

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Do Something / Week 4

"We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters."

1 JOHN 3:16 NLT

DAY 1

Have you ever had someone ask you to do something really difficult—that they weren't willing to do themselves? Maybe your coach told you to do 50 burpees, while he was eating a Big Mac on the sideline. Or a teacher told you to put away your phone, when they spent the entire class checking their own. One of the things that makes Jesus such an incredible leader was His constant leading by example. He told his followers to be selfless, and then demonstrated by washing his disciples' feet. He told his followers to make room for the people others discounted, and then ate meals with those people and shared conversation and blessed them. Jesus wasn't in the business of asking anyone to do something he wouldn't first do himself. And that's good news. Because Jesus told us to love one another, to look out for each other, and then Jesus went to the cross to show us exactly what that kind of love looks like. We can be confident we follow a God who isn't just telling us what to do, but showing us. **Today, consider the ways Jesus has led by example in his love for us, and think of a way you can demonstrate love for others based on what Jesus has done for us.**

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.

ROMANS 12:9 NLT

DAY 2

It's not hard to pretend. We pretend we studied really hard for the test—when we barely cracked a book. We can pretend we ran our fastest gym—when really, we barely broke a sweat. We can tell ourselves all kinds of things, maybe even convince ourselves that it's true—when the reality is, it's all one big act. This verse the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome tells us to stop pretending. Because we CAN pretend to love others. And maybe even make it look genuine. But Paul knows, that love isn't just about how it looks on the outside. It's about what we allow it to do to ourselves internally. We can pretend our way through faith. Or we can really go after the good stuff. Be the kind of person where what people see on the outside matches who we are on the inside. No pretending necessary. **Today, if you find yourself pretending to care or love or serve, take a minute and get your heart to line up with your actions. Don't just pretend to love others, like Paul says. But really love them.**

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging symbol.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1 NLT

DAY 3

Have you ever been around someone who was all talk, but no action? Like the kid on the other team who can talk total trash, but on the field, wasn't all that great. Or maybe someone who bragged about how good they were in a certain subject, but when it came time for a test, totally bombed it. Words are powerful. That's true. But they become less powerful when they stop lining up with actions. In other words, it's just like this verse from Paul to the church in Corinth says: You can talk all you want (and sound really good doing it) but if it isn't matched with love, with actions that back it up, it doesn't mean a whole lot. None of us wants to be someone whose words lose power and influence because our actions communicate something different. **Today, pay close attention to the words you say. Where do your actions match what you say? And where do they not? What can you begin doing today to make it so your words and your actions match, and love is present in both?**

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 JOHN 1:9 NLT

DAY 4

Most of us probably don't remember where our first ideas of what God is like came from. But for a lot of us, the picture we have of God isn't always positive. We think he is looking to catch us messing up. That he's keeping score of all the ways we have gotten things wrong. That he is frustrated, disappointed, and angry. In this verse from 1 John, we get a different picture of God. John tells us he is faithful. Meaning he is never giving up on us. And just—meaning righteous. God isn't looking to catch us. He's looking to connect with us. And he won't let anything stand in the way of that happening. Every time we talk to him, when we confess where we have gotten it wrong, where we messed up, he isn't shaking his head because we let him down. He is rejoicing that we are coming to him to make it right. **The next time you might feel like God is out to get you, remind yourself of this verse. He is faithful to you. And he isn't out to get you, but love you. No matter what.**

And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:13 NIV

DAY 5

Have you ever been part of a project where it felt like it was taking forever to see progress? Or maybe, even worse, it felt like you were moving backwards instead of forwards? Like cleaning your room. Or shoveling snow. Or raking leaves. Sometimes there seems to be so little happening it can feel like your work doesn't matter and it would be a better use of time to just quit. But here's the thing. While seeing the result of your hard work is extremely rewarding, that isn't the only reason we do the work. We do it because it needs to be done. Because it is building something inside of us. Because it is making us the kind of people who take on challenges, even when it isn't clear how the challenge will end up. Paul says in the letter that we should never tire of doing good. Because sometimes we see the results of our good work, but other times, the result is what happens in us when we refuse to tire of doing the right thing. We may not see a change outside of us, but inside of us, something is happening. We are becoming more like God. **Today, when you feel like giving something up, remember Paul's words: to never tire of doing good. And remind yourself more may be happening than you see right now. So, don't give up.**

So now, come back to your God.
Act with love and justice, and
always depend on him.

HOSEA 12:6 NLT

DAY 6

Have you ever tried to train a puppy? It involves a lot of patience and a lot of repetition. You do the same things over and over again, trying to get the puppy to learn there is something they should be doing when you say, "sit" or "lie down" or anything else. Sometimes it can feel like an endless cycle of trying to tell the puppy what to do, and the puppy just not getting it. That kind of describes the story in the book of Hosea—except there were no puppies. Hosea tells the story of a cycle being repeated over and over again with God and his people. There were continuous decisions to sin and not obey his commands, a turning away from him and the invitation for a new way of living that he offered his people, always followed by God taking them back, loving them, forgiving them, extending grace to them. This happens throughout the entire book! Which makes the verse from Hosea above even more powerful. We can always come back to God. Hosea is writing from the experience of watching God's people run away from him and God being dependable, reliable, and consistent in always offering grace, love, and compassion. If we ever need reassuring that God is for us, Hosea is a great reminder. We can't out sin God's grace. **Take time today to pray and thank God for His goodness that never runs out and always leaves room for us.**

I once thought these things were
valuable, but now I consider them
worthless because of what Christ
has done. Yes, everything else is
worthless when compared with the
infinite value of knowing Jesus
Christ my Lord. For this sake I have
discarded everything else,
counting it all as garbage, so that
I could gain Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8

DAY 7

Set a couple of reminders on your phone to go off throughout the day to remind yourself to read the verse.