

Foreword

We adopted a catchy phrase,

WHEN LOVE CAME DOWN, EVERYTHING CHANGED!

JESUS emptied Himself of His glory and came down from heaven for us. As we welcome Him into our hearts and give him the reins of our lives, everything can be changed for good. Love changes!

“TAKE A MOMENT” is a series of six daily exercises to encourage believers to take a private moment with Jesus. As we meditate, reflect and capture what God is speaking to our hearts, we are empowered for life. A moment with Jesus changes us.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it by day and by night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall act wisely.

It is only a few minutes a day but a scripture can empower you. Take a minute to *review* its reality and unfold your own *story*. Take a minute to *reflect* on a scripture with *thanksgiving*. Take a minute to *receive* that scripture to *empower* your *day* and release God's *destiny* in you by prayer.

Reflect on a scripture by focusing your gaze on a given scripture like you would on a tempting delicious plate of your favorite food.

Review by tossing in your mind any thoughts or opinions on a word or phrase in curiosity, agreement or enlightenment (light bulb experience).

Receive by an active moment of capturing an inspiring thought in your quiet interaction with Jesus in your private time that day. That is the very word of God that empowers and changes you!

Hear from God daily and be changed by God's love.

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Day One

Today's Scripture: *1Jn 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.*

We are objects of God's love. That is what children are to parents. It does not matter how old I am. The knowledge that I am a child of someone significant is a good feeling, especially when I know I am a child loved by my parents.

My story is one where my dad and I spent a lot of time in art exhibitions, art books and paintings. His time with me had an unexplained impact on me but it created success in me. I won prizes for my art in community and international competitions. I had my first solo art exhibition at the age of sixteen with 86 pieces of exhibits. That was the first of many that followed.

The manner of love God has given us is in being a Father to us. He is present with us when we would want to be with him. I did so with my dad. I looked forward to those afternoons at the exhibitions.

Since believing in Christ, I have God as my Father. This is unique as I think of other forms of belief I had before. God is Father, not judge, not just helping me pass exams and protecting me. He will help and protect but not as an external God but one that lives in my heart. I give thanks. Thank you Father, thank you Lord.

Being a child of the Father, in my opinion, means not only provision but having a future. Dads prepare us for our future. Today is part of my future. God's love looks over, guides me to train me in His plan for me in my days ahead.

I receive my position as a child loved by the Father. My Father is a significant person. He is God! Moment by moment He is with me. I am aware of Him at different turns of my day. Thank you Lord.

My Journal

What is your story of the Father's love for you?

What is it in the Father's love that makes you glad with thanksgiving?

If your future is to inherit your Father's business and prosper, how would you live differently from now?

Day Two

Today's Scripture: *1Jn 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.*

Knowing and believing the love God has in me does not mean reality to me until I abide in that love. Love can be a fleeting thing. Luke 15 is the story of the prodigal son who ran away from the father's love. He suffered for it and ended in a famine in life. I did not realize I had a somewhat similar story. In my youth and inner rush for ambition and achievement, I had not cultivated a habit of abiding in the Father's love. Much of my life was work, tasks and performance. Then I complained of stress. I even wanted to give up serving God but because I was the pioneer of the church, I did not know who to send my letter of resignation to. In those moments, I felt "burnt-out". Joy left me. Fatigue set in. That was no fun.

Staying with the Father was a progression of personal experiences with God. It began with a sour feeling at first, complaining *a bit*, but time spent in thinking about Him never goes to waste. He shows up. He did. He apprehended me in one of my moments of whining and asked, "*When are you going to praise me?*" Fear struck my heart. I did not expect that! I repented and started my next phase of learning to give thanks and praise God. Thank you Lord for your mercy in changing my ways!

In my opinion, the longer we have to wait for an answer from God, the more we have to abide in Him – stay with Him and wait on Him. He is the only One with the perfect answer to all things. He will not disappoint us. He will show up. Somehow!

My Journal

What is your story about abiding in God and His love?

What makes you glad with thanksgiving in your experience of abiding in the Father's love?

What attracts you to stay by Him daily to be empowered?

Day Three

Today's scripture: *1Jn 4:19 We love because he first loved us.*

We love only because we are first loved by God. It is in being loved that we continue in love. Love for God responds to the love of God. Without God's love, life and light ("lamp-stand" Rev. 2:5) are removed. We are not easily given to sacrificially love others. Love flows in us when we focus on God who first loved us.

Reality is such that I do feel being done in by others at times. It might have been a dishonest mechanic or a deceptive trader selling me fake stuff. I might be disappointed in the actions or reactions of others (or even my own). Love does not flow easily in those moments.

My story began when God taught me about the big picture of His love, about His plan and eternal destiny for us. When we did not behave in ways He will be proud of such as our self-centered ways, assertiveness or attention seeking actions. Because of His big picture, He was so patient with us. God is patient and kind, longsuffering and enduring with us. That's love in 1 Cor. 13.

When I realize that is how God first loved me, even though I may not "feel" very loving towards others at times, I can start by looking at God's big picture and see His love around the world and the stories of how people are incredibly changed by His love. It is strange that love is cultivated not by looking at my own world but by first looking at God, His big picture and others. With that I began to be more patient and kinder toward others.

I look at how God has indeed been very faithful and loving towards my family in provision and favor. Gratefulness arose in me. Thank you Lord!

My Journal

What is your story of loving because God first loved you?

How does being first loved by God inspire you to arise in thanksgiving right now?

What will spur you on to look at God who first loved us consistently?

Day Four

Today's Scripture: *Rom 5:8 But God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*

This scripture escaped me as something of a mental agreement but with little personal reality. It was not until it dawned on me one day that before I was born, I was included in God's purpose. That was the story of Jeremiah, the prophet in the Bible.

I was born at home, not in a hospital. I don't know why. The mid-wife and guardian over me for the first month of my life, I was told, was a Christian. In hindsight, she could have prayed for me in the process. In any case, it is interesting that my dad gave me a name that bears the idea of "one above the crowd". The Chinese character for "crowd" is a general over sheep. You wonder how I ended up being a Pastor! I did not choose it but life was already mapped out before I even realized it. Maybe it seems a bit unfair. But maybe it was destiny at work!

Before I had the opportunity to sin at my birth, Christ had already died for my sin because God knew I needed to be saved to serve His purpose in this life on earth. His love saved me from sin and eternal separation from Him by having Christ die for me to set me free from the debt of sin and Satan's ransom. His love called me into serving His kingdom so that His love perpetuates in the nations on this earth. I give thanks! A privilege indeed!

It does not matter what your name is. You are known by God before you were born and Christ died for you before you had a chance to sin because He loves you and has a purpose for you to serve Him. Your life starts with love and is nurtured and kept by love. You are secure in this everlasting arm of God's love.

For most of us, at one time or another, we recognize God's hand of love involved in our situations. Some may have vivid recollections.

My Journal

What is your story of Christ dying for your sins even before you knew it?

What is your point of praise and thanksgiving when you know that Christ died for you while you never knew him and while you were still in sin?

God's destiny for you is that you serve Him. Do you know what you can serve best in?

Day Five

Today's Scripture: *Luke 19:8 And Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor. And in anything I accused anyone falsely, I restore it fourfold.*

Probably, although previously conniving and manipulative, Zaccheus was changed by Christ's love. All Jesus did was to recognize him and have lunch with him. Zaccheus had a bad image as a tax collector. God's love changed his self-image, changing his nature and his ways. What a story of transformation!

God is love and also God is good. Change came when Jesus came. Zaccheus might have thought he had to selfishly hoard money for himself at the expense of others. But the nature of God is the opposite. He received Christ's generous hand of fellowship. Jesus gave him time and attention. He was touched. He changed to be a generous giver. I am sure his image changed.

My story is not exactly the same as Zaccheus. However, raised in a home with poverty and lack, I saw how my parents struggled over expenses they had no money to pay. As our family of six lived in a rented room, nothing happened in private. I'd only realized later that the spirit of poverty had affected my self-image. This overflowed into my image of God, thinking that it is hard for God to supply all our needs. But God's love and grace changed me. I have seen how God is generous through those he had touched and blessed. I desire to join that rank: having a new image!

As our self-image changes, so does our nature and ways. Our past does not decide our future. The love of God and a renewed image in Christ decide our future. We can be grateful for God's love, grace and goodness. We can be generous and giving.

My Journal

What is your story of self-image or lack of it?

God's love is here. Change is coming. Can you give thanks for one specific area changed by God's love?

What picture do you see about yourself (your self-image) as one empowered by God's love?

Day Six

Today's Scripture: *Job 13:15 (KJV) Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him.*

This is a confession of one who is secure in Gods love.

God loves me because I am His son. I can stay in His love no matter what. He first loved me before I can love Him and others. God's love in Christ's work on the Cross is for me even before I was born or had sinned. God's love had changed my self-image.

I can trust Him.

Have I ever wavered in the midst of unfavorable circumstances? As I write this set of devotions, a Pastor friend is dying in the ICU. Many have prayed for him. I have reached out to the Lord on his behalf at night and in the morning. Can God give him a miracle? Yes but the report is bad. They are getting ready for his funeral. The wife and daughter are upset. But they cannot bear to see him suffering anymore than he had. You know what? They still trust the Lord. Though He slays him, yet will the rest of us trust Him!

Will I believe that God can do miracles on this earth? Yes I will. Even if He does not do this miracle, it does not mean He will not do other miracles. I may not understand everything but I know this one thing:

When love came down, everything changed.

We are not the same anymore. God's love changes us.

Someone said he'd rather die believing than live as one in unbelief.

My Journal

What is your story of trusting God in adverse circumstances?

Will you still arise in thanksgiving in adversity? (I did not ask, "Can you?")

What legacy of God's love will you pass down to your children or those under your influence?
