

HIGHER PURPOSE CHURCH

5-Day Devotional

When Frustration Breaks Your Faith

A journey from expectation to appreciation

Based on the sermon series:

"When You Struggle, Write Your Story"

Matthew 26:69-75 | John 21:15-19

How to Use This Devotional

This five-day devotional is designed to take the message "When Frustration Breaks Your Faith" deeper into your daily life. Each day corresponds to a major theme from the sermon and is structured to help you read, reflect, respond, and apply what God is speaking to you.

Each day includes:

Daily Reading — A devotional reflection rooted in the day's Scripture and sermon theme.

Today's Reflection — A focused thought to carry into your day.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion — Space to write your honest responses.

Prayer — A guided prayer to close your time.

Today's Action Step — One practical thing to do before tomorrow.

This devotional can be used individually or in a small group setting. If used in a group, consider reading the daily Scripture aloud together before discussing the reflection questions.

There are no right or wrong answers to the reflection questions. The goal is honest engagement — with God, with yourself, and if in a group, with one another. Give yourself permission to be real.

Don't let your frustration break your faith.

DAY ONE

We All Come With Expectations

Matthew 26:31 | John 6:14-15

Daily Reading

When Peter's brother Andrew first told him about Jesus, those words — "We think we found the Messiah" — landed on centuries of accumulated expectation. For a Jewish man living under Roman occupation, the Messiah meant one thing: liberation. Overthrow. A kingdom established by force. So Peter showed up to follow Jesus already knowing, in his mind, exactly what Jesus was going to do.

That unexamined expectation shaped everything. It's why Peter was the first to swing a sword in the garden. It's why he was the last to understand why Jesus had to go to the cross. He was passionate, committed, and completely sincere — and he was building on a foundation that wasn't what Jesus had actually offered.

Most of us don't come to faith in a vacuum either. Something happened. Something broke open, or hurt deeply enough, that we turned to God. Maybe it was a fractured marriage and you came looking for healing. Maybe it was a loss so devastating you needed something solid to hold onto. Maybe it was an emptiness nothing else could fill.

God in his grace often meets that initial expectation — he answers the prayer, sends someone alongside you, gives peace in the middle of a storm that has no natural explanation. That's not wrong. That's how grace often introduces itself. But if the expectation becomes the foundation of the relationship — rather than love, gratitude, and genuine knowing of who God is — then the relationship is already fragile, waiting for the moment the expectation isn't met.

Peter's story asks us to look at ourselves before we look at him. Why did you come? And more importantly: is that still the reason you stay?

Today's Reflection

Peter came to Jesus with a Messiah shaped by his culture and his longing — not by what Jesus actually said about himself. Our expectations of God are often shaped the same way: by what we've been taught, what we need, and what we hope for. Faith that is only as strong as our last answered prayer is not yet deep enough.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What originally drew you to faith, or deeper into your relationship with God? What were you hoping he would do?

2. In what ways have your expectations of God been shaped by culture, tradition, or personal need rather than by who God says he is?

3. Has God ever surprised you by not doing what you expected — and in hindsight, was that a grace or a loss? Explain.

Prayer

Lord, I come to you today honest about my expectations. I confess that I have sometimes built my relationship with you on what I thought you would give me rather than on who you are. Show me the difference between hope in you and demands of you. Root me in something deeper than what I want — root me in who you are. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Action Step

Write down two or three things you expected God to do when you first came to faith or during a significant season of your life. Beside each one, note honestly: did he meet that expectation? How did it affect your relationship with him?

DAY TWO

When Your Framework Breaks

Matthew 26:69–75

Daily Reading

Peter didn't run when the soldiers came. When Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, Peter was the one who reached for his sword — the only one ready to take on a Roman army for the sake of the man he followed. He wasn't a coward. He was arguably the most committed person in that garden.

Which makes what happens next even harder to understand on the surface. A servant girl identifies him. He denies it. She comes back. He denies again. A third time — and Peter screams out the denial so forcefully that the Bible tells us he was calling down curses. Then the rooster crowed. And he went outside and wept bitterly.

If you only read that as a story about moral failure — about a man who couldn't keep his promise under pressure — you'll miss what's actually happening. Look at where Peter was standing. He was still in the courtyard. He hadn't left. He was still watching. He stayed through the betrayal, through the trial, through the mockery. He only ran after the third denial.

I want to suggest that Peter's denial was not primarily about fear. It was a spiritual collapse. Because what Peter was watching in that courtyard was the dismantling of his entire framework. The man he believed would overthrow Rome was being handed over to Rome. The one he'd sworn to die for was being treated like a common criminal. Everything Peter had built the last three years on — crumbling, in real time, right in front of him.

When he said 'I never knew him,' some part of Peter may have meant it. Not as a lie for self-preservation, but as a man whose certainty had fractured. 'I don't recognize this. I don't understand this. I gave everything I had to who I thought you were.' Barna Group research tells us that 64% of young adults who grew up in church walk away for a season — and the top reasons are unmet expectations and unanswered questions. Peter's crisis is not ancient history. It is the crisis of millions.

Today's Reflection

There is a kind of faith strong enough to swing a sword but not strong enough to survive the unexpected. Peter had passion, commitment, and courage — but his relationship with Jesus was still built on a version of Jesus that Jesus himself hadn't agreed to be. When the real Jesus didn't match the expected one, the framework broke. The question for us is not whether our framework will be tested. It's what will be underneath when it is.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- 1. Have you ever experienced a moment where God didn't do what you expected — and it shook your faith? What happened?**

2. Peter stayed in the courtyard even after the denial. What does that tell you about him? What might it say about how God views our messy, complicated faithfulness?

3. The Barna statistic says 64% of church-raised young adults walk away, largely due to unmet expectations. Why do you think expectation is such a powerful driver of both faith and doubt?

Prayer

Father, I don't always understand what you allow. I have watched things unfold in my life that I could not explain and could not reconcile with what I thought I knew about you. In those moments, I have sometimes doubted. I have sometimes grown cold. I ask you now to meet me in my honest confusion and strengthen the roots beneath my faith — not just the branches. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Action Step

Identify one area in your life where you are currently frustrated with God or confused by what he has or hasn't done. Write it out honestly. Don't edit it. Then sit with that honesty in prayer — not demanding an answer, but offering him the truth of where you actually are.

DAY THREE

Don't Let Frustration Break Your Faith

Job 13:15 | Psalm 34:18

Daily Reading

Job is one of the most extraordinary figures in all of Scripture — not because of what he accomplished, but because of what he endured and refused to surrender. By his own testimony, his only offense was that he loved God. He was blameless and upright. And then: he lost everything. His wealth. His children. His health. His friends turned on him with theological lectures about why it must have been his fault.

But in the wreckage of all of that, Job came to one of the most profound declarations of faith in the entire Bible: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' That is not the language of someone whose faith is built on outcomes. That is the language of someone whose relationship with God has moved past transaction into something unshakeable.

A relationship built entirely on what we expect God to do will always have a breaking point. Because God is sovereign — and sovereignty means he does not owe us the story we would have written for ourselves. At some point in every genuine walk with God, the motivation for following has to change. Not because God stops being good — but because we begin to discover that his goodness is not contingent on our comfort.

This is the invitation of the hard season: not to walk away, but to go deeper. Not to trust less, but to trust differently. The summer job that never came. The degree that didn't open doors. The marriage that didn't heal. The prayer that seemed to echo back unanswered. These are not evidence that God has failed. They are often the exact conditions under which the deeper thing gets built.

Don't let your frustration break your faith. Let it press you further in.

Today's Reflection

Job's 'yet will I trust him' is the pivot point of mature faith — the moment when trust stops being conditioned on outcomes and becomes a settled conviction about who God is. That kind of trust is not built in easy seasons. It is forged in the ones that almost break you. The goal of the hard season is not to produce suffering — it is to produce roots deep enough to hold.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What is the difference between trusting God for what he will do and trusting God for who he is? Have you experienced both?

2. Job's friends were convinced his suffering was his fault. Have you ever had your faith challenged by people who tried to explain away your pain with easy theology? How did you respond?

3. Where in your life right now are you being invited to say 'yet will I trust him' — even when you don't understand?

Prayer

God, you are not obligated to my comfort, and I am learning — slowly — to be okay with that. I don't always understand what you allow. But I choose today, like Job, to trust you anyway. Not because everything makes sense. Not because the door opened the way I prayed. But because you are God, and I am not, and your purposes are higher than my

plans. Give me roots that go deep enough to hold in the hard seasons. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Action Step

Memorize Job 13:15 this week: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' Write it somewhere you will see it daily — your phone lock screen, a sticky note on your mirror, the first line of your journal. Let it become the declaration you return to when the frustration rises.

DAY FOUR

Do You Love Me — or the Ride?

John 21:15–17

Daily Reading

By the time Jesus appears on the shore in John 21, Peter has already given up. He's gone back to fishing. Back to what he knew before any of this started. The man who once said 'I'm ride or die, Lord' has quietly folded up that declaration and gone home.

And then a stranger on the shore tells them to cast their net on the other side. And the net comes up so full they can barely haul it in. And the disciple whom Jesus loved leans over to Peter and says: 'It is the Lord.' And Peter — Peter who denied him, who ran, who declared he never knew him — throws on his outer garment and jumps in the water.

There is something in Peter that still cannot stay away from Jesus. Even in the failure, even in the grief, even in the quiet walk back to his old life — something in him keeps turning toward the shore.

What Jesus does next is one of the most intentional acts of pastoral restoration in all of Scripture. In front of everyone, he asks Peter one question. Three times. 'Do you love me?' Three denials. Three questions. No one had to say it out loud. Everyone on that beach knew exactly what was happening.

But notice what Jesus was not asking. He wasn't asking: did you stay faithful? Did you keep your promise? Did you earn this? He was asking something far more foundational: do you love me? Because love — real love, the kind God so loved that he gave — is not a feeling produced by positive experiences. It is a commitment. It is covenant. And Jesus was asking Peter whether, after everything, there was a real relationship underneath all the expectation and the passion and the failure. Or whether Peter had only ever loved the ride.

Consider this: on a popular television show called *The Bachelor*, people try to find a life partner in a matter of weeks, surrounded by cameras and curated experiences designed to produce feelings. The result? Over 90% of those relationships end. Because they fell in love with the experience — not the person. And when the cameras go away and real life starts, experience alone cannot sustain a lifetime. The same is true in our walk with God. Many of us fall in love with worship experiences, powerful sermons, answered prayers — the feeling of God's presence. But if we have never fallen in love with God himself, the relationship has no bottom.

Today's Reflection

"Do you love me?" is the question at the center of everything. Not: have you performed well? Not: have you kept your promises? Not: did your faith hold up under pressure? Jesus goes underneath all of that to the root question: is there a real relationship here — or only a set of experiences and expectations dressed up as one?

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What does it mean to love Jesus versus loving what Jesus gives you or does for you? How would you know the difference in your own heart?

2. Why do you think Jesus asked the question three times? What did he accomplish by doing it in front of everyone?

3. If Jesus asked you right now, "Do you love me?" — how would you answer honestly? What would that answer reveal about where your relationship actually is?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I want to love you — not just what you give me. I confess that sometimes I am more in love with the experience of your presence than with you yourself. Teach me the difference. Deepen my relationship with you past the feelings, past the seasons of answered prayer, past the comfort and the breakthrough — into something that holds even when none of those things are there. I love you. And I want that to mean something real. Amen.

Today's Action Step

Set aside 15 minutes today to sit in stillness with God — no music, no devotional reading, no prayer list. Just be with him. If that feels awkward or empty, notice that. That discomfort may be a signal about where your relationship with God actually lives.

DAY FIVE

From Expectation to Appreciation

John 21:17–19 | Ephesians 3:20

Daily Reading

When Peter answers Jesus for the third time — 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you' — something shifts. The grieving, the weight of what was unspoken between them, begins to lift. And Jesus speaks purpose back over him: 'Feed my sheep.'

Notice what Jesus did not say. He did not say: since you've made it through your failure, here is your second chance. He did not say: you're reinstated on probation. He said: feed my sheep. The same assignment, spoken with the same authority, as if the denial had never happened. Because in Jesus' economy, failure does not cancel calling. The question was never whether Jesus had given up on Peter. The question was whether Peter still loved him.

And then Jesus tells Peter something remarkable: when you were young, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. He was telling Peter exactly how he would die — crucified, for the sake of the gospel. Ride or die, Peter had said. Jesus was holding him to it. But the sword was laid down. The dying would look different than Peter imagined. It would look like service, surrender, and a life given for others.

This is what the pivot from expectation to appreciation produces. Early faith prays: save me, heal me, fix this, change this. Mature faith prays: you died for me before I knew your name. You loved me when I was running from you. I cannot repay that. I don't deserve that. And I cannot stop being grateful for it. When that shift happens, the relationship is no longer contingent on outcomes. It becomes a covenant. And a covenant-level faith is unshakeable — not because nothing hard happens, but because what you are holding onto does not depend on what happens.

Pastor Lawrence told of a summer in high school — stuck at home, friends employed, frustrated and questioning God. He could have walked away. Instead, he went to the Word. He went to prayer. And in that place of honest desperation, the Holy Spirit began to reveal not what God owed him, but what God had already given. And slowly, without him fully realizing it, the pivot happened. From expectation to appreciation. From what I want to what you've done. That pivot changed everything — not just that summer, but his whole life.

The same pivot is available to you. Wherever you are right now. Whatever has broken. Whatever expectation went unmet. The question Jesus is asking you today is the same one he asked Peter on that beach: Do you love me? If the answer is yes — your purpose is still intact. Your calling is still alive. And he is still saying: feed my sheep.

Today's Reflection

The pivot from expectation to appreciation is the turning point of a mature faith. It is the moment when you stop counting what God owes you and start recognizing what he has already given. That shift doesn't happen all at once — it happens in the hard seasons, in the honest prayers, in the long silences when you press in instead of pulling away. But when it happens, it changes everything.

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What would it look like for your relationship with God to move from expectation-based to appreciation-based? What would have to change in the way you pray, worship, or think about him?

2. Peter's failure became the foundation of his testimony and the source of his compassion for others who failed. How might God use your own broken places to deepen your ministry to others?

3. What is one thing God has already done for you that you may have stopped being grateful for? How can you return to appreciation for that gift this week?

Prayer

Father, thank you. Not for what I'm waiting for — but for what you've already done. You gave your Son before I knew your name. You loved me while I was running. You pursued me when I had walked away. I don't deserve that, and I can't repay it, and I am grateful. Shift my heart from what I expect to what I've already received. Root my faith in your faithfulness, not my circumstances. And as Peter was restored, restore every broken place in me — for your glory and the good of others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Action Step

Write a letter to God this week — not a prayer list, but a genuine letter of appreciation. List at least five specific things he has done in your life that you are grateful for. Then close with this question, answered honestly in your own words: "Lord, you know all things. You know that I _____."

A Final Word

Five days is a beginning, not a conclusion. The journey from expectation to appreciation is not a moment — it is a lifelong reorientation of the heart. It happens in the ordinary days, in the seasons that make no sense, in the prayers that feel unanswered and the mornings when you come back anyway.

Peter went on to preach on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand people came to faith in a single day. He went on to lead the early church, to write letters that still shape believers two thousand years later, and ultimately to give his life for the gospel — just as Jesus told him he would. He died, by most accounts, crucified upside down because he said he was not worthy to die the same way as his Lord.

That is the man who once screamed "I don't know him" and ran down the street. That is what restoration looks like on the other side of the pivot.

Your story is not finished. Your purpose is not cancelled. The question Jesus asked Peter, he is asking you: Do you love me? If the answer is yes — feed his sheep. Keep going. Go deeper. And watch what God does with a life that is finally, fully his.

Higher Purpose Church

"When You Struggle, Write Your Story" Sermon Series