



Devotions for September 13-20, 2025

## A journey of honest reflection, healing & renewed hope for the Bride of Christ

"Why Church?" Series, Week 1

### DAY 1 – Facing the Dream vs. Reality

**Quote**—*"Those who love their dream of a Christian community more than they love the Christian community itself become destroyers of that Christian community even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest, earnest, and sacrificial."* – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**Scripture**—*"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* – Matthew 16:18

**Reflection**—Sometimes we come to church with a dream — a vision of perfect community, flawless relationships, and people who always love well. But the reality is much messier. When we cling too tightly to our ideal, we risk becoming blind to what God is truly doing. Bonhoeffer warns us that our wishful dreaming can actually damage real Christian community. The church is not ours to perfect; it belongs to Jesus. Our role is to love, forgive, and serve — trusting Him to build what we cannot.

**Consider**—

- Where have you been holding onto an idealized vision of church that has left you frustrated or hurt?
- What would it look like to release those expectations and trust Christ as the true builder?

**Prayer**—*"Jesus, help me release my desire to control or idealize the church. Teach me to see the beauty of what You are building, even when it looks different than I expected."*

### DAY 2 – The Pain of Church Hurt

**Scripture**—*"But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property... and kept back part of the proceeds."* – Acts 5:1-2

**Reflection**—Church hurt is real. Sometimes people act from pride, fear, or dishonesty — and it leaves wounds in our hearts. In those moments, it's tempting to walk away. But our hurt also reminds us that the church is full of imperfect people, ourselves included. Healing doesn't come from pretending the pain isn't there. It comes when we bring our wounds to God, forgive as He forgave us, and choose freedom over bitterness.

**Consider**—

- Where have you experienced pain caused by someone in the church or another Christian community?
- How might God be inviting you to take a step toward healing, even if reconciliation isn't possible yet?

**Prayer**—*"Lord, meet me in my hurt. Heal what is broken in me and give me grace to forgive as You have forgiven me."*

### DAY 3 – When Good Things Get Messy

**Scripture**—*"Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews"*

*because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution."* – Acts 6:1

**Reflection**—Even in the earliest church, growth brought conflict. As more people joined, practical and cultural tensions surfaced. This wasn't a sign of failure — it was an opportunity to grow in wisdom, compassion, and love. Conflict in the church doesn't mean God has left. It's a reminder that we need His Spirit to lead us toward humility and reconciliation. Even faithful believers, like Paul and Barnabas, sometimes disagreed sharply (Acts 15:39). What matters most is how we respond: with grace, humility, and a focus on God's mission rather than our egos.

**Consider**—

- How do you usually respond to conflict in the church — by withdrawing, judging, or engaging with grace?
- Where might God be inviting you to help bring unity instead of division?

**Prayer**—*"Holy Spirit, help me see conflict as an opportunity to grow in love. Give me humility and courage to be a peacemaker."*

## DAY 4 – Loving the Bride

**Scripture**—*"The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice."* – John 3:29

**Reflection**—The church isn't just a group of people — it is the Bride of Christ. This means that loving and serving the church is ultimately about loving Jesus Himself. When the church feels broken or unprepared, our calling isn't to abandon her but to love her because the Groom — Christ — loves her deeply. Our joy grows when our eyes stay fixed on Him rather than on the flaws of others.

**Consider**—

- How might viewing the church as Christ's bride change the way you serve and love others in your community?
- What step can you take this week to show love for Jesus by serving His people?

**Prayer**—*"Jesus, help me to love Your church the way You do — with patience, grace, and joy."*

## DAY 5 – Christ Builds, We Love

**Scripture**—*"We must confess He builds. We must proclaim, He builds. We must pray to Him, and He will build."* – Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
*"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* – Matthew 16:18

**Reflection**—The pressure to fix, control, or perfect the church is not ours to carry. Christ alone is the builder of His church. Our role is simple but profound: to faithfully love, forgive, and serve while trusting Him to do the deeper work. Even when things seem to be falling apart, God is still moving. He can bring beauty out of brokenness and unity from division. When we release control, we are free to simply be faithful.

**Consider**—

- Where have you been striving to build what only Christ can build?
- What might it look like to rest in His promise and love your community well today?

**Prayer**—*"Jesus, I trust You to build Your church. Teach me to forgive freely, love deeply, and serve joyfully as I wait for Your work to unfold."*