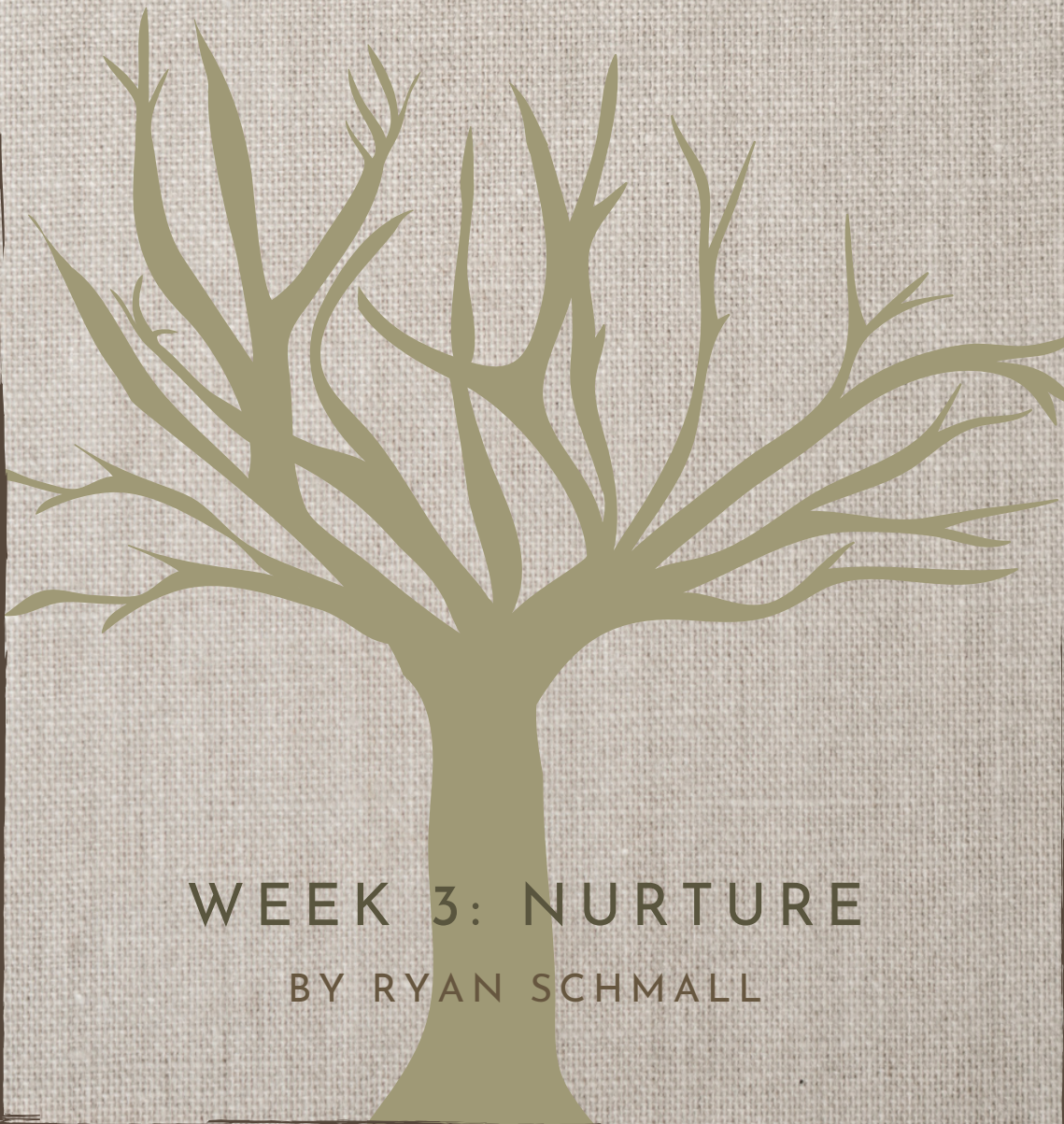


REVIVE

A HANDBOOK FOR GROWTH



WEEK 3: NURTURE

BY RYAN SCHMALL

A NOTE FROM RYAN

Hello Friends,

As followers of Jesus, we are called to discipleship. To some, this word can be intimidating, confusing, or simply not explained. Discipleship, at its heart, is about aligning our life (priorities)? with the way of Jesus and modeling our lives after him in all that we do. Sometimes we can over complicate this reality, but my desire for this devotional is to re-frame your understanding of discipleship and help you think critically about your own life as you have chosen to enter into relationship with Christ. Each week is broken down into one simple concept as we think about the process of ongoing discipleship in our lives: **cultivate, plant, nurture, and grow**. These seven days are an invitation for you to dive deeper into these ideas through Scripture and intentional questions to examine your own journey and how you can grow closer to Jesus. Every day will be divided into four sections:

- **Get Ready** - An opportunity to prepare ourselves for what God wants us to hear.
- **Read the Word** - A time to dig deep into a specific passage connected to the week's main idea.
- **Own Your Thoughts** - An invitation for you to honestly examine your own life as you wrestle with questions connected to the passage for each day.
- **Welcome Change** - A moment with God to reflect on how you can grow in your relationship with Him.

You may have noticed that the four sections also spell out the acronym **GROW**, which I hope is a simple reminder to you that this devotional is all a part of the growth process as we transform into deeper disciples in Christ.

Feel free to use this guide however best fits you in your life. Print it out, write on it, grab your own journal, or use it as a guided reflection time - it's your choice! Whatever you need to connect more to our God who loves you so incredibly much!

- Ryan Schmall



WHY REVIVE?

You may be wondering why I chose to title this devotional, "Revive." Let me explain.

One of my favorite pastimes is growing a vegetable garden. While I knew I could just go to the store and purchase some tomatoes or artichokes, there was something fulfilling about growing my own produce. I enjoyed working hard and watching my plants grow and develop. My family and I always ended up with an abundance of vegetables that we could then share with our friends and neighbors. My dedication to bringing life to this garden ultimately led to my ability to share that very life with the world around me. This process of gardening beautifully reflects the concept of life. However, as we know from the life of Jesus, an abundant life actually begins with a death.

Death comes first and then resurrection.

Every year when the time came to replant the vegetable garden, there were usually remnants of last year's harvest. To prepare the garden properly so that new life could flourish, I had to get my hands dirty - literally. I had to tear out the old garden to make space for the new one... but the hard work didn't end there. I had to also give my garden the proper attention it needed to flourish such as keeping a watering schedule, looking out for weeds and disease, and protecting it from harsh weather. I knew that this intentional care had to be done in order to revive- to bring new life to where something was dead.

This is the way Jesus pointed us. If you have made the decision to follow Christ, then you have decided to abandon your old self and embrace a new one through Jesus. So what then, is discipleship?

Discipleship is the hard self-work we carry out to enter into the abundant life with Christ that He desperately wants us to experience. It is the revival of ourselves in Christ as we intentionally tend to the lives God has given us.

So, are you ready to begin?



NURTURE

All relationships need nurturing.

I remember taking each of my daughters home from the hospital, getting settled in and realizing how much more work my wife and I had in front of us. These creatures needed food, diaper changes, and attention like nothing else. To ignore the needs of my children would be, simply put, life-ending.

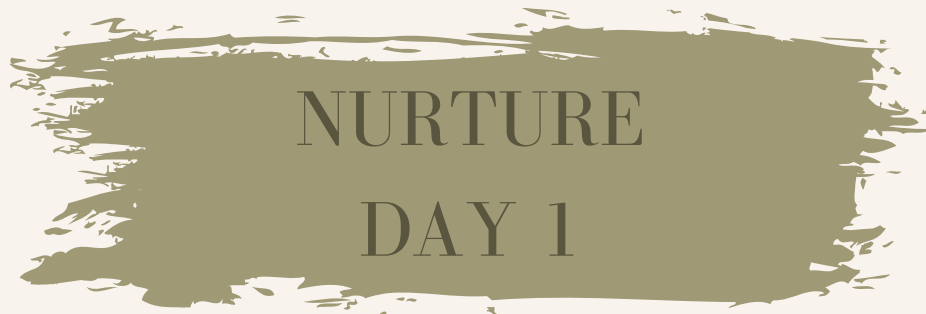
You see, without the ongoing process of nurturing, or tending and caring for life, only death awaits. For us, as we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we must persistently think about how we will continually nurture and care for it as we would that of an infant.

So, how do you nurture your relationship with Christ?

There are some obvious answers that many can easily recognize such as studying the Bible and participating in church community. But coming back to the idea from last week that this whole process of discipleship isn't about an aspect of our lives, but rather the entirety of our existence then we know there's always an opportunity to nurture our relationship, no matter the situation.

Nurturing also isn't something that's accomplished with one incredibly powerful devotional time. It's the continual mission in our daily lives to know Christ more fully. It's about creating patterns and rhythms for your life that keep your mind, heart, eyes, and soul fixed on Jesus as you go about your routine.

My oldest daughter has become an incredibly talented painter. She wasn't always. However, she had a goal to develop her skill, so she made sure everyday to dedicate as much time as possible to her newfound love. Her growth in this artform can be directly attributed to her willingness to dedicate her life to this thing. The same goes for our relationship with Jesus. If we truly want to be a disciple of Jesus, we must nurture our relationship with him in all we do.



nurture | \ 'ner-cher \nurtured; nurturing
transitive verb 1: care for and encourage the growth or development of

Get Ready

Take a moment and remove any distractions that may shift your focus. Turn your cell phone off, find a quiet space, whatever you need! Once you are ready, ask God to help fixate your heart and mind on what He has for you to experience this week.

Read the Word

Philippians 4:1-9

Own Your Thoughts

After you've read this passage initially, go back and read it again in at least 2 other versions, including The Message paraphrased version if possible. This passage uses the language of "prayer" and "thoughts" interchangeably. It's obvious Paul is making a direct correlation between these concepts. Prayer is a spiritual discipline at our disposal at any moment that can help align our minds with God. Take some time and reflect on your own prayer life. When are you coming to God in prayer? When you pray, are you simply talking at God or spending time listening? How could you intentionally nurture your prayer life?

Welcome Change

Reflect on your answers. Spend some time listening for God's voice of direction in your life. Ask Him to align your thoughts, ideas, and mind with Him and Him alone. Create an outline or a plan for how you will engage prayer in an ongoing way in your life (Hint: Whatever you put doesn't have to be the "right" answer. In fact, it will probably change. This exercise, however, is designed to get you intentionally thinking about how you can care for this aspect of your relationship with Jesus).



OWN YOUR
THOUGHTS



NURTURE DAY 2

nurture | \ 'ner-cher \nurtured; nurturing
transitive verb 1: care for and encourage the growth or development of

Get Ready

Find a space where you can be present with God without distractions. Find your notes from yesterday if you have them. Invite Him to continue to move in your life and reveal His will for you as you draw closer to Him.

Read the Word

Deuteronomy 11:8-25

Own Your Thoughts

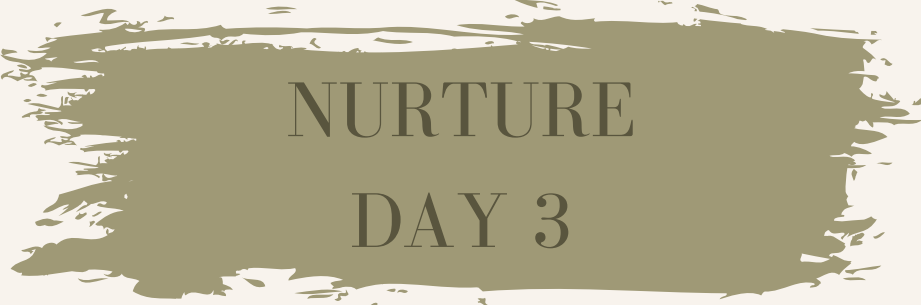
It's no secret that God's Word is deeply critical in the nurturing of our faith. In this passage, we see God's urging for Israel to not merely hear the words, but to embed them deep within their very hearts so that they take root in our lives. We aren't called to merely read Scripture. Rather, we're called to make it a part of the fabric of our very lives. We are called to know it so well that it dwells within us. How many of us can say we live that out? Take some time and reflect on your experience with the Bible. How often do you read it? Why do you avoid it? How can you embrace Scripture into your very heart and not just make reading it a task to be checked off the to-do list? Do you read a passage and simply move on to the next or do you sit with a passage long enough to truly begin grasping what God might have for you in it?

Welcome Change

Pray for God to challenge you to embrace His Word into every aspect of your life. Choose a passage that you want to grasp better and make a decision to dwell in that passage simultaneously to this guide. Reflect each day on new insights you gain as you sit longer with that passage.



OWN YOUR
THOUGHTS



NURTURE DAY 3

nurture | \ 'ner-cher \nurtured; nurturing
transitive verb 1: care for and encourage the growth or development of

Get Ready

Quiet your heart and take a moment to ask God to help you more clearly see His path to growth in your life.

Read the Word

Romans 12:3-5

Own Your Thoughts

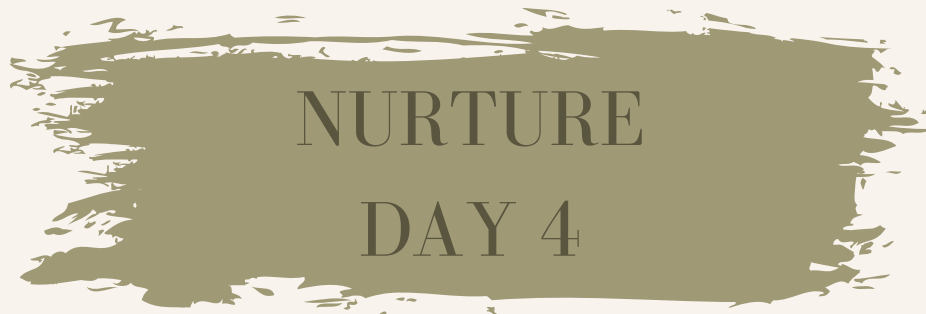
Believe it or not, discipleship is not a solo process. Yes, there's an individual reality to it, but we are called to something bigger than just a personal existence. There's a communal element to our faith that we must nurture. Think about the people of faith in your life who have deeply impacted your own journey. We can learn and grow from others like them every single day. Take some time to identify people God has placed in your life who have helped you nurture your faith. Reflect on how they have impacted you. After you've done this, reach out to them to thank them for all they've helped you through.

Welcome Change

As you reflect on the exercise above, invite God to help you identify individuals who you can influence in the same way others have influenced you. Pray for God to reveal an opportunity for you to pour deeper into that person (or persons) life.



OWN YOUR
THOUGHTS



nurture | \ 'ner-cher \nurtured; nurturing
transitive verb 1: care for and encourage the growth or development of

Get Ready

Take a moment to ask God to quiet your mind, heart, and soul as you invite Him to continue revealing new ways to nurture your life in Him.

Read the Word

Luke 15:11-32

Own Your Thoughts

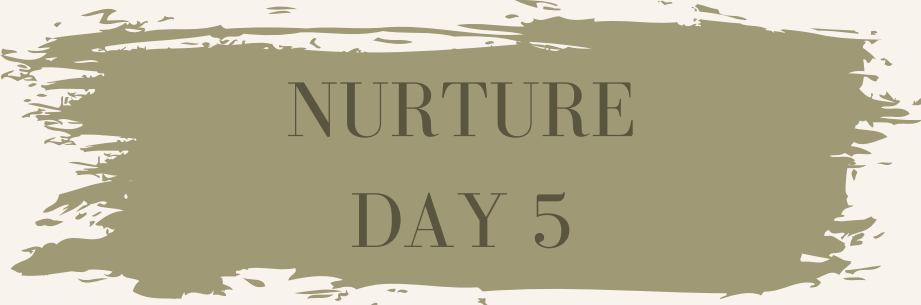
This older brother in this parable helps us think about the toxicity that exists when we refuse to embrace a life of forgiveness and grace modeled for us by our Father. Take some time to consider how you've allowed this same reality to slip into your life and create a toxic environment for nurturing your relationship with Jesus. Who are you harboring bitterness against? Why? How can you release it and free yourself to experience the life-giving reality of the Gospel that Jesus so desperately wants you to embrace?

Welcome Change

As you reflect on the exercise above, invite God to give you the courage to forgive that person (or persons). Pray for the ability to fully let go of the anger, bitterness, and resentment that is holding you back from the life God desires for you.



OWN YOUR
THOUGHTS



NURTURE DAY 5

nurture | \ 'ner-cher \nurtured; nurturing
transitive verb 1: care for and encourage the growth or development of

Get Ready

Spend a moment preparing your heart in prayer, asking God to give you the courage to honestly acknowledge your need for more of Him in your life.

Read the Word

2 Corinthians 12:1-10

Own Your Thoughts

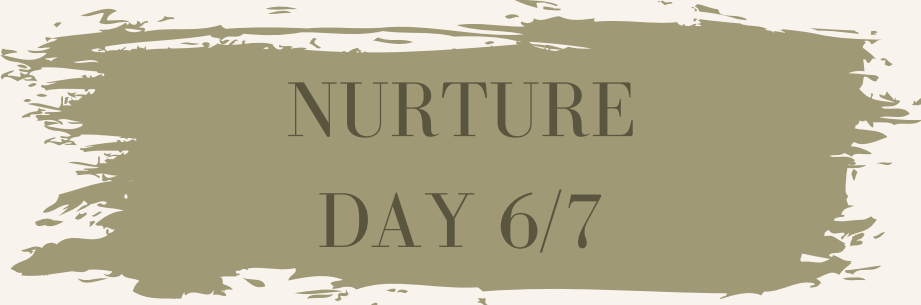
Yesterday, we dealt with the forgiveness of others. Today, however, is an invitation for you to consider forgiving yourself. In this passage, Paul reminds us that we are all broken and flawed. In our imperfectness, we can easily beat ourselves up or allow ourselves to dwell on the mistakes we've made. Not one of us hasn't made a mistake, but a life in Christ is only granted through His profound grace despite those mistakes. Nurturing our relationship with Him is about recognizing that this work is done solely through that truth. You're forgiven. Period. So what are you holding onto that you won't forgive yourself for? Spend some time reflecting on what you're holding onto from your past then reflect on God's grace in spite of that thing you're grasping onto.

Welcome Change

Ask God to help you forgive yourself for the mistakes you've made - whether it's one monumental moment or a habitual way of living. And here's the hard part of this exercise: Accept God's forgiveness. (Hint: You may need to do this more than once. We all do!) Remind yourself of that forgiveness every time your mind or heart wanders back into that space.



OWN YOUR
THOUGHTS



NURTURE

DAY 6/7

nurture | \ 'ner-cher \nurtured; nurturing
transitive verb 1: care for and encourage the growth or development of

Get Ready

Spend some time with God reflecting back on the week. Thank Him for His ongoing grace and love in your life as you nurture your relationship with Him. Invite God to continue revealing ways in which you can grow closer to Him.

Read the Word

Hebrews 12:1-13

Own Your Thoughts

Reflecting back on this week, we've considered many areas of life that we must nurture in order for our relationship with God to be whole. While these are just a few spaces of life for us to consider, we recognize there's so much more we need to think about, as well. This can get overwhelming and many Christians abandon the journey because it can seem long and challenging. In this passage, Paul helps remind us of the importance of perseverance as we embark on this journey. Spend some time thinking through how you can persevere through even the most difficult times. When do you normally throw in the towel? How can you create patterns and rhythms that help you succeed in the long-term and not just in a brief sprint of life?

Welcome Change

Reflect on your answers and thoughts to the exercise above. Ask God for His help to keep your entire life fixated on Him and Him alone.



OWN YOUR
THOUGHTS