

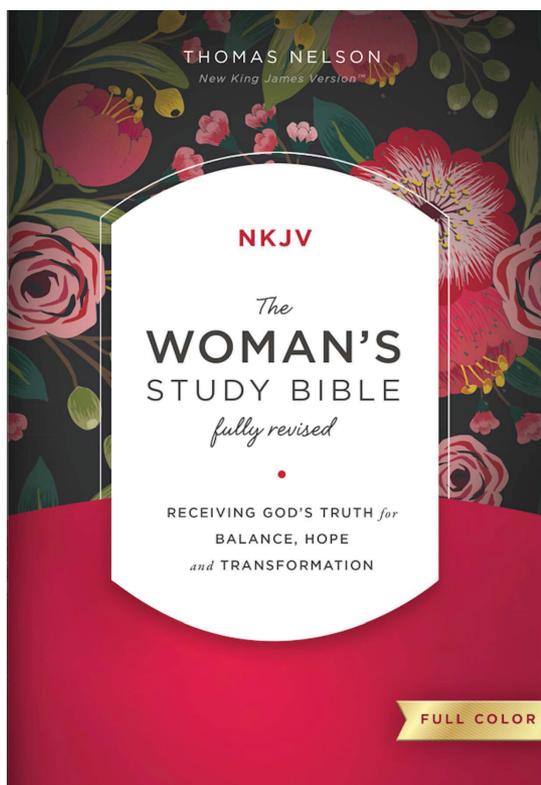


A TRANSFORMED LIFE

7-Day Devotional



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This 7-day devotional offers meaty, inspiring and challenging thoughts for ongoing spiritual growth. Drawn from *The Woman's Study Bible*, the devotions contain numerous additional references for even deeper study. Topics include: living a sacrificial life, conforming to His will, having a generous heart, reflecting His character, extending mercy and more.

DAY 1: Here Is My Life

DAY 2: Conforming to His Purpose

DAY 3: A Generous Heart

DAY 4: A Reflection of the Character of God

DAY 5: Extending Mercy to Others

DAY 6: Sincerity of Heart

DAY 7: Following Jesus

DAY 1

For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Hebrews 7:26-27

Here Is My Life

A sacrifice is an offering rendered acceptable to God. To live sacrificially is to offer your entire life to God. Such a sacrifice is acceptable to God only because of Christ's work in you; He is the final and complete Sacrifice for the atonement of sin (Hebrews 7:26, 27).

Micah knew lavish offerings were not acceptable to God (Micah 6:6–8). David and Isaiah knew acceptability with God was “a contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 66:2). Paul described this transaction as “a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Although you can never match Christ's sacrificial death—and indeed, are not tasked to do so—your self-giving is to be complete and wholehearted. Being a living sacrifice means obeying the

greatest commandments: giving God all your love, will, reason, and body (Mark 12:29–31), borne out in practical, daily service to others (Matthew 25:34–40). No expression of love, however costly, matches the price paid by Christ. The forgiven woman poured out expensive, fragrant oil to anoint Jesus' feet, but her gift also involved the recognition of her past and the risk of disclosure of her sin. Her example of sacrificial giving did not go unnoticed (Luke 7:36–50).

DAY 2

Conforming to His Purpose

A mature Christian seeks God's will and asks for God's wisdom when she is facing a major decision. Believers must pray about decisions—especially life decisions such as “Where shall I go to college?” “Should I marry this man?” “Should I bring my ailing parent to live in my home?” Such decisions have serious consequences, and they deserve the prayerful seeking of God's perfect wisdom. But knowing God's will does not happen solely in prayer. It also requires a commitment to knowing His Word.

The Bible teaches that realizing (or proving) God's will is the result of habitually conforming your thinking and behavior to God's Word over a lifetime. As a Christian woman reads the Bible day by day, her mind is renewed with a new way of thinking about life. Worldly ideas, attitudes, and prejudices are replaced by thoughts that conform to God's ways. This process takes time, and there are no shortcuts. The transformation is never complete until death.

*“I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the king's demand.”*

Daniel 2:23

The Christian who has ongoing fellowship with the Lord through His Word comes to decisions equipped with a biblically informed way of thinking. Knowing God's will at major decision points is much easier if you are seeking God's will every day in Bible reading and prayer.

DAY 3

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

A Generous Heart

A generous heart is one marked by evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life. God's love is demonstrated in the giving of His Son (John 3:16). Giving time, energies, and financial resources is the expression of a grateful heart, the natural response of a woman who realizes she has been lavished with God's grace (Ephesians 1:7, 8).

In the Old Testament, the Jewish tithe (the first one tenth) was a prescribed percentage of a person's income. It belonged to the Lord and was used to provide for the priests, the temple, and the needy. Offerings were made on special occasions (see Exodus 35:2—36:7) and as an obligatory part of public sacrifices of thanksgiving, blessing, or sorrow.

In the New Testament, emphasis is placed upon the believer's heart and attitude. Paul declared that a Christian's giving should be the overflow of a worshipful heart and a matter of conviction before God (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving to others in a spirit of forgiveness—without judgment or condemnation—brings joyful, abundant rewards (Luke 6:37, 38).

DAY 4

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

A Reflection of the Character of God

The “fruit” of the Holy Spirit refers to the godly attributes of those who “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). The true manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work in a believer’s life is that the believer becomes increasingly more like Christ in character and actions. The fruit of the Spirit should characterize the life of every believer.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit affects the believer’s relationship with God, others, and self. As Christians grow in their relationship with the Lord, they develop unselfish love, true joy, and lasting peace. As they build relationships with others, they are challenged to reflect His patience, kindness, and goodness. As they mature spiritually, Christians discover an inner strength, which results in faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

While the fruit of the Holy Spirit is not necessary for salvation, these godly virtues are evidence of salvation and the genuine work of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 7:17). The life of Christ is manifested by the fruit of the Spirit; the ministry of Christ is accomplished by the gifts of the Spirit. Followers of Christ not only receive the blessings of God but also reflect His character to all whom they encounter.

DAY 5

Extending Mercy to Others

When someone comes seeking your forgiveness, you have an obligation to grant forgiveness and extend mercy—even if the person has sinned against you repeatedly and regardless of how severe the sin may have been (Matthew 18:21, 22; Luke 17:4; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12, 13). Your forgiveness of others is a prerequisite for your receiving God’s forgiveness (Matthew 6:14, 15; Luke 11:4; James 2:13).

God does indeed forgive us (Psalm 32:1–5; 103:12; 130:3, 4; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 2:13). We forgive others, if we do not want to disobey God and break our fellowship with Him (Matthew 6:14, 15; Mark 11:25, 26; Luke 17:3, 4). No less important is the willingness for one who blames God for wrongs experienced to remember that the Lord does not direct evil against us, though He may choose to allow us to go through a trial resulting from our own sinful choices or from the sinfulness of the world in which we live (Genesis 50:20; Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 8:28, 38, 39). Finally, we must be willing to forgive ourselves since we are finite beings and since our failures often open the door for His glory and provide the environment for our own growth (Philippians 3:12–14).

“And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

Luke 17:4

Love is the prime ingredient in forgiveness (Proverbs 10:12). Often the one wounded must forgive with an act of the will, giving time for working through feelings and experiencing healing. Forgiveness comes with the removal of past offenses from the mind (Philippians 3:13), followed by meditation upon Scripture (Psalm 119:157–160), giving over to God our hurts (1 Peter 2:21–23), praying for the offender (1 Samuel 12:23; Matthew 5:44), and serving as a willing channel for God’s grace. God has promised that He will take care of all judgment so that revenge is not an option (Romans 12:19–21).

Seeking forgiveness frees you to receive God’s mercy (Proverbs 28:13). Showing mercy by a forgiving spirit brings blessing from God and gratitude from the one forgiven. A forgiving spirit brings good to yourself (Proverbs 11:17) and to others (15:23).

DAY 6

Sincerity of Heart

The essence of purity is to be free from duplicity or double mindedness, having sincerity of heart (Greek *aploteti*, lit. “singularity” or “singleness,” Ephesians 6:5). This is the root of wholeness and integrity. When James wrote “purify your hearts, you double-minded” (4:8), he equated impurity with having literally “a heart and a heart” (Psalm 12:2). He admonished his readers to seek purity, a singleness of heart toward God.

When Jesus blessed the “pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8), He affirmed that true happiness is loving God with your whole heart, desiring that your whole life please Him. In other words, purity demands the removal of all that would separate you from the holy presence of God (Habakkuk 1:13).

In the Old Testament, bodily emissions—such as discharges or open sores related to disease, menstrual flow, or the discharge of semen—caused ritual impurity (Leviticus 15). Even childbirth was included—probably because of the discharge of blood (Leviticus 12:1–8)—as were the loss of blood and contact with the dead, both of which were associated with death (Numbers 19:11).

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Mathew 5:8

Being “pure in heart,” however, involves inner cleansing: “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10). While the classical Greek word for “pure” (*katharos*) means being free from debt and guilt, the biblical usage includes more than forgiveness. To be pure means to be single-minded—free from the civil war of a divided self. It is being free from falsehood, hypocrisy, or pretense. The woman who is rightly related to Jesus Christ will be pure in heart and life (2 Timothy 2:21, 22).

Everyone who has the hope of seeing God “purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). Such a person begins and maintains a love relationship with God based on integrity and singularity of purpose. A pure life cannot exist without a pure heart set upon the Lord.

DAY 7

*Commit your works to the Lord,
And your thoughts will be established.*

Proverbs 16:3

Following Jesus

“Following Jesus” is the definition of “commitment.” Commitment demands a choice. Jesus wasted no time getting to the heart of commitment: Either the disciples would be committed to Him and deny their own desires, or they would be determined to go their own ways and deny Him (Matthew 10:32–37). The choice to commit is the same for all believers—either we deny ourselves or deny Him; either we go His way or we pursue our way.

Talk about Christ would be meaningless without the walk with Him. The disciples were to take up their crosses. Carrying the cross beam was a public declaration of Rome’s authority. Jesus challenged them to put themselves voluntarily under God’s authority, doing His will His way. Commitment demands action; it cannot be divorced from responsibility. It extends beyond our relationship to the heavenly Father to other areas of life. Ruth’s words of commitment to Naomi did not speak as loudly as did her actions. She left her family and homeland to return with Naomi to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16, 17).

Commitment definitely limits choices because it is exclusive. For example, in a commitment to marriage, God’s plan is for one woman and one man to commit to each other exclusively and permanently (Matthew 19:5, 6).

Jesus demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane that the Father’s will always takes precedence over His. The next day, He picked up His Cross, demonstrating that He would do the Father’s will the Father’s way.

Commitment builds up faith and develops character. It is a spiritual discipline (Proverbs 16:3). It is a lifetime venture, requiring time, work, and determination (Matthew 16:24).