



## 2024 New Year's Consecration Week 2: Day 8 - Day 14

### Day 8: Don't Despise Beginnings

Today's Reading: Zechariah 4:10

Nona Jones, author of the book *Killing Comparison* once said, "Stop comparing your start to another person's finish". While a relevant question to this statement would easily be why do we compare ourselves to others, I'm drawn to the subsequent question, why do we often compare our beginnings to others' endings? This point makes me wrestle with the reality that, too often, we train ourselves to only identify worth with harvest; thus, we feed ourselves a diet of insecurity & comparison until we arrive. Only by the time we arrive, we've lost more value than gained because never saw the value Jesus saw in us as a seed! This year, we stop!

I chose the verse of scripture I chose because it represents a time in history where God's people were beginning again after years in captivity. Life for them is not exactly as it once was, and their temptation was to compare what they were building to what they had lost. New beginnings can be hard spaces when we live in comparison. I consider it an identity crisis because we will mix who we are with where we are. However, for clarity, where you are is not who you are! I leave you again with the words from our affirmation: This year, I will embrace my kingdom IDENTITY. Not only will I discover more of who God is; I will know who I am. I will faithfully endure the tension of transformation as I become more aware of my true spiritual and personal identity. I will expand my mind to embrace what God says about me over what I feel about myself, and I will grow to fully love myself as Christ loves me. Don't despise the beginning of a new season, the beginning of this year, or the beginning of what's next in your life.

**Consecration/Concentration:** No Meat. Starve distractions that hinder time in the Word today. Set aside specific times to get in the Word and shut the world off as best as possible when you do.

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### Day 9: Shhhh! ☐ (Quiet)

Today's Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Away from the noise! My heart aches a bit. It seems the more time elapses, the more people become into everything but their own thing. Social media, though a great forum for socio-global communication, has grown into one very large soapbox wherewith so many feel the need to jump into everything. Back in the day, we depended on credible sources with qualified individuals to verify bad news, and we embraced such with a general sense of dignity. Now, juicy information has gone viral before it's gone viable. Consequently, the world has just become messy...and so has the church.

Consider Paul's wisdom when he states that we must make it our goal to live a quiet life. KJV says "study to be quiet". You'd think that quietness is instinctive, but it is not. Human nature is to venture into uninvited territory, but it's not God's will. Sometimes, wisdom is best defined by our ability to say nothing. When others feel the need to comment, commentate, and condemn, a real believer must learn and practice the power of silence. Secondly, he instructs us to mind our own business! Whew. This goes beyond talking and ventures into taming. I've discovered that some folks can watch their mouths but cannot tame their attitudes. Their disposition protrudes them into unwanted space with others and leaves an ungodly mark. Lastly, he instructs us to work with our hands. While on the surface this may imply hard labor, but it actually suggests personal investment. Work with your [own] hands. Do not expect others to always do for you what you are unwilling to do for yourself! Work with your own hands and invest into your own life's journey. Today, practice getting away from the noise. Your life will thank you for it.

**Consecration/Concentration:** No sweets. Abstain from social media today.

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### **Day 10: *I Need some Good News***

Today's Reading: Proverbs 12:25

There are two kinds of people in life. The first are people in a process towards some purposeful success. The latter are people who fake or lie about purposeful success. Either way, success is a process that often requires some measure of encouragement along the way.

The verse above states, "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad." There is nothing super deep about this verse. It reveals the simple reality that we experience anxiety over time, most likely due to the process required for greatness. Anxiety produces depression. These kinds of subjects are taboo for some believers because we struggle with vulnerability and transparency. We often care what others feel or say about us, and some of us are in denial about reality. So let me be honest first: sometimes I get depressed! There you have it. I get nervous and intimidated when I realize how far off I feel from destiny. My purpose is too big to fit in one season! So, I get anxious in the meantime.

If you can identify with me, I have a reality check for you. Sometimes all you need is GOOD NEWS! The text suggests that a good word makes a depressed heart mend. It's as if the heart is crying, "tell me something good?" Have you been under pressure? There is a WORD from the LORD! I believe that good news is on its way your life! Do you know that the 'gospel' means good news? The best news you will ever receive is that Jesus died for your sins and that you are no longer held guilty to the debt of death because of the sin of mankind. Every now and again, you have to simplify...back up and remember something good! Receive the word and watch God!

### **Consecration/Concentration:**

No food before 12 noon (*unless needed for medical reasons*)

Pray scriptures today, throughout the day.

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### **Day 11: *The Courage to be Yourself***

Today's Reading: Genesis 26:1-3

So many are in the fight for identity - the struggle for significance. Nothing means more to us naturally than feeling like we have come into our own. To that end, perhaps nothing feels more frustrating than to feel as if there are roadblocks preventing our ability to find the flowing harvest of purpose that defines our lives. It's one thing to know you have purpose; it's another thing to be positioned in a place where that purpose can come to fruition. Consequently, I present to you Isaac. The

promise child who was offered as a sacrifice of obedience in his formative years is now a man in search of his place. His father was great, but now he himself needs the courage to pursue his role in God's promise to his father. Here's the catch: the place he's in is subject to famine! I want to suggest that famine brings the truth out of any of us. The lack of ability to live either brings destiny or desperation out of us.

The crux of my lesson hangs on the revelation that Isaac receives an instruction from God in verses 2-3 that shapes a major shift for him. God simply instructs him not to flee to Egypt and later tells him to reside in the famine for the time being. His father Abraham once hit famine and had the luxury of fleeing to Egypt, which makes escaping the famine not only natural but instinctive to a son whose father had a similar situation. Yet, God does not permit Isaac to behave like Abraham. There are some seasons of famine that you will come into where escape will appear easier. Moreover, escape may just be a credible example you have seen in others, which makes it seem more right for you to embrace. However, God has called you to take on the courage to be yourself. You are not Abraham, Jr.! You are not to merely copy another's behavior in treatment of a season of famine. God has a unique strategy for you that may seem like it makes no sense to you but obey God! For Isaac, God's word was simply stay put. Sometimes your obedience will not look victorious but obey anyway. You do not have to live up to anyone's expectations but God! Remember that and be yourself!

**Consecration/Concentration:** Avoid caffeine and energy drinks  
Give up the need for confirmation today from others

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### **Day 12: *Getting ME Under Control***

Today's Reading: Galatians 5:26-27

I once read a book by Dr. Samuel Chand called *Leadership Pain*. In it, Dr. Chand suggests the following simple formula about personal growth:

Growth = Change | Change = Loss | Loss = Pain | Thus, Growth = Pain

Dr. Chand repeats emphatically that you will grow only to the threshold of your pain. To that end, this transparent conversation with you today is designed to ask you, how do you handle pain? The truth is that every one of us lives everyday with some measure of pain. Some of it is self-inflicted, while some of it is the result of things that happened to us beyond our personal control. You cannot avoid pain, but you can manage well the symptoms of life pain and how they affect you.

In other words: you cannot always control what happens to you, but you can control what you do to it in response. If pain is like tea in a tea bag, anger is the bag the tea is wrapped in and life is the water. Now imagine tea in water. Any real tea drinker knows that hot water draws tea out of the tea bag much faster than cold water. So, the impact of anger [like tea] is measured by the surroundings it is placed in and what draws it out. This is why being around certain people can draw anger out of us faster than being around other people.

What the verse wants us to see is that how you treat anger will determine its effect on you! Note, the Apostle Paul distinguishes for us that anger itself is not sin. Anger becomes sinful, according to the text, when we allow it to control us. According to the scripture, uncontrolled anger gives a foothold (or space) to the devil. See, emotions are natural, but when they are not submitted to the Holy Spirit, we leave room for the enemy to take advantage of our vulnerability. In closing, remember that tea bag? Imagine how hard it is to turn the water to tea if the cup would keep its cool! You are the cup. Life is the water. When you can maintain your cool, life will not be able to draw anger from you as easily. Manage your pain by controlling YOU. Your life will thank you for it!

**Consecration/concentration:** Avoid emotional eating and excessive snacking  
Control angry outbursts and unregulated emotions. As much as possible, practice sacred silence today.

## **Day 13: LIVE!**

Today's Reading: John 10:10

Here's the reality, God did not just send Jesus to give us eternal life but abundant life as well. This is not about material possessions but about personal and purposeful fulfillment. You do not cease to be saved because you laugh, go to the movies, hang out on the water, or enjoy those nearest and dearest you. One of the daunting realities is that the very people who are connected to the one who is Life, don't have one! Somehow we have mistaken holiness for the lack of humanity and people aspire to what feels much like angelic absence from life. So, I want to bless you by giving you a few commandments that will help us all LIVE.

### *1. Learn when to say NO*

Some of us are tired and frustrated because we overload ourselves with obligation. You are not a robot, neither are you superman. You cannot save everything and everyone, so grow into the habit of saying NO. It doesn't make you weak, it makes you happy.

### *2. Learn Balance*

Too much of anything breeds obesity. Please expand your mind beyond food. Are we emotionally, mentally, or socially overweight? Your attendance to church, constant viewership of every religious telecast or even your over-involvement in ministry does not impress God! What does count is when you learn when to be a spouse, a parent, an employee, a church member, a friend, and just a regular person, respectively.

### *3. Learn to be happy alone*

Both your highest highs and lowest lows are often understood only by you (Prov. 14:10). Thus, you must learn how to enjoy life...alone! People who require the company of others will soon do anything it takes to have that company, which leads to comprise and breeds unhappiness. LIVE!

**Consecration/Concentration:** Avoid caffeine and energy drinks.

Connect with at least one person today and provide encouragement through some means.

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## **Day 14: No Sudden Moves**

Today's Reading: Proverbs 16:1-3

If you grew up in public school or grew up in a neighborhood with other kids for that matter, you are most likely acquainted with the experience of racing other kids. Anyone who has ran a race successfully would most likely admit that one key to finishing a race first is being able to respond quickly when the race begins. Whether it was running to the end of the street and back or taking a lap around the track, it always seemed that the one who got the best head start seemed to finish first. The problem with transferring that mindset to life is the simple reality that life just doesn't always work that way. See, what enables children racing to the street-corner or gym-mates taking a lap around the track to start fast is because they have a clear understanding of where they are going. Life just doesn't work the same.

What our scripture today reveals is the disappointment and danger of running off with our own plans simply because the race for greatest has begun. The relevant question becomes, "are our plans adequately effective enough to run with"? So many people have great ideas that never turn into lasting success because they ran off with their plan without putting into place the principles of these few verses. The writer suggests that even though we make plans, it is the Lord than has the right answer. Whether the answer is should we do it or how should we do it, the Lord always yields the right answer. Moreover, our perspective causes us to often see our

will as flawless and ready in our own eyes, but the Lord examines our motives. God looks at why we want to pursue a certain thing or why we want to stay in a certain place. Laced up under genius ideas may be envy, competitive jealousy, desire for greed, pride, and other self-aggrandized motives that the surface does not reveal. I'm convinced that some things don't prosper because they were conceived out of a bad heart.

To that end, the writer's advice (verse 3) can easily be surmised in the three simple words, "no sudden moves". It means, don't just run off with something you want to do because you want to do it. Imagine running off quickly in a race for which you have no direction as to where to go. That is what life looks like when you move suddenly. Don't imitate children running down the street, instead move in prayerful submission and synergy to the will of God and watch Him direct your steps!

**Consecration/Concentration:** If possible, be a financial blessing to someone today. If you can't, find a way to be an answer to their prayer.

The Place of Change | 2415 Bainbridge Blvd, Chesapeake , VA 23324

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