

*Fresh Insights for  
Oswald Chambers' Timeless Classic*

A DAILY  
COMPANION  
*to*  
MY  
UTMOST  
*for*  
HIS  
HIGHEST

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& Dr. Cecilie Macosko



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*A Daily Companion to My Utmost for His Highest:  
Fresh Insights for Oswald Chambers' Timeless Classic*

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# INTRODUCTION

As a husband-wife writing team, creating *A Daily Companion to My Utmost for His Highest* was a labor of love for us in many ways. We love devotionals, and since Oswald Chambers' classic has been our favorite, we wanted to help others experience this timeless and powerful masterpiece as never before. We also love the reward of working together as best friends and were especially drawn to *Utmost*, which is the loving creation of perhaps the greatest husband-wife writing team ever—Oswald and Biddy Chambers. As we juggle two careers (Jed is a physics professor and Cecilie is a family doctor) and raise five young children, the *Daily Companion* project brought us closer as a couple. Faced with a challenging goal—to make each *Utmost* reading come alive in a new way—we discovered that many of the daily readings ministered to us with an unexpected freshness. Neither of us knew how much it would take to be *our* utmost for God's highest as we embarked on this project. If we did, we might never have started!

The same may be true for you. If God told you right now what will happen to you as you complete Oswald Chambers' one-year spiritual expedition with *A Daily Companion* as your map, you might lose heart. Giving our utmost for God's highest disrupts our whole lives, since our lives are not yet the highest God wants them to be. Despite this unsettling truth, let us be of good cheer. Each reading comes in its own time. There will be a time to plant new habits and a time to uproot old ones. There will be a time to tear down idols and a time to build altars to remember God's provision. There will be a time to weep over sin and a time to laugh in the joy of God's goodness. God will make each season of this one-year devotional beautiful in its time. And before you know it, you will be a changed person; you will be your utmost for our high and mighty King.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

The full 366 days of Oswald Chambers' hard-hitting truths overwhelm, inspire, and transform. The key is to experience *all* 366 days. *A Daily Companion's* most basic goal is to help you read the devotional of the day for an entire year. In doing that, you can achieve the far more important goal of living your uttermost best for the sake of God's highest glory. Thus, the best way to use *A Daily Companion* is whatever way helps you faithfully read each day's Scripture portion and devotional thought.

The following guidelines may come in handy as you use *A Daily Companion*. Each page matches a reading in *Utmost* and displays the same title and date. First, the **BACKGROUND** introduces the topic that Oswald Chambers covers on that day and sets the scene to prepare you for what he will say. Along with the Background, there are occasionally cross-references (indicated by month and day, not by page number) to other parts of *A Daily Companion*, and there is always a short summary of the devotional set off from the text just below the title. These pithy summaries were the first piece of the *Daily Companion* that we wrote. For several years before we wrote the rest of the study guide, these summaries proved helpful keys to Chambers' teaching.

After the Background, the **SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** section points you to the Bible and helps you learn the context of the verse or verses that Chambers quotes. As you already know, or

will soon see, the structure of every reading in *Utmost* begins with the title and date, followed by a Scripture quote, followed by a devotional. Each Scripture quote is extremely short, and to fully grasp the meaning of the devotional it is essential that you know the context. If you have the whole Bible memorized, you can read the short quote and be on your way! If not, you will want to have three books (or reading devices) in front of you: the Bible, a copy of *Utmost*, and *A Daily Companion*.

Once you have found the context verses, you are ready to dive into the devotional. The section labeled **WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?** is designed to help you explore the meaning of the devotional. There are questions to ask yourself about parts of the devotional that you might easily miss. Combined with the summary, this section will allow you to tighten your grip on the essence of each daily reading.

Finally, in the **APPLICATION** section *A Daily Companion* will help you apply what you have learned to your current situation. One of Oswald Chambers' recurring themes is that we cannot learn anything new from God until we apply what He has already taught us (see, for example, the *Utmost* devotion on March 27). The Application section, then, is most important. Here is where you have space to write down a few notes to yourself about what you need to change in your life (if you like to write a lot, you may want to add a fourth book to your pile—a journal—or get the journaling version of *Utmost*). This section is also where you will be encouraged to finish a prayer that we have started for you about what you learned and what you plan to change. A devotional book will discourage you if you try to apply what it says by your own power. But when God's power is let loose in your life by prayer, there is no telling what good things will happen!

Each of Oswald Chambers' devotionals, as edited and presented by his wife, Biddy, is like an exquisite entrée or a rich dessert. Your spiritual taste buds thrill as you read it. To enjoy a full meal, however, you need the quoted Scripture *with* its full context. *A Daily Companion*, with its four place settings of Background, Scriptural Context, What's the Devotional Saying? and Application, will help you connect each devotional to its quoted Scripture and then to specific applications in your life. Even the most sensuous meal is meant not just to please our palette, but also to nourish us, giving us energy to be who God wants us to be. So also, the purpose of Chambers' masterpiece, *My Utmost for His Highest*, is to give us spiritual energy to be our best for God. *A Daily Companion* will help you better digest Chambers' teaching on the Scriptures and will better aid the Holy Spirit as He uses these Bible passages to make radical changes in your life.

# ❧ MAY 1 ❧

## FAITH—NOT EMOTION

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*Looking for the limelight?*

*When you accept your duty, you'll find God's light instead.*

**BACKGROUND** After Oswald Chambers' death, Biddy wrote, "Through all the days of the illness, . . . the word which held me was, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God,' [John 11:4] and there were times when it seemed that the promise was to have a literal fulfillment. But . . . God had a fuller meaning."

The "fuller meaning" was that Chambers' sickness didn't end in the death of his ministry, even though it did result in his bodily death. And how true "but for the glory of God" proved to be! Today's lesson reminds us that God has no obligation to bring *us* glory as we serve Him. All glory goes to Him: "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** In 2 Corinthians 4 and 5, Paul compares bodily life on earth with the resurrection life we will receive in heaven. In that context, 2 Corinthians 5:7 means we walk through our lives guided by our faith in future glory, not by anything we see on earth. How does this verse relate to today's lesson?

Chambers quotes this verse from Moffatt (see January 1, *Companion*): "I have to lead my

life in faith, without seeing Him," instead of from the King James: "For we walk by faith, not by sight." What is the difference? How does Moffatt's version better fit with Chambers' point today?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Today's title is "Insight Not Emotion" (Classic Edition). Chambers' point is that we need insight into God's plan for us—to be hidden, obscure people. We don't need emotion. God sends us times of passionate emotion by giving us moments of inspiration. But if we rely on those moments and the emotions they give us, we will be "unfit for daily life."

Are you fit for your daily life? Do you overcome daily tests, or do they overcome you? Chambers' advice is to remember that we have infinitely greater power at work in us and that we need to "get up" *before* we feel inspired. Do you have something today that you know you need to do? Get started on that duty right now. God will be there as you do!

### APPLICATION

Has God "sealed up heaven"? What was your response? Why is our work our standard? Why is a hidden saint of more value than a self-assured one? Do you seek to be needed? Finish this prayer: "Lord, you've given me infinite power. Help me 'get up,' without inspiration, and see . . ."

## ❧ MAY 2 ❧

# THE PASSION OF PATIENCE

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*Be impatiently patient: hungry for more of God, yet enduring His silences.*

**BACKGROUND** While at Dunoon (see February 2, *Companion*), Oswald Chambers started a society dedicated to Robert Browning, his favorite poet. Today we read how our “reach must exceed our grasp.” This line is from Browning’s 1855 poem “Andrea del Sarto,” a work named after a contemporary of Michelangelo. Artist del Sarto was praised as a flawless painter, but he was also criticized for having no inspiring “reach.”

What have you reached for that exceeded your grasp? Chambers says when we reach for more than we can grasp of God, it’s proof that we have the God-given *vision* of God. Today we will see how that vision is the key to being patient.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** On March 11, we looked closely at what Chambers means by “vision.” We also read today’s theme verse from Habakkuk 2. Reread chapters 1 and 2. What was Habakkuk’s question? How does God answer? How does this vision differ from the vision Chambers describes?

Chambers also quotes from Hebrews 11:27, Psalm 116:12-13, and Philippians 3:12. What did Moses do that required endurance? Is this referring to the first or second time he left

Egypt? Do you think it’s ironic that we “render” as we “take”? How was Paul perfect? How was he not?

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Do you need more patience? Today Chambers says that vision is the key to patience because it gives us “moral inspiration” (Classic Edition). When we look back at the lessons on March 21 and 22, we see that when Chambers says “moral” he often means “from the center of our will.” When we gain a clear vision of God, we are inspired at the center of our will to make right decisions. How often we lose patience just because we lack the will to decide to wait!

Sometimes we seem patient, but we are actually just passively indifferent. Chambers wants us to have “passion” and immense strength as we are patient. He wants us to be like the Rock of Gibraltar that he passed on his way to Egypt.

In the last paragraph, Chambers quotes Browning to give us the litmus test for whether we have the vision. If we continually thirst for God, we have the vision. Once we lose our thirst for Him, we try to slake our thirst from our own cisterns (Jeremiah 2:13). Are *you* thirsty for God?

### APPLICATION

What causes/issues inspire you? How is that different from being devoted to God?

Have you been through a “wilderness” time? Did it cause you to reach out for more?

Finish this prayer: “Father, I want the vitality your vision gives. Please help me to keep your vision in . . .”

## 🌀 MAY 3 🌀

### VITAL INTERCESSION

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*Do you pray powerfully?  
If you're too sympathetic, it will limit your strength.*



**BACKGROUND** Today begins a two-day series on intercession. We saw on March 30 through April 1 that intercession is the one job we can do that doesn't have a snare. Today we see the key to intercession: identifying with God. We also see an obstacle to intercession: sympathy exceeding our identification with God.

It's strange that our sympathy for others can block intercession, but Oswald Chambers says that even *sin* is less likely to break our identification with God. Do you find that to be true? Does your sin drive you closer to God, while your own understanding of what God should do drives you further from Him?

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Today's theme verse follows the memorable passage about our spiritual armor. It's as if Paul wants the Ephesians to remember that all our powerful defenses (and one weapon) are for one purpose: intercessory prayer. Read this chapter and see what prayers Paul asks the Ephesians to pray. Whose

armor is it? Ours or God's? Where in the Bible can you find descriptions of God wearing His armor?

#### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

In four paragraphs, Chambers dissects the obstacles to intercession. In the first two paragraphs, he says that sympathy with others breaks our identification with God and blocks intercession. The key is complete trust in God and His plan; otherwise, we will trust our own views about what is best for others.

Do you often throw yourself a pity party when you're trying to intercede? In the second paragraph, we see that when we fully identify with God we don't even have to try to stop thinking about ourselves.

The last paragraph is short and sweet (so short that the Updated Edition tacks it on to the third paragraph). Do you have discernment into other people's faults? Why do you think God opened your eyes to their problems? Pray for them right now!

#### APPLICATION

How do we rebuke God as our sympathy undercuts our intercession? Do you do that? For whom do you intercede? What discernment has God given you about them?

Finish this prayer: "God, right now I want to identify with your interest and concern for . . ."

## ❧ MAY 4 ❧

# VICARIOUS INTERCESSION

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*Where are your strengths?  
Pray for that! It might be what God wants to change.*



**BACKGROUND** Yesterday's devotional taught us the importance of a vital, living connection with God. Today we see the reason our connection is even possible: the "vicarious identification of our Lord with sin." Moreover, as Christ identified so completely with our sin that He *became* sin, we should completely identify with His interests and plans in others.

When you hear a sad story, does it move you to pray for those involved? While that is a natural and good reaction, Oswald Chambers warns against thinking that this is what intercession means. Instead, as we saw yesterday, intercession is about embracing *God's* plan for others.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Hebrews 10 doesn't usually spring to mind when we think of intercession. As you read this chapter, what verses do you recognize? How might they relate to identifying with God's plan for others?

The point of quoting verse 19 is to emphasize Jesus' role in our intercession. When priests

approached God, they needed blood to pay for their sins. The blood they used only symbolized the blood of Jesus, which would eventually pay for everyone's sins. Likewise, when we come before God to intercede for others, we need the blood of Jesus. Do you ever think about this when you pray? Try to do so today!

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

The main obstacle to intercession, as we saw yesterday, is sympathy for others. Today we learn that it's the prideful attitude behind our sympathy that is the real obstacle. We also learn that it is in Christ's vicarious death that we gain access to true intercession. This is because His blood cleanses our sin and lets us into God's holy presence, and also because His vicarious substitution for our sins makes it possible for us to substitute God's plan for our human sympathy.

God's plan is not always pleasant. Are you willing to go with His plan and forsake all of your great ideas about what is best? Trust in Him today!

### APPLICATION

List what is and isn't intercession. Are you interceding well? How can you improve?  
In what areas of your life do you think you need no atoning? Does this affect your prayer?  
Finish this prayer: "Lord, I'm willing to give up my own sympathies and substitute your interests in . . ."



## ❧ MAY 5 ❧

# JUDGMENT AND THE LOVE OF GOD

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*Does your God-talk fall on deaf ears?  
Have no fear! God will help them to hear.*



**BACKGROUND** Classes at the Bible Training College were open to visitors, with the exception of the weekly devotional hour (see January 1, *Companion*) and sermon class. Many of the lessons in *Utmost* come from the weekly devotional hour, but today we start a two-part series that comes from sermon class.

Can you picture the twenty-five resident students? Some were terrified of sermon preparation and delivery. Others enjoyed it. But Oswald Chambers reminded them all that giving a sermon is serious: “The element of judgment must always come out; it is the sign of God’s love.”

Does God’s loving judgment against sin and evil shine through in what you say? Today’s lesson gives us motivation to be winsome and bold as we talk about God.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** It’s tricky to find the connection between today’s theme verse, its context, and the lesson. The verse connects to the lesson, since both are about God’s judgment. The second half of today’s verse connects it to its context, which is about how we should praise God when persecuted for being a Christian. But the context does not seem to directly connect to the lesson until we realize that the context helps us know *how* to preach judgment. We need to preach judgment both to

non-Christians *and* Christians. To Christians, we preach that God uses suffering and persecution to purify us from our flaws.

What are your flaws? Are your “inabilities” an excuse for not obeying God’s commands? How might God purify you? Be open to His judgment as you preach it to others.

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Today’s lesson opens with a profound truth: Salvation is bigger than our experience of salvation. How did you experience salvation? Did coming to Christ give you peace? If you tell people Jesus will give them peace, you are missing the point. Chambers says we must preach the “great thought of God” behind our experience of salvation; the rest of the lesson (800 words in his original lecture) describes this “great thought.”

God’s great thought is an “unfathomable abyss” (Classic Edition). If we are to preach it, we need to “be sure of the abysses of God,” which is the title of his original lecture. Chambers lists four abysses—love, the cross, the atonement, and the gospel—and shows how these relate to judgment, conscience, morality, and liberty. In today’s lesson we see the interplay between God’s love and His judgment. How do those concepts relate in your life? Ask God to show you His love in His judgment today.

### APPLICATION

How would you summarize the good news? What is the “great thought of God” in it? How is judgment the sign of God’s love? Have you ever brought someone to judgment? Finish this prayer: “Jesus, you only command things I can do by your power; help me . . .”

# 🌀 MAY 6 🌀

## LIBERTY AND THE STANDARDS OF JESUS

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*To set others free, let God reign over you.  
What you feel will spread to others.*



**BACKGROUND** The concepts in yesterday's lesson were so deep that it's a good thing we have another day to look at them! Yesterday Oswald Chambers showed us how God's love and judgment are related. Today he compares liberty and the gospel (Classic Edition). Specifically, he compares liberty to the standards that the gospel places on our lives.

Love and judgment seem like opposites. So also liberty and high standards appear to be at odds. Doesn't liberty mean that we are free from any standards? Not at all! Chambers tells us to preach *Christ's* standards. This will free our listeners from lesser standards, which are often ones *we* inadvertently placed on them.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Chambers uses three passages for today's lesson. First, we see Galatians 5:1, which beautifully summarizes Galatians *and* today's lesson. In the NIV, this verse reads, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." How does this compare to the "where-with" in the KJV that Chambers quotes? Do you think both meanings are true?

The second passage is John 5:39–40. What were the Jewish leaders missing? Are you missing the same thing?

### APPLICATION

List the comparisons that Chambers uses in today's lesson. Which ones can relate to you? Are you impatient—burdening yourself or others under a yoke that isn't Christ's? How? Finish this prayer: "Lord, you want me to stop forcing people to think like I do, but I'm stubborn. Please . . ."

Finally, read the Great Commission in Matthew 28. What is the difference between a disciple and a convert to an opinion? How did Jesus ensure He made disciples? How will He help you do the same?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

If you've spent time around Christians who try to squeeze you into their mold, you will appreciate today's lesson. It's also a great warning to us, since we all secretly like to have a set of human standards to follow, and we all like to make converts to our own opinions. It's nice to have friends who think like we do!

Chambers is saying that we follow, and hold up to others, only one set of standards: Christ's. What are His standards? They certainly are not a list of dos and don'ts. In a part of his lecture that didn't make it into *Utmost*, Chambers gives a good way to think about God's standards of holiness: "It means every part of the life under the scrutiny of God, knowing that the grace of God is sufficient for every detail." Is that how you live? When we let God reign over us, we experience a freedom that is contagious!

## ❧ MAY 7 ❧

# BUILDING FOR ETERNITY

---

*Christ is the mason; we are the bricks—formed and baked by Christ himself.*

**BACKGROUND** Oswald Chambers was no stonemason. But he was the foreman for the construction of his living quarters, meeting hall, and study hut while in Egypt. He ordered materials, hired workers, and inspected the work. In today's lesson, he talks about how God inspects our work to determine whether we are building things according to His plan or according to our own ideas.

Jesus paid the full price to lay a proper foundation. What are you building on it? If you are using your own bricks and therefore building according to your own plans, your work will be consumed by fire on the day of judgment. If, however, the brick you use is your own life, and you let God be the bricklayer, the building will turn out according to His perfect plan. Be a brick today!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Today's Scripture is from Luke 14:25–33 and 1 Corinthians 3:10–15. Both passages compare spiritual work

to a building project. In these verses, who is building what? What are you building? How does today's lesson change your view of Luke 14? As you build, what must you keep in mind?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Do you like the tasks God has given you? Today's lesson reminds us that “no one has any right to demand where he will be put to work” (Updated Edition). Why? We don't work for God; He takes us over and uses us for His plans. As you think of a building project, think of yourself as one of the bricks, not one of the hired carpenters or stonemasons. There is only one builder, and He uses any brick who loves Him “personally, passionately and devotedly,” “in whom He has done everything.”

Did God do everything in you? Have you given Him permission to do everything? Or are there ties on earth that pull you away from the heart surgery He wants to perform in you? Yield fully to Him today!

### APPLICATION

What difference does it make whether the “cost” is something we pay or Christ has paid? What has Christ done in you? How do you love Him? Do you demand where to work? Finish this prayer: “Jesus, you are coming back to judge my works. I want them built on you, not me. So . . .”

## ❧ MAY 8 ❧

# THE FAITH TO PERSEVERE

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*Faith isn't whiny, nor is patience desperate. They show God's power.*

**BACKGROUND** In the Classic Edition, the opening sentence on May 2 was “Patience is not indifference.” Today it is “Patience is more than endurance.” The Updated Edition uses “perseverance” instead of “patience” in order to convey the larger sense that Oswald Chambers gives this word. But it might have been better, as was done in some of Chambers’ other transcribed talks, to capitalize it. For example, the first sentence of one of his lectures at the League of Prayer (see January 10, *Companion*) was written: “The subject of Patience is so largely dealt with in the Bible that it ought to have a much larger place in our Bible studies and talks.”

In the same lecture, Chambers said, “Patience is the result of well-centered strength.” Do you have strength that is centered on God? Chambers told his students, “Patience is not the same as endurance because the heart of endurance is frequently stoical, whereas the heart of Patience is a blazing love.” Today’s devotional will help you develop well-centered faith, which bears fruit of blazing Patience.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** The church in Philadelphia slips by without any rebukes. The same cannot be said for most of the other

seven churches mentioned in Revelation! Read 3:7–13. What did they do well (see February 22, *Companion*)? What *does* “the word of My patience” mean?

The next quote is from Job. Chambers talks about Job more than any other Bible character with the exception of Paul. Like Job, do you feel as if God has slayed you? Do you still trust Him? How do you know?

Last, Chambers brings in the definition of eternal life from John 17. What else does Jesus say in this chapter that relates to today’s lesson?

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

The main point today is that we need passionate patience (see May 2, *Utmost*). In *The Message* (MSG) Bible, Revelation 3:10 begins: “Because you kept my Word in passionate patience . . .” Do you passionately trust God and His goodness as you wait to see what He’s doing?

Chambers’ bow-and-arrow analogy helps us during times when God stretches and bends us. When we truly know God, we know His goodness and are able to wait with fiery passion. Will you venture your all on God? Ask Him to help you have dynamic patience today.

### APPLICATION

Are you stretched to the breaking point? Can you maintain your intimacy with Jesus? Is your life a great romance? How are you being disciplined to throw yourself on God? Finish this prayer: “God, my life’s big effort should be to abandon myself to you. Today please help me . . .”

## ❧ MAY 9 ❧

# REACHING BEYOND OUR GRASP

---

*Are you on a downward spiral?  
When what you do matches His plan, you'll rise in joy.*

**BACKGROUND** Today we return to the theme of vision. This time, Oswald Chambers contrasts vision with ideals. On February 16 and March 17, these concepts were equivalent, but today Chambers points out an important difference. Vision, as we saw on May 2, gives us moral inspiration. This is why people with vision are inspired to *do* things, while people with ideals are not.

Are you somewhat depressed? Maybe not desperately so, but are you counting the days and wishing the time would pass? Chambers challenges us to live with the expectation that God will do greater things than He ever did before. Chambers' nickname for the BTC (Bible Training College) was "Better to Come." Let that be your motto today!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Today is the only time the theme verse comes from Proverbs. What is the second half of this verse? How is wisdom personified in Proverbs? Could she equally well have been called "vision"?

### APPLICATION

Do you have a vision from God or only idealistic principles about Him? In what ways? How is your prayer life? Have you cast off restraints or done things on your own? Finish this prayer: "Today, Lord, I will regain freshness and vitality in my spiritual outlook by . . ."

Jonah is only mentioned once in *Utmost*. The Updated Edition helps us find where (see 4:2). Jonah inappropriately used a correct ideal about God to get out of actually *doing* something. When did he make this argument? What did he try to get out of doing? Do you do the same?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Today Chambers tells us that if we do what matches *our* plan, only what we can grasp, we get on a downward spiral. The opposite is also true. When we do God's plan and reach beyond our grasp, we will rise ever higher in God's joy.

Chambers tells you to examine and take stock of yourself. Do you have vision, or only ideals? Are you fighting hard to restrain evil, or are you lulled to ruin? Ask for more of a vision of God today, and the Holy Spirit will give it to you!

# 🌀 MAY 10 🌀

## TAKE THE INITIATIVE

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*Do you want to make a conflict right?  
Stop reading this and do it now!*



**BACKGROUND** In late 1914, as all Europe grappled with the first months of World War I, Oswald Chambers gave the expanded version of today's lesson to his students. In the full version, he made three points: Stop hesitating; start hearkening; and stand heroically. In today's lesson, we see the same points in a more condensed format.

What have you been meaning to do? What keeps you from acting? We fall into the trap of thinking God has to do things for us that He actually wants us to do ourselves. Or we keep asking God what to do when we already know what we should do. Sometimes, we think we would act boldly if we were in a different situation. But that is just another excuse. Which of these excuses are you using? Let today's lesson help you take action!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Second Peter 1:5 was also the theme verse for Chambers' original 1914 lecture. He quotes both the King James and the Moffatt ("Furnish your faith with resolution") versions of this verse. What are the

differences? How does 2 Peter 1:1–11 help you know how to take the initiative to form better habits?

Chambers also refers to Philippians 2:12–13. What do these verses teach us about our responsibility and God's?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

The three paragraphs in today's lesson give us three common excuses for not taking action. First, we wait for God to do the things that God wants *us* to do. Second, we ask God for guidance, which is just a smokescreen for our fear of taking action (see January 2, *Companion*). Third, we think that when a *big* crisis comes, we will take initiative. But in doing so, we miss out on all the *small* ways God wants us to take action.

What is on your to-do list? Will you keep putting it off, or will you start forming the habit of obeying God right away? Let God work in you as He wills, and act according to the good purpose He has shown you.

### APPLICATION

What *won't* God do for you (that you have expected Him to do)? What should *you* do?

How can you know if you have the habit of listening to God? Do you have it yet?

Finish this prayer: "God, I know you want me to get things started without looking back, so today I will . . ."

❧ MAY 11 ❧  
“LOVE ONE ANOTHER”

---

*Do people irk you?  
Think how God feels! Yet He still loves you.*



**BACKGROUND** Today we continue a seven-part series that Bidly Chambers took from weekly lectures her husband Oswald gave to his students in 1914. The subject of these lectures was “Christian habits.” Bidly sent the full lecture transcripts to the League of Prayer (see January 10, *Companion*) for its monthly magazine. They appeared from 1926 to 1928, around the same time she was writing *Utmost*, which was published in 1927. As you read today’s lesson, think about Bidly in 1926, taking care of her 13-year-old daughter and four Oxford students. The fact that she edited *Utmost* and published full lecture transcripts while running a boarding house as a single mom is a tribute to God’s power and grace!

Today’s title, “You Won’t Reach It on Tiptoe” (Classic Edition), describes how it’s impossible to love God or others using our own strength. It would be like trying to stand on your tiptoes for a whole week! Today’s lesson points you in a better direction; love with the love that *God* put in your heart!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** All the theme verses for Chambers’ seven-part lecture series in 1914 came from one of Peter’s letters. All but

one came from 2 Peter 1:5–11 (the other, which we will study on May 13, came from 1 Peter 3:16). We looked at these verses yesterday, but read them again to see how love fits into Peter’s list.

Besides 2 Peter 1:7, Chambers references four other verses: Luke 14:26, Romans 5:5, John 15:12, and 2 Peter 3:9. What do these verses say about love?

**WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?**

Chambers walks a good line between telling us to do it all ourselves and giving us the impression that God will do it all for us. In today’s lesson, for example, he gives us a practical way to love “unlovable” people. He reminds us that the only way we can do that is with God’s love. But he also urges us to actively remember how much God loves us and to allow that thought to send us forth into love for the unlovable world.

Who do you have trouble loving? What irritating person has God put in your life? Thank God for that person! As today’s final sentence says, “Love is spontaneous, but it has to be maintained through discipline.” The unlovable people in our lives will help us maintain God’s divine love in our hearts.

**APPLICATION**

Has God removed insincerity, pride, and vanity from you? Do you feel lovable or loved? Are there people you can’t respect? How do you treat them? How does God treat you?

Finish this prayer: “God, you love me, though I’ve been so disagreeable with you. Help me to love . . .”

# ❧ MAY 12 ❧

## THE HABIT OF HAVING NO HABITS

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*Do you enjoy your Bible study, or do you enjoy hearing from God?  
There's a difference!*



**BACKGROUND** Of Oswald Chambers' seven lectures on Christian habits, only the last five mention "habit" in their titles. Since today's lesson comes from the first of these five lectures, it's appropriate that it teaches us the most important truth about Christian habits: Habits can become our idols if we're not careful!

Are you in the habit of doing something "Christian"? If you have been reading *Utmost* every day, you at least have one such habit! Do any of your habits encroach on what God really wants you to do? Today's lesson will help you make good habits your goal while remaining free from worshipping them.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** At the end of the list of godly qualities, Peter tells us, "For as these qualities exist and increase with you, they render you active and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8 Moffatt). How fruitful and active are you? Does focusing on the various qualities prevent you from being fruitful?

Chambers' original three points follow the three parts of this verse. "For as these qualities exist and increase" goes with the point that we should exercise habits and qualities until they are so much a part of us that we don't even

notice them. The next part, "render you active and fruitful," goes with the point that our well-exercised, now-unnoticed habits will allow us to be more fruitful than our earlier, more conscious habits. The third part, "in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," goes with the point that, though we must strive to know God, knowledge must be eventually swallowed up by the greatness of God's actual presence. When that happens, we will live the "simple life of a child."

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

How can we make a habit of having no habits? That seems paradoxical! But the clear point of today's lesson is that any good habit can become harmful if it takes the place of God in our lives.

After we have disciplined ourselves and have added to our faith all the things listed in 2 Peter, those qualities will become so much a part of the life of God in us that we won't even notice them. Are there other things you need to add to your faith? If you are conscious of being holy, that's proof that you still need to add to your faith. Let God show you what you still need to add, and work at it until it is second nature.

### APPLICATION

What are your spiritual habits? Have they become your "gods," restricting you at times? In what area(s) do you still lack and aren't at home with God? How can you add these?

Finish this prayer: "Lord, I want to live the simple life of the child, but I self-examine too much. Help me . . ."



# ❧ MAY 13 ❧

## THE HABIT OF KEEPING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

---

*Your highest ideal will direct you toward God's law—or away from it!*



**BACKGROUND** Here at the halfway point of our seven-day series, it's good to take stock of where we've been and where we're headed. First, Oswald Chambers told us to furnish our faith with resolution by avoiding three common excuses. Second, he reminded us that we can't love with our own love, only with God's. Third, he warned us against making habits into idols. Tomorrow, we will see how to enjoy adversity. The next day we will hear how to rise to the level of what God sends our way. Finally, we will look at how to handle money. Today's lesson returns us to the same theme as the first of the seven lectures and gets us in the right frame of mind for the next two lessons. If you have been dragging your feet when you already know what God wants, today's message is for you!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Chambers' lectures often had three sections that were given alliterative titles (see April 24, *Companion*). The titles he used for the lecture "The Habit of a Good Conscience" were the following: Sensitive Conscience, Seared Conscience, and Saintly Conscience. Biddy took his thoughts from the first of these three sections to use in today's devotional. The theme verse is Acts 24:16. How did Paul "strive" for a clear conscience? The Amplified Bible says he would "always exercise and discipline myself [mortifying my body, deaden-

ing my carnal affections, bodily appetites, and worldly desires, endeavoring in all respects] to have a clear [unshaken, blameless] conscience" and so on. Is all that really necessary? Do you do any of those things?

What other verses does Chambers quote? How do they relate to our conscience? How do we "make out" (Moffatt) the nature of God's will?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Based on the title, we might think that today's lesson would tell us to follow high moral standards so our consciences won't feel guilty for the bad things we do. Instead, Chambers tells us to develop *sensitive* consciences, which in turn help us listen to God and do the right thing. Can you see the difference between these two approaches? To develop a sensitive conscience, we must know what a conscience is. In the original lecture, Chambers says that conscience is *not* the voice of God in our hearts. Instead, it is "the eye of the soul." Just as our eyes want to fix themselves on the most beautiful thing they see, so also our conscience fixes itself on the highest thing it sees, and it informs the rest of our soul how to respond. How will you respond to what your soul "sees" in Jesus? Will you see Him as He truly is? If so, your life won't be the same!

### APPLICATION

Has your love for God ever burst forth spontaneously? Looking back, what do you see? Why can't we prove or take credit for our love for God? What role do emotions play? Finish this prayer: "Holy Spirit, the love I have is yours. Thank you for giving me . . ."

# ❧ MAY 14 ❧

## THE HABIT OF ENJOYING ADVERSITY

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*What's irritating you?  
It might be just what helps you reflect God's glory!*



**BACKGROUND** Do you think Bidley Chambers enjoyed the hard task of selecting which parts of her husband's talks she should use to write this seven-part series on Christian habits? The original lectures were six times too long to use as *Utmost* devotionals. So Bidley had to pick and choose what to use and what to save for when she published Oswald's full lectures (see May 11, *Companion*).

As she sliced and diced her verbatim shorthand notes, she often combined paragraphs from two lectures into a single devotional. For example, yesterday's devotional lesson opened with a paragraph from Oswald's lecture, "The Habit of Enjoying the Disagreeable," which is the topic of today's lesson. In the same way, today's lesson ends with a paragraph from a different lecture ("Make a Habit of Having No Habits," which is also the source material for May 12). Understanding Bidley's method of mixing of paragraphs helps us tie together Chambers' main points, especially for all-encompassing themes such as "Christian habits."

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** The theme verse is one that Chambers references at least

ten times in his *Complete Works*. Interestingly, however, he didn't mention this verse in his original lecture, so we can conclude that Bidley considered it a perfect verse to summarize the devotional. How does 2 Corinthians 4:10 relate to today's main point? What other verses might Chambers have been thinking about as he spoke the words that ended up in today's lesson?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Is getting saved by Jesus just "fire insurance"? Do we ask Him to take control of our life and forgive our sins only to avoid hell? Obviously not! God has much more in store for those He saves. Today's lesson reminds us that the main thing He wants us to do is to show signs of *Jesus'* life in *our* lives.

How can you allow Jesus' life to shine out of your own? By enjoying disagreeable things. And you will enjoy them only if you are *extremely* hungry for His life to be manifest in your life. When you must do an unpleasant thing, do you ever think about how that thing might help you shine Christ's life through yours? Try to think about that today and embrace all unpleasantness!

### APPLICATION

Describe a time you experienced adversity. What was your response? Were you ready? How can you keep your soul ready to manifest Christ this week?

Finish this prayer: "Father, you engineer my life to make your Son's glory evident. Help me today to . . ."

# ❧ MAY 15 ❧

## THE HABIT OF RISING TO THE OCCASION

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*God won't put us in a museum. He displays His glory in our living flesh.*



**BACKGROUND** Oswald Chambers probably gave his second-to-last lecture on Christian habits on December 3, 1914. He divided the lecture into three sections, and today's lesson comes primarily from the second section, "The Habit of Realizing Your Exercises." In this section, he urged his students to embrace difficult situations so they could manifest Christ's life in their own lives.

What is it you need to just get up and do? Are you putting off something unpleasant? Rise to the occasion as you read today's devotional!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Today's theme verse comes from the lecture's first section, "The Habit of Ratifying Your Election." Chambers used Ephesians 1:18 to show how much God has given us and how blasphemous it is for us to say we can't be made into saints, even though that kind of talk sounds humble to others.

Read the context of this verse and list what God has given us. What do the other verses Chambers quotes say about God's provision? Do you ever catch yourself being so "humble" that you blaspheme God's power to make you a saint?

**WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?** The four paragraphs today lead us through four interrelated points. First, Chambers reminds us

that the reason we are saved is so Christ's life can shine through our own (see May 14, *Utmost*). Second, he distinguishes between our responsibility and God's: God saves us and we "work out" the salvation He worked in us. Third, he urges us again to embrace difficulties, since they help reveal Christ in us. Finally, he encourages us to exercise as disciplined athletes do as we prepare our lives for Jesus' life to shine in them. He also warns us that our goal in Christian habits is not to become trophies in some museum for holiness.

In Chambers' commentary on Genesis 25:1–10, he makes the same point about trophies and says, "You can often find better [trophies] in the world than in the Church," since God gives Christians crises that nonbelievers don't have to face. If God wanted to display *human* goodness, would He give you crises that break, irritate, and upset you? No. But God wants to display *His* goodness and glory. That's why the "net result of your life is not admiration for you but a longing after God." Isn't this true of Oswald and Biddy? The net result of their lives has been millions of people longing after God. (Most of those people don't know who they were, so admiration for Oswald and Biddy has never been an issue.) Is that true of you?

### APPLICATION

What wall is God placing in your life? How are you planning to jump over it?

How have (or haven't) you worked out your salvation in speech, thinking, and emotions?

Finish this prayer: "Lord Jesus, you never demanded your rights. Please help me to do the same as I face . . ."

# ❧ MAY 16 ❧

## THE HABIT OF RECOGNIZING GOD'S PROVISION

---

*Who wants to be a millionaire?  
God has more buying power than that!*



**BACKGROUND** On December 17, 1914, Oswald Chambers told his students that they should “be going about like multimillionaires.” This was despite their lack of basic necessities because of World War I. He reminded them that even though they didn’t have a dime to their names, spiritually they “have all the grace of God to spend on others.”

Biddy carefully edited this nearly 2,000-word lecture on wealth to create today’s short devotional. She picked out the essence of what we need to know about God’s provision. Are you willing to learn about this today?

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** The theme verse for the lecture was 2 Peter 1:11, but Biddy picked verse 4 for the devotional. What do these verses have in common? How do these verses relate to the “add to your . . .” verses that are sandwiched between them?

Chambers also references Psalm 87:7, which he finds in *The Book of Common Prayer of the*

*Church of England* (“all my fresh springs are in thee”). How does the word “fresh” emphasize his point? Why does Chambers quote 2 Corinthians 9:8? How is this point a great way to end the devotional?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Our final lesson in this seven-part series teaches us about the first habit to form as we “work out” the salvation that God worked in us. How do you handle “The Habit of Wealth” (Classic Edition)? Are you working out the awareness of God’s provision, which He put in you when He saved you? Or are you still saying, “Oh, I can’t afford it”?

The second paragraph makes the additional point that God dries up every other spring of wealth so we know all our fresh springs are in Him. Are you going through a drying-up experience? Thank God that He is breaking your confidence in your own powers. Don’t forget to drink deeply of His reserves!

### APPLICATION

What is your “so-called wealth” (money, education)? Has God ever taken it away?

Where are you tempted to say, “I can’t afford it”? How might God provide for you?

Finish this prayer: “Father, you own the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). Today I commit to trusting . . .”

## ❧ MAY 17 ❧ HIS ASCENSION AND OUR ACCESS

---

*Jesus gave up His power to be like us. He regained it to make us like Him.*

**BACKGROUND** On April 5, 6, and 8, we read lessons excerpted from Oswald Chambers' twelve-lecture series on psychology. Today's first paragraph recaps the seventh through tenth lectures in this series. In these four lectures, Chambers told how the transfiguration, Gethsemane, the cross, and the resurrection affect our study of psychology.

Do you often think about these four other-worldly events or about the fifth one—Christ's ascension? Do you ever think about your psychology and what makes you tick? Today's lesson will show you how the deep-thinking Chambers linked Christ's ascension with our psyche.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** As was typical of Chambers, he referenced dozens of verses in his lecture on Christ's ascension. The main passages were Luke 24:50–51 and Acts 1:9–10. How do these verses connect the two books Luke wrote?

Other verses Chambers referred to were John 17:5, Acts 2:33, Matthew 28:18 (with Matthew 11:27), John 14:13, Acts 7:56, and John 17:23. Can you see how these verses relate to the ascension? For example, what does John 17:23 say is the reason Jesus stands at the Father's right hand (Acts 7:56)?

### APPLICATION

How do you think the disciples thought of Jesus before and after the transfiguration? What did Jesus' cross, resurrection, and ascension do for us, and how did they do it?

Finish this prayer: "Jesus, I praise you for being willing to lay down your glory and give us access into . . ."

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

In the first paragraph, Chambers refers to his previous four lectures. He briefly explains the main point of the previous two: "His cross is the door . . . into the life of God" and "by His resurrection He has the right to give eternal life." In the same paragraph, Chambers summarizes today's lesson: "by His ascension our Lord enters heaven and keeps the door open for humanity."

It's as if Christ opened an airlock to heaven. First, through the cross, He opened the door on earth. Then, through His resurrection, He earned the right to let people through the airlock. Finally, through His ascension, He opened the door into heaven.

Of course there's not really an airlock to get into heaven. But imagining two doors, one on earth and one in heaven, helps us make sense of the cross and the ascension. Part of Jesus' job was to be on earth as the Son of Man, to reopen the door that was shut at the fall. But His job wasn't finished until He went back to heaven and held open the door for us there too.

Take time today to thank Jesus for going back to heaven. If He hadn't done that, your psyche would be forever trapped in the old earthly patterns!

❧ MAY 18 ❧  
LIVING SIMPLY—YET FOCUSED

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*Want to be useful?  
Just be who Christ made you to be.*

**BACKGROUND** At noon in Perth, Scotland, on July 19, 1911, Oswald Chambers gave the third lecture in his five-part Sermon on the Mount series. Four years later, he and Biddy sent the modified transcripts to a publisher in Cincinnati (see February 15, *Companion*). From this *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Biddy extracted today's lesson: "Careful Unreasonableness" (Classic Edition).

At Chambers' funeral, his good friend David Lambert said that Chambers' life was "the finest commentary on the Sermon on the Mount" that he knew. How does your life compare? How does it compare to the part about "Do not worry"? Are you "unreasonable" in how carefully you guard your relationship with God? Today's lesson gives us a fresh look at this part of Jesus' most famous sermon.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** On January 26 and 27, we looked at this part of the Sermon on the Mount. If you made notes from those days, look back at them as you read the whole Sermon on the Mount. How did the "do not worry" section affect you earlier? How is it the climax of Jesus' sermon? Why do you think He used more

words in this section than in any of the other nineteen sections of His sermon?

Chambers also quotes John 7:38. Why is it so important to believe in Jesus as we live simple lives? How does God exert influence on others through our simple lives?

**WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?**

Have you felt guilty for not "buttonholing" an acquaintance to talk with him or her about God? Christians have at times put an unnatural emphasis on the need to verbally share our faith with others at the expense of what Chambers is teaching us in today's lesson. He urges us to focus on our relationship with God and to approach everything else the way a lily approaches life.

Looking to a lily for life advice seems strange from a non-Christian perspective. As Chambers put it in his 1911 lecture, "It seems unreasonable to expect a man to consider the lilies, yet that is the only way he can grow in grace." You will definitely be seen as unreasonable if you are so careful about your union with God that all else falls by the wayside. But that is the only way you can grow in grace!

**APPLICATION**

How should your life be like a lily's? Do you know someone who lives like this? Who? Where are you trying to be useful? Which circumstances have your focus right now? Finish this prayer: "God, I want to be useful to you, but it can only happen as I focus on Jesus. Help me . . ."

## ❧ MAY 19 ❧

# OUT OF THE WRECK I RISE

---

*Getting bugged? Want a change?  
Pesky problems lead to victory through Jesus.*

**BACKGROUND** Do you ever feel like a total wreck? How can you make today's title true and rise out of your wreck? Oswald Chambers gave a sermon with this same title to World War I soldiers. Some may have caught the reference to Browning's poem "Ixion." But others probably just imagined rising up out of their own wreck of a situation.

Why are you a wreck? Is it because of tribulation? Anguish? Whatever helps you realize the wrecked state of your life is actually a blessing. As today's lesson teaches us, it is right in the midst of troubles that we receive God's victory.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** The foreword to the 1959 book that included Chambers' "Out of the Wreck I Rise" said it was a "remarkable exposition of the closing verses of Romans 8." Read these final three verses. What does Paul list

as things that can't separate us from God's love? Which ones did Biddu include in today's lesson? Why do you think she picked these?

Chambers also quotes Psalm 91:15. How does this Psalm help you know that God will be with you *in* the very things that make you feel like a wreck?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Have you ever met someone whose life is full of troubles but who still holds on to the love of God? Are there any signs or wonders that better prove God's love?

Isn't it odd that we don't become super-victors through our courage? Our Hollywood-soaked culture adores courageous victors and abhors wrecks. But God loves wrecks like us and loves to wreck us until we learn to rise out of our wreck by *His* power.

### APPLICATION

What do you wish *wasn't* in your circumstances? Has it made you Christ's super-victor? What can you do to remember that God loves you despite tribulation, distress, and famine? Finish this prayer: "Jesus, I know you haven't deceived us. I want to hold on to your love despite what I . . ."

# 🌀 MAY 20 🌀

## TAKING POSSESSION OF OUR OWN SOUL

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*Moody? Tried praying?  
God tells us to kick bad moods by taking action!*

**BACKGROUND** For today's devotional, it seems that Bidley Chambers took two paragraphs from different talks and combined them. Today's second paragraph comes from a talk on "Attention" that Oswald Chambers gave to his Bible Training College students. The complete version of this talk is preserved in a book published nine years after *Utmost*. We don't know where today's first paragraph came from, but it rings with expressions that Chambers used elsewhere.

Are you struggling to give more attention to the real, spiritual world? Are you distracted by the realm of the unreal—the things that steal our attention from the spiritual? Today's lesson helps you put away your excuses and get "roused," or awakened, to God's reality.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** In some translations of the Bible, Luke 21:19 is a promise that we will stay alive during the hardships Jesus

describes. But the King James Version, which Chambers quotes, commands us to possess our souls. Do you think Chambers uses this verse out of context? How does patient acquisition of the "mind of Christ" relate to our surviving the end times that are discussed in Luke 21?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

What a convicting message today! In response to today's lesson, a person blogged, "I've tried praying away my blues, but instead of dispersing them, my moods only seem to increase with the increased attention."

Is that your experience as well? Take stock of what it is you say you can't do, and rouse yourself to do those things. God doesn't want you to sit around praying about it. He wants you to use the Holy Spirit's power that is already in you and to take the first step toward making it happen!

### APPLICATION

When you became a Christian or got serious about God, did you feel a setback in focus?

How can you take possession of your new life? In what ways have you done that?

Finish this prayer: "Father, the life you gave me is so precious! I commit to shaking myself out of my . . ."



## ❧ MAY 21 ❧

# HAVING GOD'S "UNREASONABLE" FAITH

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*We think we know what's important. But God's the one who made the rules.*

**BACKGROUND** We return again to the topic of our May 18 study: being careful to live an “unreasonable” life. Oswald Chambers uses the phrase “carefully careless” in today’s study (Classic Edition) and more than twenty times in his *Complete Works*, often to sum up the main point of the Sermon on the Mount. What do you think this phrase means? How are you careful to live carelessly about everything except your relationship with God?

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Read again Matthew 5–7. In his *Complete Works*, Chambers quotes these three chapters more than three hundred times and recommended we read them whenever we want to see just how dull and slow we are in following the teachings of our Savior.

### APPLICATION

How many hours a day do you spend making money, eating, relating to God, and so forth? Where should you reprioritize? Why is it so difficult to harmonize with the verses in Matthew 5–7?

Finish this prayer: “Jesus, I don’t want to be lazy with my responsibilities, but on the other hand I need to . . .”

What parts of the “do not worry . . .” section are you still not obeying?

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Chambers was not a man who dressed sloppily or put off improvements to his house, garden, and place of work (see March 6, *Companion*). He used the term “Bohemian” to describe people who refused to put adequate effort into doing quality work. So when he says we should take great care to put our relationship with God first, the implication is that the “great care” we take in our heavenly relationship insures that we are also responsible for our earthly affairs. The key is to keep these earthly affairs in clear subordination to God and our relationship with Him.

## ❧ MAY 22 ❧

# THE EXPLANATION FOR OUR DIFFICULTIES

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*Prayer is not God giving us more stuff. It's us learning what's on our Lord's heart.*

**BACKGROUND** Imagine Biddy Chambers digging out her old shorthand notes for Oswald's talk "Now This Explains It." He said in this talk that God's purpose "is not to answer our prayers." Oh, how she had prayed that Oswald would recover! Then to read these words! Few of us can relate to her deep loss and the way these words must have affected her.

Which of your prayers has God decided not to grant the way you were hoping? Has this made you sweeter, better, and more noble, or more insistent on your own way? Let today's study prepare you for the next time God doesn't answer your prayer.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** In his *Complete Works*, Chambers quotes from John 17 more than one hundred times. The only chapter he references more frequently is Matthew 5 (see May 21, *Companion*). Indeed, Jesus' high priestly prayer and His Sermon on the Mount

were the two lynchpins of Chambers' whole view of Scripture.

Read through Jesus' prayer in John 17. What parts stand out to you? How many times does He talk about "oneness"?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Have you ever wondered why you have to go through difficulties? Many of our troubles are self-inflicted, but we still can be left wondering why God didn't keep us from those bad choices. Plus, there are many troubles that are not our fault at all.

Today's lesson explains that God wants oneness with us. All our troubles are toward that end. It's comforting to know that this is true even of our self-inflicted troubles. So in the midst of troubles, will you say to God, "Your will be done"? If not, troubles will only make you bitter because you are not getting your own way.

### APPLICATION

What does it mean to be one with God? How do you feel about being that close to Him?

What difficulty are you facing? Is it making you sweeter or more critical?

Finish this prayer: "Jesus, thank you for praying to the Father that I become one with Him.

I commit to . . ."

## ❧ MAY 23 ❧

### OUR CAREFUL UNBELIEF

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*Are you worrying?  
It's not just useless; it's the sin of unbelief!*

**BACKGROUND** Today's lesson is the third in a three-part series that began May 18 and continued on May 21. Oswald Chambers saw Matthew 5–7 as central to Jesus' teaching, and he considered the lesson of "careful carelessness" from chapter 6 the essence of the whole sermon.

Have you ever thought of worry as a sin? What about common sense? Is it really "infidelity" as Chambers says (Classic Edition)? Today's lesson pulls no punches as it warns us against commonsense carefulness!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Instead of reading Matthew 5–7 for the third time in five days, just focus on 6:19–34. Try to read it in a few different versions. What new ideas come to mind?

The truth is we will spend the rest of our lives trying to live out these verses. We can try with all our might to be "carefully careless" about everything except our relationship with God, and we will still miss the mark. Only with the Holy Spirit's power will our concerted

efforts make any headway in the "Realm of the Real" (May 20). Ask the Spirit to fill you with trust and "careful carelessness" today.

#### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Chambers gives us three examples of where we show our infidelity to God: relationships, vacations, and books. Obviously, these are only examples, but they are at least a place to start. List some of your plans in the first two areas. Is the Holy Spirit pointing to where you haven't put God first in these areas? How do you choose what books you will read? In what other areas of your life is the Spirit calling for fidelity?

The full "Careful Infidelity" sermon elaborates on "abandon," Jesus' "great word" to His disciples. Chambers says we must learn to abandon the way our bodies learn to do things physically, by practicing over and over. What can you do this week that will further your practice of abandonment to God? What step is the Holy Spirit asking you to take next?

#### APPLICATION

What worries or confuses you? Do you always put Christ first? If not, what is first?

Do you see worry as unbelief? How do you view common sense and carefulness?

Finish this prayer: "Lord, I want to abandon myself to you. Right now, the place where I need to obey is . . ."

## ❧ MAY 24 ❧

# THE DELIGHT OF DESPAIR

---

*Until we've fallen down and been raised up by God, we don't have real peace.*

**BACKGROUND** Back on February 24, we learned about “The Delight of Sacrifice”—the joy of being a “doormat.” Today’s lesson, “The Delight of Despair,” teaches us that we will experience great delight when we finally know that, in our flesh, there is not a single good thing.

Have you ever felt despair? Have you wanted to fall down and not get up? Often our despair is from unholy sources that take away all hope and give no delight. Oswald Chambers is referring to holy despair that helps us realize our need to fall prostrate before God. Have you ever felt that kind of holy despair? Today’s lesson will prepare your heart for it, whether you have felt it yet or not.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Do you find it hard to relate to John’s vision in Revelation 1? God rarely manifests himself like this. Chambers often said that though we look for God to manifest himself *to* us, “God only manifests himself *in* His children” (see April 21, *Utmost*). Yet there are many ways that God’s presence

and our sin become so clear that we feel like falling down as if we were dead.

How does the rest of the theme verse comfort you? What about Deuteronomy 33:27? What else in that chapter is comforting? How did Paul respond to the realization that he had nothing good inside his old, human flesh (Romans 7:18)? How do you respond?

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

First, Chambers describes the experience of holy despair. He talks about how Jesus will seem completely different from who we thought He was (see March 15, *Utmost*). Second, Chambers says that God will lift us out of this holy despair with His “ineffably sweet” tenderness. Third, Chambers warns against unholy despair and draws the connection between holy despair and our realization that nothing in our old selves is good.

Have you come to grips with the lack of anything good in you, in your old self? The proof will be that you have experienced God’s sweetness. Ask Him for that sweetness today!

### APPLICATION

Have you felt despair? Was it because God revealed himself? How did you react?

Do you see your natural self as basically good or do you see it as totally bad—in dire need of God?

Finish this prayer: “God, if you appear to me, my whole being falls prostrate, since I am so unworthy . . .”

❧ MAY 25 ❧  
**THE GOOD OR THE BEST?**  
**(BIDDY AND OSWALD'S ANNIVERSARY)**

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*Stuck in a spiritual rut?  
Yield up your rights to “golden opportunities.”*

**BACKGROUND** As 1915 got underway and Britain prepared for the second year of World War I, Oswald Chambers began a four-month series on the life of Abraham. By the end of this series, Chambers decided to leave London's comforts to serve with soldiers (see March 28, *Companion*). In today's study, Abraham makes a similar choice by giving up his rights to the well-watered land. Chambers says that when we give up our rights to good things, we grow spiritually.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Chambers quotes from two parts of Abraham's life. Genesis 13:9 is from an early time, when Abraham was still Abram and was sharing land with his nephew, Lot. Read this chapter and see how God rewards the way Abraham gives up his rights.

In the second quotation, Abraham is 99 years old. Read Genesis 17. Why did God

change Abram's name to Abraham? Did Abraham follow God's command (see Genesis 24:40)? How do *you* walk before God?

**WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?** When you first started following God, did “fascinating” prospects open up before you? Did you face golden opportunities? Chambers says this is bound to happen, since God uses them to help us grow. Surprisingly, it is in giving up our right to them that we grow spiritually.

Related to this, Chambers says that the good is the enemy of the best. We must avoid a perspective that puts our rights ahead of God's best for us. Let God make the decision, as Abraham did when he let Lot choose first. What right can you relinquish today? Don't shirk your responsibility to choose wisely, but when you are faced with a golden opportunity, let God make the final choice. You'll grow as a result!

**APPLICATION**

What good things could you choose right now? Does God want you to yield your rights?

How much have you grown spiritually this year? Have you chosen “good” over “best”?

Finish this prayer: “Lord, I want to live a higher standard, one focused on you. Specifically, I commit to . . .”

## ❧ MAY 26 ❧

# THINKING OF PRAYER AS JESUS TAUGHT

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*Prayed but didn't receive?  
Disillusioned with God? He answers best—always!*

**BACKGROUND** On May 22, we saw that the only prayer God always answers is Jesus' prayer for our oneness with Him. Today Oswald Chambers tells us that God always answers *every* prayer. Is this a contradiction? Chambers says the answer might not be immediate, "in the domain in which we want it" (Classic Edition). So the lesson on May 22 was that Jesus' prayer for our oneness is the only prayer that God immediately answers in the exact way Jesus prayed it.

Think about your prayers that were unanswered. Can you see how God answered them "in the best way," as today's lesson says? Don't give up on your childlike certainty that God *will* answer prayer!

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** First Thessalonians 5 ends with a rapid-fire list of instructions. How does verse 17 fit into this list? What kind

of prayers could you pray continually? How can life be prayer and prayer be "the life"?

Chambers also quotes from Luke 11:10 (identical to Matthew 7:8). Do you believe that when you ask you receive? How does that fit in with Luke 11:13, the verse that changed Chambers' life?

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Today's lesson makes two points. First, prayer should be unceasing. It should not merely be an exercise, but it should constantly be a part of our lives.

Second, prayers *will* be answered. We remember times when an answer was not immediately evident "in the domain in which we want it," so we think we've misunderstood verses like Luke 11:10 that promise an answer to all prayers. Take Jesus at His word, and pray without ceasing!

### APPLICATION

List truths about prayer described in today's devotional. Is this how you've been thinking about prayer?

How has your view been shaped by common sense? Have you had unanswered prayers?

Finish this prayer: "Holy Spirit, I know that you can help me pray as I ought. Please give me continual . . ."

## ❧ MAY 27 ❧

# THE LIFE THAT REALLY LIVES

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*The disciples waited for the Spirit, but we receive the gift of Christ's power now!*

**BACKGROUND** Before he left for Egypt, Oswald Chambers organized Bible correspondence courses. Chambers used material from these courses as he taught soldiers in El-Zaytoun (see April 30, *Companion*). Biddy published one of these courses, *The Making of a Christian*, while she was still in Egypt a year after Chambers died. Today's lesson comes from the final chapters of this little booklet.

Do you understand Pentecost and how it relates to the Holy Spirit in you? Today's lesson gives us valuable insight into both topics.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** The theme verse and the first two verses Chambers quotes (Acts 2:33 and John 7:39) outline the Holy Spirit's grand entrance to our planet. First, we learn that Jesus was the one who sent the Holy Spirit to earth. In the second verse we see that He didn't send the Spirit until He was "exalted" to God's right hand. Finally, we learn that the Spirit's coming happened after Jesus was "glorified."

Does any of this matter to us? Chambers thinks it does! He says we often separate the Spirit's infilling power from the power of our risen Lord. Instead, we must see the Spirit's baptism as the evidence of Jesus' glorified life in our lives. This truth is highlighted by the fact that

the Spirit wasn't even *here* on earth before Jesus had risen, ascended, and been glorified.

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

The final verse Chambers quotes points us to the take-home lesson. We must know God. Period. The experience of the Spirit's baptism serves to help us know God. Although it's important to understand the timing of the Spirit's appearance at Pentecost, our experience of Him should be here-and-now, since God wants us to know Him right *now*.

In *The Making of a Christian*, a sentence Biddy used in today's lesson: "The reception of the Holy Spirit is the maintained attitude of the believer" (Classic Edition) is followed by another intriguing sentence: "The way of His entrance into us is the knowledge of our own poverty." What does this mean?

This intriguing sentence means that the Holy Spirit's power can't fully be expressed in your life until you know that you are "poor in spirit" and realize how much you need Him. Do you know your own poverty? Let God show it to you today, so you can continually welcome the Holy Spirit's entrance into your daily life. Then you will truly experience "The Life That Lives"!

### APPLICATION

What's the importance of the Holy Spirit's coming *after* Christ was glorified?

How could "reviving life" help you really live? How can you receive the Holy Spirit?

Finish this prayer: "Spirit of Jesus, I welcome you into my life today and every day. Please empower me to . . ."

# ❧ MAY 28 ❧

## UNQUESTIONED REVELATION

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*Are you just asking for things you want?  
Or are you asking in Jesus' name?*

**BACKGROUND** Do you ever wish God would level with you? Do you feel as if it would be a lot easier if He just spelled things out clearly once in a while? In a sermon titled “Why Are We Not Told Plainly?” Oswald Chambers spoke about this feeling. His threefold conclusion was that God doesn’t tell us plainly because we can’t bear it; we can’t believe it; and we don’t need to know it once we know Him. Today’s lesson comes from the third point.

Are you experiencing something “dark to your understanding” (Classic Edition)? Do you ask God *nothing* about it and trust that He will work things out “in accordance with His will”? That’s hard to do! But today’s study will help you in your times of darkness.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Read John 16:16–33. How does today’s theme verse contribute to the change in the disciples’ attitude? How does it relate to verse 25?

Chambers says that John 14:1 will become a reality in our hearts once we know God well

enough to stop questioning Him. Is your heart troubled? Or do you trust in God?

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

On May 26 we saw that when we ask, we receive. But we also learned on May 22 that the only prayer God *must* answer is Jesus’ prayer for our oneness with Him. The question is this: Are we asking for what Jesus would ask for—in His name—or are we just asking for what *we* want?

When our prayer coincides with Jesus’ prayer and we have oneness and perfect contact with God and His purpose, Chambers says our questions will cease. Does that mean we won’t ask for anything? Absolutely not! Two days ago we were told, in the Updated Edition, to “maintain the childlike habit of offering up prayer in your heart to God all the time.” When we do, our prayers will be less about questioning God for what He is doing and more about communicating with Him as our Father and our best friend.

### APPLICATION

What questions have you asked Jesus? Are they separating you from Him? How so? Compare mind vs. spirit and asking Jesus vs. asking God in Jesus’ name (John 16:23, 26). Finish this prayer: “Jesus, I’m willing to submit to your life—relying completely on your resurrection . . .”



## ❧ MAY 29 ❧

# UNTRoubLED RELATIONSHIP

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*Do you ask in Jesus' name?  
Get with God and you will!*

**BACKGROUND** On a Wednesday evening in November 1912, Oswald Chambers left his home at Number 45 North Side, Clapham Common, to speak at the annual League of Prayer meeting in Caxton Hall.

Was Oswald Chambers nervous as he made the three-mile trip through London to give the address? We can't know for sure. But we are blessed to have the talk he gave preserved in the book *If Ye Shall Ask* and to read a condensed version of this talk in today's lesson.

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** On February 28 we noted how the upper room (and from there to Gethsemane) marked a turning point in the disciples' lives. How does John 16 fit into their transition from "smooth sailing" to "world crashing down"? How does Jesus' prayer in John 17 complete the transition?

### APPLICATION

How should/shouldn't we pray in Jesus' name? How is Jesus' character proved?

What is the point of God's love—if not to keep us free from difficulties?

Finish this prayer: "Father, I want to live in an undisturbed relationship with you today and every day . . ."

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Yesterday, we focused on those times when we ask God about things dark to our understanding. Today we look at how the same closeness that keeps us from questioning God's plan will allow us to pray in Jesus' name and will allow us to receive from God whatever we ask.

Do you use "in Jesus' name" as magic words to make your prayers official? Or are you so intimate with God that you really pray for the things that are part of God's mind and plan? Ask God today for the closeness that will protect your heart from being troubled and allow you to pray in Jesus' name, which is a guarantee that you will receive your requests!

❧ MAY 30 ❧  
“YES—BUT . . . !”

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*Christians take risks in order to do big things.  
What do you risk for God?*

**BACKGROUND** “Sometimes your whole life boils down to one insane move” is a line from the 2009 film *Avatar*. Though *Avatar* is by no means a Christian film, we can appreciate the spiritual truth in that quote, especially after we read today’s devotional.

Today’s lesson teaches us that the more we practice stepping out of our comfort zone to do things that defy common sense, the better we will be at following God. Conversely, the more we say, “Yes—But . . . !” the harder it will be to do what He asks. Are you willing to take a leap for God today?

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** The source material for today’s lesson is from the same part of *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* that we saw on May 23 (Matthew 6:30–32). But Biddy, when she edited the source material into this devotional, chose Luke 9:61 as the theme verse. Read verses 57–62. Can you identify with any of these excuses? How are you saying “Yes—But . . . !” to God?

### APPLICATION

Has God asked you to do something contrary to common sense? How did you respond? Search the New Testament for “mad” statements made by Jesus. Have you proven them true?

Finish this prayer: “Lord, I want to be that one person willing to invest my faith in your character, so I’ll . . .”

### WHAT’S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

What kind of “reckless, sporting” (“unrestrained, adventurous,” Updated Edition) spirit does a natural man exhibit? In his original sermon, Oswald Chambers explains this cryptic phrase with an example from track and field. When a hurdler starts to balk at a hurdle, he will continue to turn back each time until he breaks his fearful habit with a reckless sporting spirit.

Have you made a habit of balking at what God wants you to do? Will you throw yourself today in reckless abandon at whatever barrier He puts in your way? If you are going to do anything worthwhile, you will have to risk everything on your leap. Ask Him for wisdom to know what risky actions *He* wants you to take and what things are your own ideas. Remember, God will give you wisdom as you read His Word and compare it to your situation. Will you be that one out of a hundred who will bank it all on God’s faithful character?

## ❧ MAY 31 ❧ PUT GOD FIRST

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*Who is first in your life?  
God, or someone else?*

**BACKGROUND** We learned on January 1 that much of the source material Biddy Chambers used to create *Utmost* came from a weekly devotional hour at the Bible Training College, which was closed to everyone except full-time students (see May 5, *Companion*). Today's lesson most likely comes from one of these devotional hours. Oswald Chambers speaks intimately with his students about the believer's need to put God first in every area, and he tells them that the whole "purpose of this College is to get us rightly related to the needs of God" (see Classic Edition).

**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT** Chambers uses three verses to walk us through three aspects of putting God first. He first quotes John 2:24–25 to show how we put God, not humans, first in our trust. Second, he uses Hebrews 10:9 to remind us that we put God's needs in *us* first, then His needs elsewhere. As we learned in kindergarten, "Just worry about yourself." When we try to meet God's needs in other people before we meet His needs in us, we are in danger

of seeing the speck in our brother's eye and not the log in our own!

The final verse for today is Matthew 18:5. This verse highlights how God has given us a precious trust. Have you ever babysat for someone else's child? It's a weighty responsibility! God says that we must receive Jesus in the way we receive a little child. We must be very careful to provide a nurturing environment for His life, so that His life will grow up to maturity inside us and be evident to all around us.

### WHAT'S THE DEVOTIONAL SAYING?

Do you put God first in anything? What evidence is there that you do? Where are you *not* putting Him first? Do you trust human beings first? Have you been burned? Do you focus on God's needs elsewhere more than His needs right inside your own heart? Do you value, first and foremost, the way God entrusted His Son's life to you?

We fall short in so many ways. Let us take today to renew our efforts to put God *first*.

### APPLICATION

Who has let you down? How are you going to get better at trusting God first?

Why might we temporarily set aside others' needs? What are God's "needs" in you?

Finish this prayer: "God, I want my life to be a Bethlehem. Although it might take a while,

I want to start by . . ."