

## August 6 — Stand Firm

### READ

Jeremiah 19:1-20:18

Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel 1:8, *“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.”*

### THINK

Exiled in Babylon and recognized for his leadership potential, Daniel submitted to being renamed Beltshazzar and participating in the king’s specialized cultural training. However, when ordered to eat the king’s non-kosher food that was likely used for sacrificing to false gods, Daniel drew the line! As a man of great resolve, his top priority was to honor and obey God.

Resolving in his heart to not defile himself with food forbidden to Jews, Daniel asked the chief guard if he and his close friends could instead eat vegetables and water. When the guard objected, thinking the king might notice that they looked weak, Daniel asked for a trial run. This was an altogether risky request because refusing the king’s food could lead to harsh consequences — even death. But because Daniel stood firm in faith, the Lord granted him favor, and the guard accepted his request. At the end of the trial, Daniel and his friends were stronger and healthier than those who ate the king’s food.

Literally translated in this context, “resolve” means to “set one’s heart,” which is precisely what God wants us to do! He wants us to have unwavering faith. Yet, too often, we crater to the pressure of going along with the crowd. But, if we steadfastly set our hearts to honor and obey God above all else — regardless of criticism or consequences — He’ll grant us favor, increase our strength, and use us to impact lives.

Resolve now to stand firm! Even if it’s difficult at the moment, God’s favor remains and His blessings are eternal.

### PRAY

Dear God, Help me to stand firm in my faith, even when it’s not the easiest or most popular thing to do. Give me strength and increase my resolve so that I may set an example for others struggling to remain steadfast to You in the climate of today’s culture. In Jesus ’name, Amen.

## August 7 — Man in the Fire

### READ

Daniel 2:1-3:30  
Jeremiah 7:1-8:3

Daniel 3:16-18, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.'"

### THINK

You're in a large group, and everyone is told to do something that makes you really uncomfortable. Everyone does it without hesitation — what do you do? Do you go along with the crowd, or do you refuse because it goes against your values? That's the same predicament Daniel's three God-fearing friends found themselves in when a 90-foot golden statue was revealed. As everyone was commanded to bow before it in worship or be thrown into a fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were the only ones to remain standing. Things were about to get hot for these brave God-fearing men!

King Nebuchadnezzar was outraged! He demanded that the three "rebels" be brought to him immediately. He threatened them with the fiery furnace and then offered to give them a second chance — surely they must have been confused, right?! But, no! As we see in the passage above, they had some pretty shocking words in response to the king, who in turn ordered his guards to tie them up and throw them into a fire. The blaze was so hot that the guards died from the heat as they threw them in, but the three young men remained alive, walking around in the fire. Then, King Nebuchadnezzar looked more closely and noticed a fourth man in the fire and recognized Him as the Son of God. He ordered them to come out of the fire, and the three did, unscathed.

How amazing is it to be in the face of imminent death and say, "Even if God doesn't come through for us, we still refuse to worship you!" That is a conviction on a whole different level; it's an unparalleled devotion and love for God that we should try to imitate today. Times are different, but Jesus is always with us in the "fire" to protect us, just as He did them. And we should note that they didn't demand a miracle but placed their hope for one in God's hands, and God delivered!

So, when things get hot, have faith. God is ready to deliver you unscathed!

### PRAY

Heavenly Father, I want to have the faith of Daniel's friends. When life gets "hot," I want to place my trust in You no matter the outcome. Please help me to live this out. Amen.

## **August 8 — Spotless**

### **READ**

Jeremiah 12:1-15:21

Jeremiah 13:23, *“Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”*

### **THINK**

Can a leopard change its spots? We’ve all heard this saying before, but did you know that it was a rhetorical question asked by God Himself? He’s asking Jeremiah this regarding the sinfulness of man. Essentially, we can’t. No matter how good we try to be, we still aren’t good enough — but God is always God enough to have a solution to our sin and pollution.

By nature, we are all fallible sinners — spotted by sin and shame. Through Christ, though, if we accept His free gift of salvation, we have the chance to “change our spots” to become washed clean by the blood of Christ. Jesus sacrificed Himself to make us spotless in God’s eyes so that we could enter His holy presence one day in eternity. Knowing this should make us want to live a better life here, one that honors God.

Have you accepted the gift of salvation? Have you changed your spots? You’ll never live a perfect life on this side of heaven, but you can bask in the coming perfection of your forever in heaven!

### **PRAY**

Heavenly Father, Forgive me all my sins and trespasses. I know that apart from You, I am spotted and sin-stained. Thank You for the gift of salvation through Christ. May I live a life that honors You knowing that Jesus sacrificed Himself to make me clean. Amen.

## **August 9 — No One Like You!**

### **READ**

Jeremiah 8:4 – 11:23

Jeremiah 10:6, *“Lord, there is no one like You! For you are great and Your name is full of power.”*

### **THINK**

Let’s face it, the majority of our lives are spent in mundane moments that fill our days. Most days aren’t terrible or morose — that would definitely be a difficult existence. And most days aren’t mountaintop highs — it would become the norm and wear us out! But, it’s there in the midst of the every day that we find those indescribable, breathtaking, and exhilarating experiences that leave us speechless. Perhaps such a moment was found looking up at the stars without the interference of city lights. Maybe it was standing on a beach and taking in the vastness of the ocean and all its wonders. Or, possibly it was holding a baby for the first time after the miracle of childbirth. It’s in these times when words don’t do justice to the experience, that we gain a sense of God’s absolute majesty and greatness.

In today’s reading, Jeremiah was once again trying to get the people of Israel to understand the futility and danger of worshiping worthless idols. This was the norm, the mundane — Jeremiah talking and his audience not listening as he spoke about what they didn’t want to hear. Suddenly, he stopped to declare just how great the one true God really is -- the Creator of the universe, He who tells the ocean where to stop and start, the Giver of life itself. Do you think Jeremiah finally struck a chord? It’s highly likely it did for them, just as it does for us. When we look for Him in the ordinary, we may be surprised at the extraordinary ways we see Him!

Today, speak the same words Jeremiah spoke aloud so long ago. Praise God for who He is and be in AWE of Him. Worship Him, for He is above all. He is never mundane, never typical, and His goodness is always beyond description!

### **PRAY**

Heavenly Father, You are truly like no other! I choose to praise Your name and worship You alone, even in the everyday! In You alone, I place my trust. Amen.

## August 10 — Don't Follow Your Heart!

### READ

Jeremiah 16:1-18:23

Jeremiah 35:1-19

Jeremiah 17:5-10, *"This is what the Lord says: 'Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord ... But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream ... The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart and examine the mind...'"*

### THINK

"Listen to your heart..."

"My heart's just not in this anymore"...

"My head and my heart are telling me different things..."

Do any of these thoughts ever cross your mind? The world tells us to throw caution to the wind and follow our hearts above all else. Ultimately, the heart is good, right? We constantly see this idea of intrinsic goodness reinforced in movies, books, and quotes on social media — but it's not true! It directly opposes the truth that we are all sinners in need of a Savior.

In and of ourselves, we are not good, and our hearts are not pure. Think of the anger that can swell up over something small. Consider how easy it is to tell a lie to cover our mistakes. We may be able to fake it in front of others for a while, but God sees the condition of our hearts 24/7!

Here's the good news! Through Christ, we are born again — we can have a new life in Him. As believers, we have the power and responsibility to follow after God above all else. So, as long as you face temptations on earth, be wise, NOT merely following your heart which leads to folly. Instead, seek God and discover His goodness and power that will lead you to discover what living "the good life" is truly all about!

### PRAY

Lord, Search my heart and examine my thoughts. Is there deceit in me? Impure motives? Convict me of any sin. Give me the courage to own up to it, confess it and then turn fully from it. I choose to follow after You! Amen

## August 11 — Here, There, Everywhere

### READ

Jeremiah 49:1-33, 22:24-23:32

2 Kings 24:5-9

2 Chronicles 36:6-9

Jeremiah 23:23, *"Am I a God who is only close at hand? 'says the Lord. No, I am far away at the same time. Can anyone hide from Me in a secret place? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth? 'says the Lord."*

### THINK

Life is busy. With a million things vying for our attention, we look at our overpacked schedules and think, "How can I be in more than one place at a time?" Obviously, we can't. Even with the most advanced technology, we'll always be limited by time and space. God, though, isn't. He's omnipresent, meaning He's everywhere at every time.

God's greatest gift to us is His constant presence. As Christ-followers, it's comforting to know that He's always by our side in the good times and the bad. Yet, this thought can be a little scary because there is no such thing as a private conversation, secret meeting, or closed-door operation – God is always watching. But as our awareness of His presence increases, the more we live with a healthy fear of God. We think twice before giving in to temptation, knowing our sins are not a secret.

God's Word promises He will never leave or abandon us, that He is our "ever-present help in times of trouble." So, no matter what you're going through, even when you don't feel His presence, God is *with* you, God is *for* you, and God is *in* you through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. How great is that!

### PRAY

Dear Lord, I find great comfort and peace in knowing that You are always with me. Thank You for never leaving me to navigate life on my own. Remind me of this when I feel the pull of temptation and help me live a life of integrity that pleases You and displays Your glory. In Jesus 'name, Amen.

## August 12 — On Purpose

### READ

Jeremiah 23:33-24:10, 29:1-31:14

Jeremiah 29:11, *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

Innately, we want to matter. Most of us want our lives to have meaning, and we hope to make a difference during our time here on Earth. But many of us are going about it the wrong way. Some think purpose can be found apart from God, while others feel as if He can only use certain people — but it’s simply not true.

The Bible is full of ordinary people God used in extraordinary ways. Mary was an average teenage girl when God told her she’d give birth to the Messiah. Simon Peter was a gruff fisherman with anger issues when Jesus chose him to be a disciple. Neither would have likely gained any notoriety on their own accord, but they were both willing to be used by God. This means God can use anybody — even if they feel like a nobody — to be somebody who can influence everybody!

God has a unique purpose for your life. He can and will use you to do incredible things. Are you ready? Because there’s nothing more exciting than being used by God on purpose for a purpose!

### PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for giving me a unique purpose. I open my heart to You with a willingness to do whatever You call me to do. In Jesus ’name, Amen.