



**SHE**  
*speaks*  
A DEVOTIONAL SERIES FOR GIRLS

**GOD GIVES GOOD**  
*gifts*

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# LESSON ONE

## THE GIFT OF THE CHURCH

- Are you traveling anywhere for Christmas this year? If so, where are you going?
- What is the greatest or most thoughtful gift you have ever been given?
- How do you serve in your local church? Or how do you wish to serve your local church in the future?



### *Purpose of the Church*

**Do you remember learning about living organisms in Biology class? (If you haven't learned about this subject then you will soon!) According to Biology Online, a living organism can be classified as any systemized structure that "can react to stimuli, reproduce, grow, adapt, and maintain homeostasis." Your local church can also be viewed as a living organism.**

The church is always growing and moving forward. The church has a purpose to reach your city and provide opportunities for souls to be disciplined. With this in mind, there is a God-ordained mission for the church and many roles that need to be filled by a united body of Christ. Christ ordained the church to be a beautiful gift to help us navigate our lives.

Ephesians 2:19-22 says, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

In the book of Ephesians, we see Paul remind the believers in Ephesus about Christ's gift of the church. He teaches them that Christ has divinely orchestrated the church to be built on the foundation of the apostles' teaching. And that Christ is the cornerstone that holds it all together. The book illustrates how we are all given the opportunity to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to live inside us. Paul goes on to lay out the importance of faithfully walking in holiness and using our gifts for the church. As Christians, our purpose in this life is to be the light to this CRAZY world. In other words, the church is one of the greatest gifts God has given us in this day and age so that we can fulfill our purpose.

The church is full of imperfect people who serve a perfect God. It is absolutely beautiful to see how Christ works through all sorts of people with different backgrounds, personalities, gifts, and talents to be a part of a moving church. When we submit ourselves to the Word of God, we are able to see how we are being built together for the dwelling place of the Spirit of God to live inside us.

One thing to remember is that Christ has built His church to last.

Matthew 16:18 says, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Jesus is referring to the revelation that He is the Messiah and upon Him, He will build His church. When we are rooted in the Biblical foundation and teaching of the Word of God, nothing will stop us.



Revelation 22:13 says that Christ is the “Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

This, along with many other verses, tells me that Christ is not going anywhere. The calling that He has placed on your life is also not going anywhere. He has chosen you to do great things for His Kingdom!

Just like a living organism, a rooted Apostolic Church is always moving and growing. We are blessed with the apostles in the New Testament that laid a beautiful foundation for how the church should operate. God worked through them to teach us how we can best reach this world. With that in mind, there is always a need for disciple-makers, worshipers, and servant leaders in the church. It does not matter where you are from or how old you are because in the eyes of God we are all loved and valued by Him. Christ has ordained and empowered you to be the light to this world. He has given you all of the necessary tools to fulfill the calling upon your life.

So, go be used by God to be a light in this world everywhere His Spirit leads you!



**Discussion questions:**

- How has the church or somebody in the church helped you, your family, or somebody you know?
- How can the church relate as a living organism?
- How can we be the church everywhere that we go?



***about the writer: Kaitlyn Kyle***

Kaitlyn and her husband, Luke, are both Urshan College alumni. They currently serve at the Sanctuary of the Palm Beaches. Her passion has always been youth ministry and helping see people fulfill their God given dreams.

## LESSON TWO

# THE GIFT OF HIS WORD

- What is your favorite food?
- What's the best gift you ever received?
- What's the best gift you've ever given?



**How many of you like...wait...hold on...who am I kidding?! How many of you love bread?!**

I would like to be the first to confess that I have a major food crush on bread. It's a problem. Fresh out of the oven, buttery deliciousness is an absolute fav of mine. Those who know me well, and have ever been around me when I have been in a situation with a warm buttered roll, know that I will instantly be transported to another land.

Ok...back to reality! (I think I am supposed to be writing a devotional right now.) Let's come back to talking about this yumminess in a little bit.

Read Luke 6:46-49

"Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock..." (Luke 6:47-48 ESV)

Remember this story of the wise man who built his house upon a rock? The floods came, the winds blew, but the house wasn't shaken. However, the foolish man did not take heed to Jesus' words and built his house on sand. When the storm came, his house was destroyed because it had no foundation. We must have our foundation in the Word of God. Everyone around us is looking for someone they can trust to not crumble into pieces when each storm of life beats on their door. They need someone who can stand firm in their beliefs. They need stability. If we plant our feet on the firm foundation of His Word, they will want what we have and will need to be pointed in the right direction.

The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. His Word is infallible. It cannot change. HE cannot change! Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

I encourage you to make a commitment to know Jesus in a deeper, more personal way by reading and studying His Word daily. If you devote yourself to extending your time and depth in His Word, your relationship with Him will be stronger. He will speak to you through His Word if you give Him the opportunity. I challenge you to not only have a Bible app but to also commit to physically sitting down with your Bible, page by page, word by word, without any device nearby to distract and cheat you of your quality time with Him. Take notes. Highlight. Invest in a Study Bible to help you understand what you are reading. Don't rush through, but allow Jesus' words to come alive. Fall in love with reading His Word. See for yourself why you believe what you believe (2 Timothy 2:15). When you are needing direction, you can remember that His Word is a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (Psalm 119:105). Memorize and hide His Word in your heart, that you



might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11) and so you can also have a word to speak over your life, a friend's, or family member's life in the time of need.

Coming back to my love for that delightful bread...

Jesus said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." In John 6:51 He says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

Over the years, I have fallen more in love with God's Word. I have found that it is something that I cannot live without. When I am regularly reading and studying, I find myself being filled. When I fill my heart and my mind with more of Jesus, I simultaneously find myself desiring entertainment less. Unlike the warm, buttery hot roll, I am filled and fulfilled by His daily bread. This bread is everlasting (and it doesn't make your clothes shrink!). What a gift this truly is. O taste and see that the LORD is good (Psalm 34:8)!

#### Discussion questions:



- What is the biggest challenge you face when it comes to reading God's Word? (Understanding, time, distraction, etc.)
- What can you personally do or change in order to help you grow in God's Word?
- What is one thing you either learned or were reminded of in this devotion that is valuable?



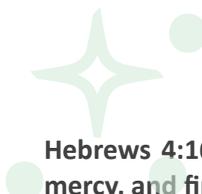
#### *about the writer: Lindsay Cuttridge*

Lindsay is "babe" to Steven and "Mommy or Mama" to Makenna and Anniston, as they serve at The Pentecostals of Cooper City in Cooper City, FL under the leadership of Pastor Mark Hattabaugh. Her roots are in global missions and being a pastor's kid. Outside of church, a few of her favorite things are traveling, music, and writing (oh, and we can't forget hot buttered rolls!).

## LESSON THREE

# THE GIFT OF GRACE & MERCY

- What is one of the best tangible gifts you have ever received, and why did it mean so much to you?
- Tell about one of your favorite gift-GIVING experiences: who it was for, what it was, and why it was so memorable for you.
- Have you ever been spared punishment for something that was your fault? How did that make you feel?
- Recall a time that you received a blessing that you know was completely undeserving.
- Have you ever blessed someone? If so, do they know the blessing came from you, or was it a secret?



**Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**

Having grown up in the church, I have heard the terms “mercy” and “grace” all of my life, and I used to think they were interchangeable. When I would pray, sometimes I would thank God for His mercy, and other times I would thank God for His grace. It was not until my late teen years that I learned that mercy and grace were in fact NOT the same concept, which in hindsight makes sense since we often say them together instead of individually.

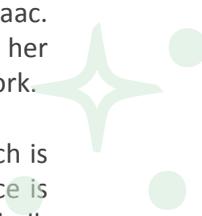
Can you remember a time that you did something that you COULD have been punished for, but you weren't? Maybe you hit a parked vehicle while driving your dad's truck, but instead of revoking your driving privileges for a month, you simply had to pay for part of the damages. Or you failed a major exam, but instead of giving you an F, your teacher let you take a different version. These are examples of mercy: when we escape the punishment we deserve.

God's mercy has been shown from the beginning of mankind, starting in the Garden of Eden. He could have killed Adam and Eve for disobeying His one direction, but instead, He spared their lives, clothed them, and then removed them from the garden. His mercy continues to be on display throughout the entire Bible as evidenced in the lives of Jonah, Lot, the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8, and countless other individuals.

On the other hand is God's grace, which is when we are given something good that we do NOT deserve. Perhaps you have received an unexpected check in the mail. Or maybe you were hired for a job for which you were underqualified. Or maybe your parents surprised you with a gift out of nowhere and for no reason. These are all examples of receiving grace: you did not do anything to deserve the blessing, but it was still bestowed upon you.

God's grace has also been extended from the beginning of time. Abraham and Sarah were extremely doubtful that they would be able to conceive a child, but it was God's grace that gave them Isaac. The woman with the issue of blood was healed because of God's grace and not because of her money or good works. Every time God blesses, delivers, heals, and protects, His grace is at work.

God's mercy and grace are not mutually exclusive. He can extend both simultaneously, which is what He did when He went to Calvary on our behalf. God's ultimate gift of mercy and grace is salvation. Mankind deserves eternal damnation, but God's mercy gives us a way of escape from hell. Mankind does NOT deserve to live with God eternally, but God's grace gives us the opportunity to live with Him forever. We cannot earn His mercy and grace, and we should not take it for granted.



He gives the gift of His mercy and grace to all that seek it. None of us are worthy of this gift, but as Hebrews 4:16 states, we are to come boldly before His throne to find His mercy and grace. We will never deserve His mercy and grace, but He will always extend them when we ask.

**Discussion questions:**



- Give an example of God's mercy being extended in the Bible that was not previously mentioned.
- Give an example of God's grace being offered in the Bible that was not previously mentioned.
- If you could only have one – God's mercy OR God's grace – which would you pick and why?
- What is more difficult for you to extend – mercy or grace?
- Recall a time that God gave you His mercy or grace.



***about the writer: Taylor Locke***

Taylor Locke is the wife of Phil and the mother of Everley, Ellerie, and Enslee. She lives in Fort Myers, Florida, where they pastor the wonderful people of Apostolic Praise. Taylor loves coffee, baking, reading, traveling, and family time.

## LESSON FOUR

# THE GIFT OF SELF-WILL

- How do you define self-will?
- How is self-will a powerful thing?
- Who's someone in the Bible who used their self-will for God's will?



**Look at you, girl! You got up today. You showed up. Maybe you didn't brush your hair as you should've. Maybe your bed isn't made, but you are here. Something within you helped you make it another day. Sometimes, we don't realize how our self-will is actively building our everyday lives and future.**

Self-will is defined as “the quality of obstinately (stubbornly) doing what one wants in spite of the wishes or orders of others.”

When I first met my husband, him being the eldest of five kids, one of the first humorous family conversations we had was “who was the most stubborn” among the siblings. I still don't think they have that argument settled.

Stubbornness often has a negative connotation, but actually when directed for good, it can be an incredible trait. When you're resilient for all the right things, you can do incredible things despite what others think or what life brings your way.

It's our power of choice that pushes us further in the direction we are heading. It's all the little choices that define us. And, whether we realize it or not, the power to use our will to build something good is a gift and a blessing. We are all presented with the option of using our will to fulfill His.

Gal. 6:7 says, “What a man sows that shall he also reap.”

We live in a world constantly wanting to blame our lives' predicaments on the choices of others. But God gave us all the power to overcome our circumstances and to turn our situation around for good.

What good is it for us to dismiss the power He's given us just to play the “Blame Game?” When you've seen people go through literal Hell and still not quit, remain kind, and serve others. It makes you grateful for what you've been given.

I believe there's a time to recognize our struggles, our valley seasons, and our trials; however, there should be a time we claim the victory that is ours through Him over everything in this life.

Life may not always be easy, but God never said it would be. What He has promised is that He'd always be with us (Deut. 31:6-8), He'd give us the strength to endure (Neh. 8:10), and He works all things for our good (Rom. 8:28)!

Self-will is what led Hadassah to free her people. Self-will is what led Ruth to work the fields that brought her to Boaz. Self-will led Mary to wash Christ's feet, despite the Apostles' criticism. Self-



will was what helped Mary birth the Messiah despite the doubts of all those around her.

Within every one of us is the gift of self-will, but the most powerful thing you can do with your self-will is yield it to the will of God. By doing so, when you make decisions, pursue dreams, or chase goals, you know that you are fulfilling a purpose greater than your own.

Self-will is most effective when it's submitted to His will.

They say "true freedom is living no longer caring what other people think," but for the Christian "true freedom is living for what God thinks, even when others disagree." And they will, but that's why God gave us self-will. Man was created with free will to genuinely worship, serve, and love.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us RUN with patience the RACE that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him ENDURED the cross..."

It was the self-will of the man Christ Jesus that completed the task of Calvary. That same drive is in us (made in His image) to complete what we are called to do!

Use "the quality of obstinately doing what one wants in spite of the wishes or orders of others" to please Him every day for the rest of your days. Every day is a gift, and the gift to will to do something great with each day cannot be underestimated.

#### Discussion questions:



- When is self-will destructive, and when is it constructive?
- Why is our self-will most effective submitted to Christ's?
- What's an area of your life you need to activate the gift of self-will?



#### *about the writer: Tiffany Huba Bonilla*

Tiffany Huba Bonilla married to the ever-incredible Jonathan Bonilla, mom to the cool and cuddly Revival Rey Bonilla and soon to be Baby Bonilla Boy 2! Tiffany graduated from FSU with a Bachelors in Media Communications, works for the State of Florida as a Training Operations Specialist and is proudly active online with Apostolic, home, modest and lifestyle blogging. Licensed with the UPCI, Tiffany and her husband serve their local church in Tallahassee as the Youth Leaders and Music Ministers and serves as the Section 3 Youth Leader for the Florida District.