



30 DAYS WITH SAVE THE STORKS

Reimagining PRO-LIFE





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DEDICATED TO

Gabi. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Indiana.
pictured on page 8

Brienda. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Iowa.
pictured on page 33

Jasmine. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in North Carolina.
pictured on page 34

Jas. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Texas.
pictured on page 43

Hannah. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Tennessee.
pictured on page 55

Kendra. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in New York.
pictured on page 56

Brenda. who adopted four children in Colorado.
pictured on page 74

Roslani. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Maryland.
pictured on page 76



To all the brave men and women who have chosen life,
and to those who are on the journey of healing from an abortion.

*You are living proof that God is the provider of hope
for those in crisis, the restorer of the broken, and the author of
abundant life for all.*

DAILY
DEVO

WEEK

1

2

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“How can you say
there are too many children?
That’s like saying there are
too many flowers.”

—Mother Teresa





Welcome to

REIMAGINING PRO-LIFE: 30 DAYS WITH SAVE THE STORKS!

Throughout Scripture, knowing God and caring for the vulnerable are interconnected. Yet often in our culture, this connection is lost and we are discouraged from speaking up for the unborn because we view the issue through the lens of politics, anger, or shame.

At Save the Storks, our deepest desire is to change the conversation around the pro-life movement. We don't want to engage in the current debate; we want to reimagine it. As we shift the focus away from divisive language to a dialogue of hope and true empowerment, we mirror our good Father and His unconditional love. Over the next 30 days, you're invited into a journey to rediscover this connection in a new way through *Reimagining Pro-Life*. Join us as we engage with the millions affected by abortion from a new framework, one of love, compassion, and action.

This devotional is a collaborative effort of Save the Storks and Heartwork™. Your daily experience will be divided into two sections, Heart and Work.

Heart. This consists of daily scripture, inspiring devotionals, and real-life stories. There are also several videos throughout the 30 days that further the ideas presented in the devotional.

Work. The work section is where we live it out, and connect our love for God with compassion for his people. This includes weekly and daily empathy challenges, journal prompts, and prayer guides for us to engage with the ideas on a deeper level.

Connect! All videos and blogs referenced in *Reimagining Pro-Life* can be viewed at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine

The *Reimagining Pro-Life* devotional can also be found on the YouVersion Bible App under “plans” if you or your family would like to read along on a device.

Here we go!



DAILY
DEVO
WEEK

W Z O

Letting go



DAY 1

Spend Yourself

“And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” —Isaiah 58:10

HEART // According to Isaiah 58:10, if you will SPEND YOURSELF, hope will become available to others, and hope will fill you, too. Darkness will recede as your light shines.

It can be difficult to live out Isaiah 58:10, though. We like the principle but tend to avoid the practice, both consciously and unconsciously. However, through *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks*, you are turning principle into practice. Being intentional about spending ourselves for others doesn't always come easily, but as we pursue love, compassion, and action—sacrificial giving for mothers and their babies—we won't regret the cost. Let's embark on a journey that brings light and hope to one of the most complex issues in society today: the tragedy of abortion.

We want to take that journey with you. Right here, in the middle of our everyday lives, we can learn to experience God's age-old promise in Isaiah 58. By making the decision to engage in *Reimagining Pro-Life*, you are choosing to wrestle with an issue that impacts the lives of millions of people in our world. You're inviting God into your thoughts on abortion, and you're inviting the reality of abortion into your prayer life with God. As Christ followers, we choose to welcome the widow, the orphan, and the refugee into our prayer and practice of what it means to be a Christian. Similarly, we want to bring the issue of abortion into our conversations with God about how to love Him by loving others well.

One of our deepest desires is to change the conversation around the pro-life movement. We don't want to engage the current debate; we want to reimagine it. We want to shift the focus away from divisive

language to a dialogue of hope and true empowerment. We want to meet women in their time of need with the kind of love, compassion, and action that support them no matter what. Our mission is to move hearts and minds, enabling these women to see that life, whatever the circumstances, is always worth celebrating.

The miracle of God's nature is that, as we learn to bring this hope and light to others, we experience goodness in our lives, too. The temptation to ignore the serious issues that cloud the far edges of our daily lives is constant. We can easily spend all of our energy on seeking satisfaction in 'Self'—in acceptance, in security, in distractions and entertainment. But we also know that a quest focused on 'me, my, and mine' will never satisfy the longing deep within our hearts to experience the fullness of what God wants to do in and through us.

One of our deepest desires is to change the conversation around the pro-life movement. We don't want to engage the current debate; we want to reimagine it.

There is so much more to life as a Christ-follower than self-absorption. Jesus championed the 'needy,' the 'weak,' and the 'vulnerable,' and He asks us to do the same (Luke 4:13-18; Matt. 25:40). He asks us to spend ourselves on behalf of these people. Because we live in a culture that tells

us to 'climb higher,' we often isolate ourselves from those in need. However, during these next thirty days, we will work together to give God the room to grow our empathy and gratitude.

As we begin to invest the resources of our lives (things like time, creativity, money, or community) in others in the same way that God has invested Himself in us, God's powerful light begins to shine in and through us. It will also surely illuminate some dark places, like our own broken hearts or the stark reality of abortion clinics. Sometimes we would rather keep these spaces unspoken about; we would rather keep them hidden. But God wants to bring us unimaginable freedom; He wants us to join Him in the mighty miracles that He has planned. During these thirty days together, we will spend time on four big ideas (Letting Go, Identity, Compassion, and Mission) that will help us to understand how we can "spend ourselves" well. We will also invite you to take on several simple activities that may be outside of your normal routine. These 'empathy challenges' are designed to help us imagine the pressures, and even *feel* the hurt, that these vulnerable women experience—and they are all around us.

This will be a short, sweet, and, at times, challenging journey, and that's exactly why we are excited to walk it with you. If we want not only to save the lives of babies, but also to serve their mothers, fathers, and families, then we have to reimagine a pro-life movement that isn't afraid of thinking, talking, and praying about thorny topics. More than this, we must *live* differently. For thirty days, let's learn to turn hate to love, judgment to compassion, and apathy to action.

//WORK

Dedicate a journal or another creative space to these next thirty days. First, ask God to show you particular areas of your life that are in need of His light (confused, sinful, terribly sad, broken).

Then, write your list down!

After you do, grieve this reality that is a dim corner in our nation:

Over 2,000 babies are aborted daily in the United States alone, not to mention countless abortions every day in other nations.*

Spend at least five minutes in focused prayer, asking God to increase your awareness of not only your own brokenness and need, but also the brokenness of people near and far.

Take a few minutes to pop by the *Reimagining Pro-Life* page to watch the intro video from Save the Storks with more on the heart behind this devotional!

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 2*Living Water*

“Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’ ‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?’ Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” —John 4:6-14

HEART //

Oh, the Lord Jesus...Don't we love Him in this account, where he encounters a woman whose life is a bit of a mess (John 4:15-18)? The beauty of how this woman's life is changed by such a moment stops us in our tracks.

But let's consider—what if you were this woman's sister? Or first husband? We love the grace Jesus gives her when we are zoomed out, but sometimes the view from up close reveals the painful details of a person's choices, conversation after conversation, chance after chance, year after year. Sometimes this loving grace is hard to give.

We begin this week with the big idea of “Letting Go.” Where better to begin than with letting go of our own feelings and reactions toward those we consider wrong? Did you know that this interaction with the woman at the well is the longest recorded conversation Jesus had with any one person in Scripture—including His disciples?*

The length and detail God gives us highlights the importance of what we need to learn from it. It also reveals that Jesus did know all about this woman’s life. He had seen failure after failure, yet His response was so very simple: His first and standing offer to her is Living Water.

When we encounter sin, especially sin due to conscious decisions that impact others (as this woman’s choices most certainly must have), in our own strength our anger may rage. Our call for justice may rise up. Our shutdown-and-shutout mechanism may be triggered. But let’s take a close look at the tone and reaction of Jesus in this story. Imagine His face, His emotions, His perspective, and His truth-telling. Let’s ask ourselves how we can tap into His miraculous love that’s available for us to receive and to give.

In light of the Bible, it is undeniable: God is against abortion. And so we, as Christians, should fight and work and plan and pray to stop it. But here is another truth that we cannot deny: God is against *all sin*. As much as abortion pains the heart of the Father, He grieves all our sinful responses to the sins of others just as deeply.

As much as abortion pains the heart of the Father, He grieves all our sinful responses to the sins of others just as deeply.

That’s why reading the story of Jesus and the woman at the well early in our *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* journey is so powerful. This narrative gives us a Christlike framework not only for responding to the issue of abortion, but also for dealing with our own sin and the sin of those we encounter.

So, how do we respond exactly? We respond as Jesus did. *He offered the woman Living Water*. He didn’t say to her, “I’m ashamed of you. How dare you? Clean up your act!” Rather, He had *compassion* for her. He recognized her need. He saw the chasm that sin, likely her own AND that of others, had created deep within her soul, and He offered to fill it up with Himself. This is an offer we must receive for ourselves, and then learn to make to those around us, no matter what brokenness they may be living in.

WORK

Throughout this month, we will be letting go of comforts that distract us from our ability to spend ourselves for others. Fasting is a practical way to let go, and as we loosen our grip on our normal coping mechanisms, we hold tight to God.

This week's fast is to go seven days (or as many as you can!) drinking only water as a reminder of the grace of Jesus, our Living Water.

Let go of all other beverages: soda and tea, juice and milk—even coffee. In satisfying your physical thirst through water alone, your actions will take on great spiritual significance. Our first empathy challenge invites you to let go of the crutch of uppers, downers, sugar addictions, and comfort drinks. Satisfy yourself in the endless well of Living Water—in Jesus alone. You can choose to fast all beverages besides water for one week while still eating as you normally would. If you're feeling physically and spiritually empowered to fast non-water beverages *and* food—go for it! Try it, even for just one day.

Every time you choose water rather than your other normal beverages, be thinking about the ways that you can turn the love of Jesus in your heart toward people who have had abortions or are facing unplanned pregnancies and the temptation of our culture to cope with a “quick fix.” If your fasting includes skipping meals, consider using that time to pray for their healing, and for this issue in our world, for hearts to change and strongholds of deception to be filled with the light of Truth. Pray for the volunteers in your local pregnancy resource center, those who are doing sidewalk counseling and praying near abortion clinics.

Pray about how you can run toward and invite others into the Living Water.

However you prayerfully decide to approach this fast, we want to encourage you to meditate on the way the woman at the well reacted once Jesus invited her to drink from His unending well: “Leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the

people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’” (John 4:28-29). Having been led to the wellspring of eternal life, *she couldn't help but to invite others to drink*. Pray about how you can run toward and invite others into the Living Water. The love of Jesus is as vital to our spiritual lives as water is to our physical bodies. What an image for those in our world who are thirsty to the point of desperation. Jesus is refining *you* to encounter people who need this invitation more than you know.

DAY 3

Living Outside of Our Comfort Zones

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

—1 John 2:15-17

HEART //

How many things around us daily scream, “Buy me! I will make your life better! Indulge in me! I will make you happy!” Hearing this message over and over makes it hard to resist. But today’s verse reminds us that lust for more and the pride of life are real enemies to our soul. Things that we use, need, and enjoy are not a problem in and of themselves, of course. Problems arise with how we may be tempted to hold onto these things instead of to God, and how we allow them to shape us. Author and church planter Jeff Christopherson wisely said, “Jesus is against whatever we will not leave behind to follow Him.”*

As we continue practicing Letting Go, let’s consider how distracted with material possessions we can easily become and how it impacts the things that matter most in our lives. We are trained by marketing geniuses to develop an appetite for more, especially with the way things can even be individualized to our personal preferences. From what we eat to how we consume media, we are becoming really good at curating our own perfectly-customized life experience. We are up to our eyeballs in this way of thinking, and usually, we don’t even realize how it could be impacting our church communities, our family time, our donations, our volunteer hours, our personalities—and even our understanding of God.

Paul Isaacs, with Save the Storks, puts it this way: “Money is what we give in order to live. Time is what we give that we can’t get back. *Where* we give these things shows what we value.” Our value may be on making the futures of ourselves, our homes, our vacations, and our kids as comfortable as humanly possible. Or we may grow to have such a high value on being the hands and feet of Jesus to bring the Kingdom of God to the earth that being pleasantly secure just isn’t our highest priority.

We encourage you to prayerfully consider where you place your value. As you think of the sixty million children who have lost their lives to abortion, legally, in the United States since 1973, do you get uncomfortable?*** Would you ever consider sacrificially giving your time and money toward families who may be vulnerable to choosing abortion over life for their babies by supporting a pregnancy resource center in your area?

Sometimes the discomfort of the reality of abortion can cause us to react in one of two ways: fight or flight. Fighting in a way that’s reactive, judgmental, or unloving is sort of like fighting fire with fire.

Sixty million children have lost their lives to abortion, legally, in the United States since 1973.

This way of thinking has done some significant damage in our world, but so has another reaction: flight. Passivity, freezing, or running away from the battle usually comes from thinking, *This is a huge, complicated problem. What difference can I actually make?* In that

response, we choose not to enter into the redemptive story, potentially getting sucked into the stream of self-focus and wasting much of our God-given resources on our own very small story.

Instead, may we learn to react to the tragedy of abortion—to all vulnerability and heartbreak!—in a way that aligns with Jesus. It is possible! *Christlike brokenness leads to active compassion.* As today’s verse reminds us, love and passion for the things of the world and the things of the Kingdom don’t easily coexist. On one hand, we can complicate it, saying “There’s nothing wrong with wanting _____!” Truly, there are no Christian rules against any of our stuff, but with our very best interest in mind, Jesus wants our whole hearts and energy pointed toward Him. We should want to be willing to lay anything down to follow Him. And as we learn to hear His voice and respond,

compelled by the Holy Spirit, we have access to a compassion so strong that it breaks the chains of needing more and more to fulfill ourselves. Then, it leads us to pour more and more into the Kingdom of God, our Father. Our internal reactions and external actions will align with His, and the sheer joy of serving others will begin to fuel us, regardless of how much that true compassion costs.

If our possessions and our current level of comfort are satisfying us, making us feel 'happy enough' to ignore the needs around us, then they are an immense threat to our souls. And our good Father cares so deeply about our souls.

//WORK

Giving up tangible things that we love and enjoy—even if only for a short time, even when we know that good things will come out of it—is a major battle. You're probably feeling the weight of that statement right now, especially after giving up your favorite drinks (and maybe even food) for just one day. We hope that today's passage refreshes you, though. When we give up good gifts from God, like coffee or dinner, we are reminding ourselves that Christ is *the* Gift. Doing His will is more satisfying than anything the world has to offer.

Let this truth of today's verse sink into you: doing the will of God leads to eternal life. What an invitation! It's mysterious and impossible to quantify, but it is simple. Living like God (following His example) means living *like God*—eternal reality seeps into your limited perspective, and eternal life is yours. Today is about living outside of your comfort zone. God has a bit of a reputation of pushing us out of our comfort zones to grow us and invite us to be like Him.

Pray about how you may be able to give your time, talent or treasure to a local pregnancy resource center, even if that's outside of your comfort zone. We all have certain spiritual gifts and limitations and we should never feel pressure that comes from anywhere but the Holy Spirit. How might He be challenging you today?

Journal about the ideas that come from your prayer time.

What could your life look like if you surrendered to God's direction fearlessly and selflessly?

DAY 4

Backwards Kingdom

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” —Matthew 5:3-10

HEART //

What do you think of when you think of God’s blessings? It might be your current job, a healthy family, or the meal right in front of you. We all desire God’s blessings, but in His economy, blessings come in all forms, and the best are definitely not material. As we read yesterday, the world and its desires are passing away. It’s the *forever* sorts of blessings that God seems to be most interested in! What does it really mean to be “blessed”, then? In the Bible, the word *blessed* describes someone who is *happy and favored*. The riches of God center around the fact that His people are living with Him now in the Spirit while doing His will on earth, and will spend eternity with Him later...A relationship that is grace-based (favored) and joyful (happy)!

Reading today’s verse feels literally backwards, opposite, to how we, as humans, naturally pursue blessings. But it gives us such insight! Even while we wait for eternity’s doorstep, we can draw close to our indestructible destiny through sacrifice and service. We find real blessings as we serve one another, as a tribe of people who depend not just on ourselves—but on God. After all, those who taste His Kingdom are not necessarily powerful or well-known individuals.

Mostly poor, grieving, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful and pure in heart, we may not look like much, and we certainly don't all look or talk the same, but we are united under the eternal promises of God.

In God's coming Kingdom, there will be no poverty, no mourning, no hunger, no thirst, and, ultimately, no distance between us and God. We can be more sure of this than we are that the sun will set on us tonight!

Because we are confident that God's backwards Kingdom is arriving soon, we can work expectantly and determinedly for it now.

As Kingdom workers, we must learn to show and share our resolute hope with those who have none. Matthew 5

gives us a glimpse into the way our Eternal God thinks of human suffering. Even the meek, the mourning and the persecuted are blessed because He is near to the brokenhearted (Psalms 34:18). Surely, a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy feels hopeless and scared, and her fears are legitimate. As a pro-life people, the Church should seek to *bless her* in her brokenness by coming alongside with our prayer, love and resources.

We have the eyes to see how God wants to comfort her and the opportunity for Him to be strong in her weakness. We hold the light in the darkness and the key to grace-filled joy in our own lives and stories. We have hope to share! We need never worry about blessing someone too much.* That is the nature of our God!

Mostly poor, grieving, meek, hungry & thirsty for righteousness, merciful and pure in heart, we may not look like much, and we certainly don't all look or talk the same, but we are united under the eternal promises of God.

*Some may be concerned with enabling unhealthy choices. This is valid, but 'enabling' and 'blessing' are very different. *To enable* is to prop up unhealthy behavior, while *to bless* is to make space for God to come in truth, grief, change, and peace—all of which are wrapped in sacrificial love. Blessing shows people who are hurting that they don't need to run to solutions this world has to offer (all of the unhealthy behavior they've been depending on) because they are supported through community and faith in a miraculous God. Blessing others in their brokenness embodies this truth: when we are weak, we are actually strong, because our brokenness is a canvas for God's glorious grace (2 Corinthians 12:10).

//WORK

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the ways that you have been seeking earthly prominence, favor, security or purely material blessings. Pray that God would increasingly satisfy you with His steadfast love instead (Psalms 90:14). How has your water fast helped you to rely on God alone for satisfaction?

When you are satisfied in Christ, you will find yourself full of Living Water, joyfully pouring into the lives of others.

When you are satisfied in Christ, you will find yourself full of Living Water, joyfully pouring into the lives of others.

Let's practice overflowing with loving action—letting go of our expectations for fairness and need for acknowledgement.

Serve one person today without expecting the favor to be returned.

You could send a note of encouragement to someone who is sick or lonely. If it's not your normal job, you could cook dinner for your family. You could share a smile and a conversation with someone in need on the street. You could even drop an anonymous treat on a neighbor's porch or, to continue the focus on reimagining the pro-life movement, drop some notes and snacks to the staff of a nearby pregnancy resource center. There are so many opportunities to love others!

To wrap up today, enjoy a short encouragement from Ahna Cameron, Kirk and Chelsea Cameron's daughter, on using whatever we're given to serve others.

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 5

Why Generosity?

“Then he said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?’” —Luke 9:23-25

HEART //

Jesus is constantly asking His followers hard questions. As we follow Him, we should find ourselves doing the same. In reading today’s verse we can ask ourselves and others, *What in the world does it mean to daily take up our cross? What does it mean to lose our life for Him? How do we know that we are truly walking with God in our daily lives?*

The answer can be found, in part, by asking another question: *How often do we sacrificially serve those around us?*

Giving until it hurts is what taking up our cross is all about. If our lives are characterized by a willingness to listen and respond wisely to the needs of others, we can be sure that we are following in Jesus’ footsteps.

Too often, however, the cultural ‘need for more’ hinders us from denying ourselves! We find ourselves numbly climbing the ladder of more to do, more ambition, and more comparison. This ladder offers a false sense of security and distracts us from following Jesus. In a culture that always wants more and more of everything, we must realize that our hearts truly need less.

If we want to let go of that ladder, we may need to let go of find satisfaction in our own possessions, positions, our ‘rightness,’ or security. Then we will free up so much space in our lives to extravagantly love

Too often, the cultural ‘need for more’ hinders us from denying ourselves!

and serve others. Let these questions and thoughts from pastor and author Francis Chan sink in: “When was the last time you sacrificed for someone else’s sake? Unless I’m mistaken, isn’t that the whole point of the Gospel? If this isn’t commonplace in your life, and you can’t think of anyone outside your family you’d sacrifice for, you need to seriously examine your life. This is what separates Christians from the rest of the world.”*

These are the types of open, honest conversations that we should be having in the family of God. Let’s offer our hearts up to the Lord, asking these challenging questions of ourselves and each other. The answers will help us to live more thoughtfully.

Sometimes the political nature of the abortion issue in our country prevents us from being willing to be generous with others. We may be all right and all wrong at the same time. Right in believing the truth about abortion, but wrong in being influenced by judgemental voices who believe shaming abortion-minded women will serve to change their minds when, in reality, it only hurts them more deeply.

We may be all right and all wrong at the same time.

We should be motivated instead by the love of Jesus, He who climbs down the ladder, looking for the lost over and over again. Many of us are so polarized by our position (even if it’s correct!) that we can’t see over to the other side to learn or to love.

You might be thinking, *So where is the how-to manual? Who do I believe? How generous is generous enough? How much of my time, money, and energy should I be giving?*

You do not need a how-to manual, because your every *How?* is answered in the God-made-Man: Jesus. You should look to Christ, who spent Himself so that you could be free from the never-ending ‘need for more.’ Go and do likewise! May every plan and ambition be refined by the Holy Spirit; inspired by Jesus; and oriented toward your calling in the Kingdom, so that you are able to use whatever education, talent, and privilege you’ve been blessed with to spend yourself for others.

//WORK

Today you asked yourself a series of questions. Hopefully, your grip on ‘me’ time, ‘me’ money, and ‘me’ achievements has loosened as a result. Letting go of our ambition and need to be ‘right’ can be really challenging! But Jesus shows us the way...He broke through every cultural norm, every ‘right’ way, to show us that following Him is the only way. When we choose to give our lives to Jesus, our lives become not ‘our’ lives, but His! (Galatians 2:20) Every day we must take up our cross—the instrument of death—and follow Him into situations that may be unconventional or silly to others, all for the sake of love.

Today, take the time to reach out to one person or group that you aren’t necessarily close to—maybe even someone you don’t agree with or you’ve been avoiding—and find out how you can be a blessing to them today. Then, follow through as best you can! Maybe it’s sitting by someone at church who you usually go out of your way to avoid, bringing a dessert to a family on your block who doesn’t do things the way you do, or stopping by the pregnancy center nearest to you to find out what their biggest needs are.

Write about your experience in your journal. Yes, this is a big ask, but we have to practice facing tough situations with extravagant generosity if we really want to follow Jesus’ command to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily.



DAY 6

Pulling Weeds

“The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

—Matthew 13:22

HEART //

From all sides, women with unplanned pregnancies are pricked by thistles of earthly worries and lies: *Your life will become unbearable with a child in it. Besides, you can't afford to raise a child by yourself! It's better for the both of you if you have an abortion.*

In a recent study, 73% of post-abortive women acknowledged pressure from others to have an abortion, and 28% admitted aborting out of fear of losing their partner if they didn't. 66% said they knew in their hearts they were making a mistake when they underwent the abortion.*

Christian and non-Christian women alike can get “choked out”—making unfruitful choices for their lives and those of their children—from the prick of this deceptive thornbush Jesus describes in today's verse.

We, as the Church, have the opportunity to replace those thorns with the loving touch of the Savior. We must operate as His life-giving hands, speaking His truth into our culture and helping to heal the wounds of those who have been affected by the thorns of their worries. If we truly want to empower our brothers and sisters to make life-affirming choices, they need to feel God's love, like a balm through our presence in their lives.

But before we can help those who have been considering, or have been affected by choosing abortion, we too must let go of the “worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.” We must realize that the ‘need for more’ is an itch that can never be scratched. It’s an itch that distracts us from the opportunities to love others that God may be hiding for us in plain sight. God is the gardener of our hearts. When we bask in the light of His word, He pulls up the thorny weeds of self-focus and pride from our hearts. Then, He plants seeds of truth that allow us to further experience His love for us and for others.

We know that letting go is complex, especially for younger generations. With concern for young people, pastor and author Timothy Keller once said, “From their youth culture they have imbibed not only an emotional resonance for social justice, but also a consumerism that undermines self-denial and delayed gratification.”** Isn’t it true—of all of us? How can we want justice for the unborn yet be unwilling to make tangible sacrifices for them?

How can we want justice for the unborn yet be unwilling to make tangible sacrifices for them?

In a society that tries to keep the thorny weeds well-watered, how do we unlearn the materialism and self-focus that so easily grow in the soil of our human hearts? How can we move beyond the consuming distraction of our own concerns and comforts? Letting go of any identity or purpose placed in worldly things is a good place to start. Instead, we must root our status and joy in God—the only source of true life.

It can be scary, but we only need to take one brave step at a time: reading His Word, asking honest questions, and making small changes in our daily lives. Wanting less, giving more, spending ourselves and our resources with intentionality, and learning about vulnerable people in our communities are all small, yet meaningful, steps.



WORK

Has this first fast, which reminds us of the all-satisfying Living Water, helped you to move in the direction of letting go? We hope that occasional or wholesale fasting from all beverages besides water (or even from all food!) has helped you to be like the seed from Matthew 13:8: “Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.”

Likely, there are more things than your favorite beverages that are turning your focus inwards! **Ask God to show you other things in your life that consume your focus**, pulling you into anxiety, fear, or pursuit of wealth or success, preventing you from loving others well. Go back to your journal today and respond to this question: **What are a few “worries of this life” that you could let go of today?**

You don’t want to miss the video of Victoria Robinson, with Save the Storks, share about her abortion. It’s not easy to hear the heartache, but such a reminder of why we are engaging in this month of living and thinking differently together!

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 7

Letting Go of Shame

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

—Proverbs 28:13

HEART // We tend to believe that we are less vulnerable if no one knows what we have done. When we sin, we are often quick to hide behind walls, concealing our shortcomings. In reality, Satan is using shame from past sin to keep us swamped in current sin. God’s correction and conviction in our lives “produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret” (2 Corinthians 7:15). Godly regret (coming to terms with the reality of our wrongdoing) takes down the wall (our sin) that was separating us from God and leads us to Jesus.

As Dr. D. Clair Davis wrote, “The Lord doesn’t talk about your sin so you’ll think you’re trash. He talks about it just because you’re not. He talks about it because he made you in His own image, with an infinitely higher and brighter plan for you than the one you choose for yourself.”* In order to get to God’s high, bright plan for ourselves, we have to “confess” our past and present vulnerability, as today’s verse teaches us. We also have to “renounce” (reject) it. We must ask God to come near where we may have been pushing Him away, to hold us up where we are weak—He doesn’t strengthen and sustain us from a distance. Sometimes shame can take hold and keep us distant from God because (individually, or as a church community) we struggle with openness about the realities of sin and the extravagance of grace.

Statistically, 43% of women who have had an abortion were regular (once a month or more) churchgoers at the time of their abortion, and sadly 54% said they would not recommend discussing an unplanned pregnancy with someone at church.**

Shame keeps us silent, causing us to suffer alone and wordlessly continue in the dark cycle of struggle. Silence does not welcome the dawn of mercy and joy that God promises us with confession.

The temptation of abortion relies on lies, lies that thrive on isolation. Loneliness, insecurity in unhealthy relationships, or the ‘need’ to be completely independent lead us to believe that no one is really there for us. Lack of accountability in community fuels the twisted deception in our culture at large, that life will be easier, more fair, if there are no real consequences for sexual ‘freedom.’

The well-intentioned but misguided notion that, because women should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, they should be able to end a life, undermines the relationship of mother and child that is a cornerstone of healthy family community. These lies come flooding in when we, as a people, are not cultivating interconnected, healthy relationships. If we, as a church, can become more inclined to tell the truth about our own sin; to confess and receive mercy; to reject shame and isolation; and to invite forgiveness and accountability, then we will raise the level of honesty and openness in our families and communities.

Letting go of shame over past mistakes is absolutely necessary when moving toward the life of spending ourselves on behalf of others. The past should not determine how we live life in the present.

Letting go of shame over past mistakes is absolutely necessary when moving toward the life of spending ourselves on behalf of others. The past should not determine how we live life in the present. The truth that God’s love is enough to cover every past mistake—and even future failures—sets the stage for forgiving ourselves, forgiving others, and removing shame from our midst.

No matter what we have done, God’s grace and love are enough. Openness in community is vulnerable and scary because there will be mistakes. None of us will love perfectly, but shutting out community is never the solution. Fears multiply when we become distant from healthy community and wise counsel. Shame is always waiting for us in the wings, hoping that we will shut each other out, so that it can lie to us in our isolation. Will we fall into its trap?

//WORK

Today's prayer is that God will reveal to us any walls that need to be torn down in our hearts, those that separate us from God and isolate us in shame. Recognizing and becoming free from this trap is a HUGE step toward spending ourselves for others in the way that God invites us to. Will you consider letting go of the past and looking toward your future opportunities without fear?

In your journal, write down the areas in your life where you feel inadequate, ashamed, or worthless.

Then, let go. Meditate on these truths: God is gracious and loving, and He is enough. He says that we are forgiven and loved, covered by Christ's righteousness, adopted into His family. Ask Him to download these truths into your heart, casting out feelings of shame and producing lasting change in your actions. Prayerfully consider whether to seek out a well-trained Christian counselor or pastor to help you where you are stuck. You are not alone!

After you do, take a moment to go to the *Reimagining Pro-Life* page and watch the powerful video of actress Ashley Bratcher, who plays Abby Johnson in the movie, *Unplanned*. She shares about a confession that changed her life while on the set of *Unplanned*.

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DAY 8*Untangled*

“Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” —Hebrews 12:1-3

HEART // The author of Hebrews counsels us that the race we run is no straight line. Sin reaches out, trying to hinder and entangle us in order to keep us from Christ. As we’ve been experiencing this week, letting go can be tricky! Running “with perseverance” in the Christian life requires the kind of community support we explored in Day 7, and it requires intentional focus.

As we focus on “the race marked out for us”—thanks be to God that we are not forging our own way! Christ has already paved the path to the Kingdom for us, through His death and resurrection. To run the race well, we must focus on Christ. And focusing on Christ requires throwing off anything that is unnecessary for our race. In other words, the Christian life requires not only perseverance and community, but also strategy.

Imagine that you are at a track meet, getting ready to race. A teammate comes up to give you final words of encouragement. He tells you to take off your running shoes, and he gives you a brand new pair of snow boots to put on. He places a high-quality coat on your back, and he sets designer jeans on the bench beside you. Everything that he gives

you may be desirable in the eyes of our image-oriented culture, but it is all completely unnecessary for the race that you are getting ready to run. In short, when we clothe ourselves in nonessentials, we slow down our pace in God's race.

Strategy in our Christian journey means listening to the Coach who knows our weaknesses and what will be best for our training. This Coach can and does strengthen us. Learning to recognize the voice of God in your life; surrounding yourself with a good team; praying and fasting; surrendering to Christ on a daily basis; and following in His footsteps by loving others are all ways to train well. God has specific methods and paths that match His plans for you, so pay attention to the details of your suffering, your past failures, your passions and your strengths—because He wants to redeem them all in a way that is unique to your story!

God has specific methods and paths that match His plans for you, so pay attention to the details of your suffering, your past failures, your passions and your strengths—because He wants to redeem them all in a way that is unique to your story!

If you've made it to Day 8 of this devotional (and the last day of the Letting Go water fast), you are doing an amazing job of training well, and you're probably gearing up to reimagine the pro-life movement in our world in powerful ways. It is a race that will require perseverance because it's an uphill journey in many ways, but remember to keep training hard and staying strong. There is present and everlasting joy for the runner who glorifies God in the flurry of worldly distractions. One day, when we see Christ face to face, we will know that it was all worth it.

//WORK

This week, through our daily fasting, reflections, and challenges, we've seen that letting go requires a great deal of determination and planning. The reimagined pro-life movement requires the same traits: perseverance, community building, focus, strategy. Even though the fight for life is a fierce battle, what is amazing is that we may run with a winning mentality. Jesus has already won the race!

We can have confidence in the face of setbacks because Christ assures us that all will be made right in the end. Fear and despair cannot hold us down because ALL WILL BE REDEEMED! We can already see glimpses of His victory. Four out of five women who board a Stork Bus choose life.

We, too, should work toward establishing Christ's everlasting Kingdom. Right now. Right in our own families and cities. Over the past week, we've talked about what life could look like if we made decisions fearlessly and selflessly. What remaining fear or sin "that so easily entangles" can you feel hindering your spiritual race?

Spend a few minutes journaling about your own race in this life.

Then, pray about (and then make some notes on) how your path can or may continue to connect with the reimagined pro-life movement.

If you've never interacted much with the pro-life movement, here are some ideas to get you started...

- Are you a prayer warrior? You could join a group like 40 Days for Life to pray for women entering abortion clinics and that God would change their minds.
- Do you have a knack for organization? In the future, you could volunteer at a local pregnancy resource center or at other pro-life events in your area.
- Have you ever donated items for a food, clothing or toy drive? Many pregnancy resource centers collect and distribute items that expectant mothers are in desperate need of, and some even have their own thrift store and need volunteers!

Tomorrow, as we move into a new week with the theme of Identity, we pray that you may be filled with newfound strength and freedom in God, even if it means letting go of some 'normal' things that aren't serving you well on your race. God is good!



**By choosing his life,
I chose mine too.**

-Brienda



APPENDIX

Day 1

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