is accomplished only through the magnificent atonement of Christ. Never confuse the effect with the cause. The effect in me is obedience, service, and prayer, and is the outcome of inexpressible thanks and adoration for the

miraculous sanctification that has been brought about in me because of the atonement through the Cross of Christ.

Day 31

The Trial of Faith

If you have faith as a mustard seed...nothing will be impossible for you. (Matthew 17:20)

We have the idea that God rewards us for our faith, and it may be so in the initial stages. But we do not earn anything through faith—faith brings us into the right relationship with God and gives Him His opportunity to work. Yet God frequently has to knock the bottom out of your experience as His saint to get you in direct contact with Himself. God wants you to understand that it is a life of *faith*, not a life of emotional enjoyment of His blessings. The beginning of your life of faith was very narrow and intense, centered around a small amount of experience that had as much emotion as faith in it, and it was full of light and sweetness. Then God withdrew His conscious blessings to teach you to “walk by faith” (2 Corinthians 5:7). And you are worth much more to Him now than you were in your days of conscious delight with your thrilling testimony.

Faith by its very nature must be tested and tried. And the real trial of faith is not that we find it difficult to trust God, but that God’s character must be proven as trustworthy in our own minds. Faith being worked out into reality must experience times of unbroken isolation. Never confuse the trial of faith with the ordinary discipline of life, because a great deal of what we call the trial of faith is the inevitable result of being alive. Faith, as the Bible teaches it, is faith in God coming against everything that contradicts Him—a faith that says, “I will remain true to God’s character whatever He may do.” The highest and the greatest expression of faith in the whole Bible is—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15).