

JUST ENOUGH

REFLECTIONS ON GOD'S HEART FOR THE WORLD

there is no other; there is just us



WELCOME TO OUR 7-DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE!

We're glad you're here.

It's easy to see that we live in a world that is broken and unjust; a world that is crying out for transformation. The God who we know is full of compassion and love for those who suffer injustice, and our desire is to join Him in working towards restoration, healing, and wholeness in all of creation.

We are passionate about equipping people with the knowledge and tools to become agents of change who will help transform our world for the better. We believe that gaining a global perspective and a fuller understanding of issues such as poverty and social justice is key in developing us into informed and engaged global citizens.

We hope that this devotional guide will help you to gain a clearer and fuller picture of God's heart for the world, and the ways in which you can be involved in bringing transformation and restoration to all creation.

Cheering you on,

The JustUs Collective

Karis Chitty, Andy Harrington, Chris Hege, Laura Solberg, and Kristie Voth

DAY 1 | Embracing the Story

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

In his book, *Walking With the Poor*, Bryant L. Myers has this to say about God's story of reconciliation in the world:

The Bible is the narrative of God's creative and redemptive work in the world; thus it also contains the story of the Christian community. It is God's story about what God is doing. It is the story of what God wants and is doing that compels us to care for the poor and to work for human transformation. God's story is the source of our motivation, our vision, and our values of mission.

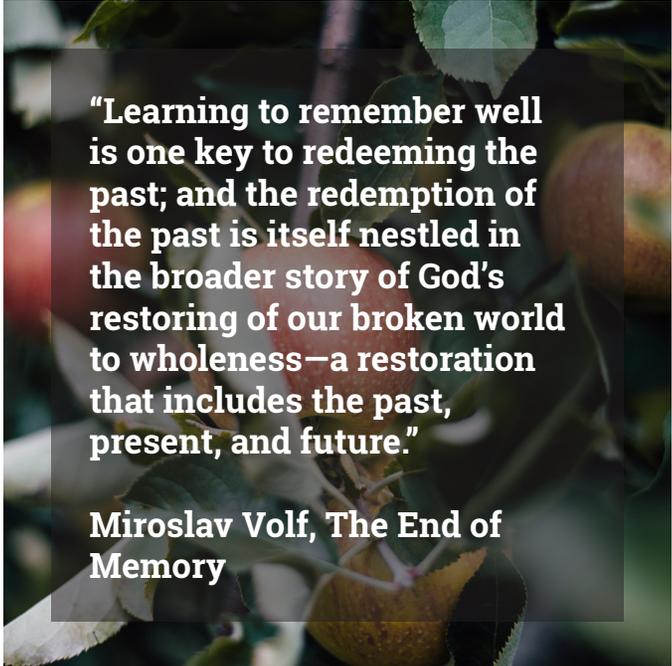
The biblical story also puts our stories into place. We learn that this is not my story, or your story, or our story that is the main story, the story that gives meaning. Meaning only comes from God's story. To pursue human transformation as Christians means understanding where humanity is coming from, where it is going, and how it can get there. To do the work of transformation, we have to embrace the whole of the biblical story, the story that makes sense and gives direction to the stories of the communities where we work, as well as our own stories.

The biblical story is a love story. It is the story of God reaching out over and over again to a broken world and to broken people, and inviting them back into love, into freedom, and into relationship. It is the story of a creator seeking to restore His creation to His glory.

We know that we all experience brokenness and suffering in our lives. When we look around at the world, we can be easily overwhelmed by the problems, the pain, and the grief that we see. But even so, God is actively at work in the world today redeeming, restoring, and reconciling - and He wants us to be a part of this work. This is something that we will unpack throughout the course of this devotional.

REFLECTION

- What is an example of God's redemption in the stories of the Bible that you connect with?
- How does the overarching biblical story help us to make sense of and add meaning to our own stories?
- Where have you found an opportunity to be a part of God's restoration and reconciliation in the world today?



“Learning to remember well is one key to redeeming the past; and the redemption of the past is itself nestled in the broader story of God’s restoring of our broken world to wholeness—a restoration that includes the past, present, and future.”

Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory*

DAY 2 | The Way Things Ought to Be

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.
Romans 8:28*

When we read the creation stories in the first two chapters of Genesis, we discover the four primary relationships that God has created for us as humankind: our relationship with God, our relationship with self, our relationship with others, and our relationship with the rest of creation.

The original condition of the world was unimpaired beauty. And the original design of all of these relationships was for their flourishing at every level – something we call ‘shalom’.

*We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight, the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment...Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.
—Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*

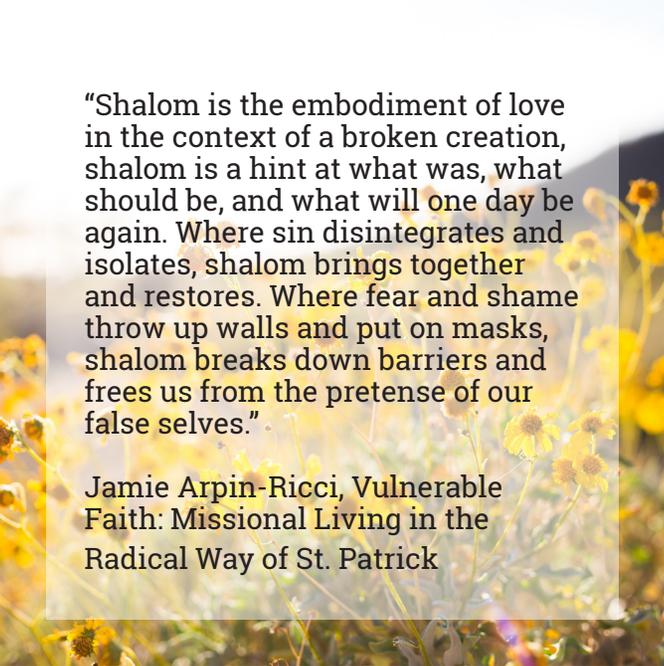
Though we see parts of this original goodness still in the world today, we also see its corruption. Living apart from God's goodness has resulted in brokenness in all of these four relationships listed above. We've already talked about how restoration is at the heart of God's story. To overcome the brokenness in the world, He came down into the world in human form to restore the world to a state of shalom and to help us experience reconciliation with God.

You cannot live close to God without experiencing some degree of restoration. God restores our broken relationships through the process of reconciliation - a transformation from fragmentation to harmony and fellowship. This is the only way that our broken world will be restored. The process of reconciliation is a long, hard road when we have experienced suffering at the hands of others, but true reconciliation *is* possible through experiencing and extending God's love and forgiveness.

God invites us into this process of restoration and reconciliation as we work toward experiencing Shalom in all of our relationships.

REFLECTION

- How have you experienced restoration and reconciliation in your own life?
- In which of the four primary relationships have you experienced the most relational brokenness?
- What is one step you can make toward experiencing shalom in that relationship?



“Shalom is the embodiment of love in the context of a broken creation, shalom is a hint at what was, what should be, and what will one day be again. Where sin disintegrates and isolates, shalom brings together and restores. Where fear and shame throw up walls and put on masks, shalom breaks down barriers and frees us from the pretense of our false selves.”

Jamie Arpin-Ricci, *Vulnerable Faith: Missional Living in the Radical Way of St. Patrick*

DAY 3 | Poverty Redefined

*I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.
Psalm 140:12*

What comes to mind when you think of the word “poverty”? Most of us would define it in material terms, but if you ask people who actually experience material poverty, “*they by and large describe their condition in psychological and social terms. While they recognize their material lack, they talk more about things like shame, inferiority, powerlessness, humiliation, fear, hopelessness, depression, social isolation, and voicelessness.*” (Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*)

This is a view of poverty that has much more to do with relational brokenness than material lack. In fact, in his book, *Walking With the Poor*, Bryant L. Myers calls poverty “the absence of shalom in all its meanings.” This relational poverty is something we all experience, regardless of our societal status, and it shifts our ideas about *who* is poor.

That being said, in *When Helping Hurts*, Corbett & Fikkert also say:

It is not legitimate to conclude that there is not something uniquely devastating about material poverty. Low-income people daily face a struggle to survive that creates feelings of helplessness, anxiety, suffocation, and desperation that are simply unparalleled in the lives of the rest of humanity....

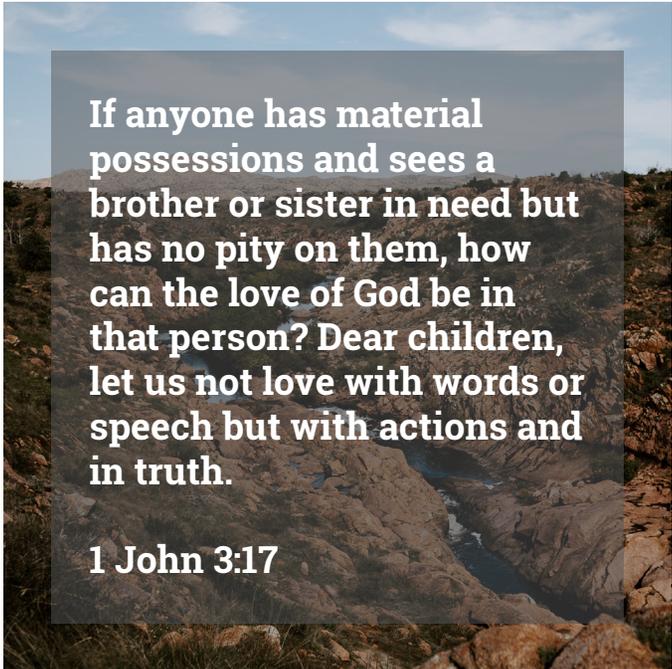
[While] “material poverty” is rooted in the brokenness of the four foundational relationships – a brokenness we all experience in different ways – this does not mean that there is nothing unique about “the poor” in Scripture... We cannot let ourselves off the hook by saying to ourselves, “I am fulfilling the Bible’s commands to help the poor by loving the wealthy lady next door with the troubled marriage....

The economically poor are singled out in Scripture as being in a particularly desperate category and as needing very specific attention.

God is a revolutionary. He put himself in the place of those experiencing poverty in its various forms. He became poor to experience poverty himself and encourage us to do something about it. In our role as ambassadors of reconciliation, we follow God’s lead. This is what He teaches us about how we should engage in the world.

REFLECTION

- How have you defined poverty, and how has the way you have defined it influenced the way you’ve approached ministry to the poor?
- If poverty is the absence of shalom, and considering the inclusion of psychological and social dimensions mentioned above, what are some non-material ways that people all over the world experience poverty?



If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:17

DAY 4 | His Ambassadors

We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you. 2 Corinthians 5:20 (The Message)

The role of an ambassador is to represent the king in another country. The ambassador is empowered to act on behalf of the king and carry out all the actions necessary towards the fulfillment of the king's strategy in that country. It is an honor, but it is also a lot of responsibility. It requires knowledge, initiative, creativity, and a whole lot of other skills necessary to deal with the issues and problems that come up when one tries to enact a specific policy in a country that is not your own.

It also requires humility and obedience. It is important to remember that an ambassador is part of a much larger picture – they work under the authority of their king. They serve their king and act in order to fulfill the king's mission in the land in which they live. Ultimately, it is the king's wishes that will be fulfilled, not their own.

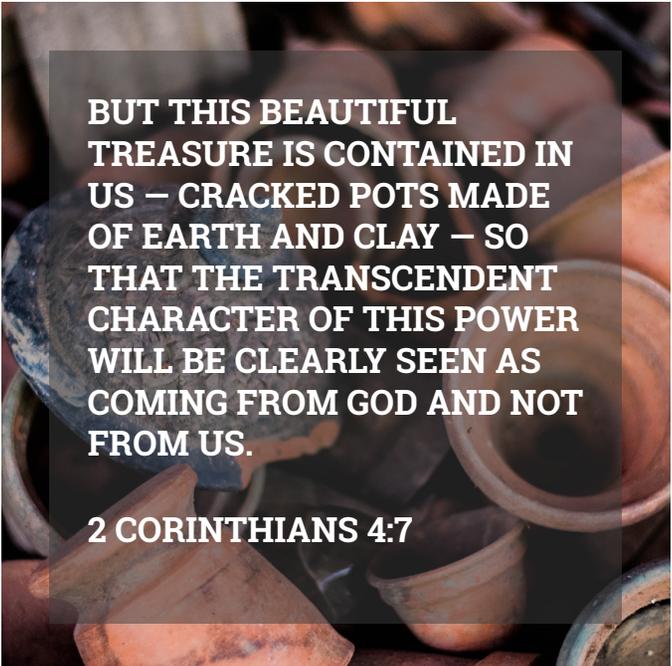
A correct understanding of the concept of an ambassador is important as we start to engage in God's mission of restoration in the world. Our own role in God's plan changes if we view ourselves as ambassadors. God sets the policy. We are commissioned to work towards its fulfillment. God is the reconciler. We are His ambassadors.

Every good idea begins with God. As the author of our stories, God plants ideas in our hearts and minds that further His Kingdom work. So then, when we invest our lives in the work we've been given, we can remember that if the idea began with Him, He will faithfully complete it. We can rest and trust knowing that He is always working on our behalf.

If our work begins and ends with God, then He also gets the glory. It's not ours to own in pride, but to reflect back to Him in praise.

REFLECTION

- As God's ambassadors, how do we react to the overwhelming needs we encounter in the world?
- How do you feel Christians are doing at being ambassadors of God's restoration and reconciliation in the world today?
- Is there something – an idea, project, conversation - that God has shown to you that you know he wants you to act on?



**BUT THIS BEAUTIFUL
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2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

DAY 5 | There is No “Other”

Then the King will say...‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father...for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Matthew 25:33-46

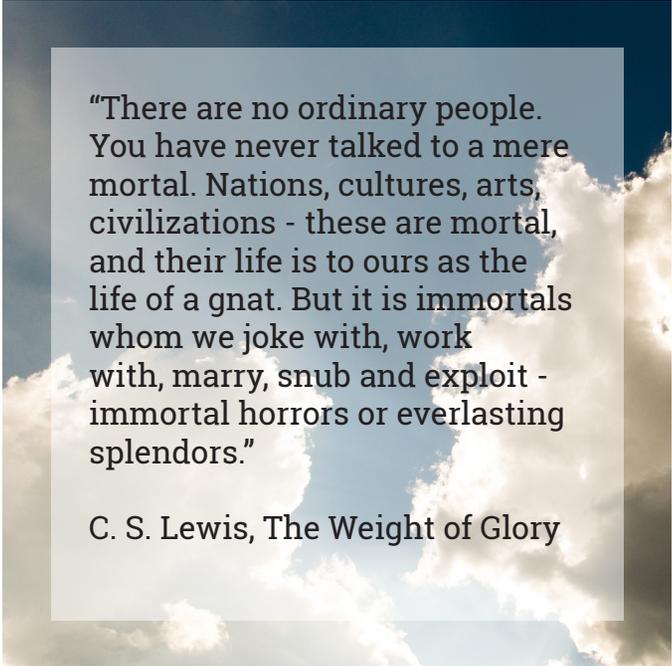
The truth is that everyone we meet is created in the image of God. This calls us to treat every person in a way that honours them – everyone from our closest friends to the strangers we pass on the street. This means that nobody should ever be treated as “other”, for we are all equal. We all have equal inherent value.

Seeing people as other than us, rather than as fellow human beings who have feelings, history, family, and dreams for the future just as you do, can have disastrous consequences on relationships, communities, and nations. When we don’t relate to people as people it is easier to dismiss their needs, hopes, and desires. At best, they are seen as projects – things for us to fix. At worst, they become a means to an end – objects used to further goals – whether that goal is accumulating wealth and power, or some version of a purified/ homogeneous society.

“[We] should think carefully about how we characterize people in poverty. When we treat them with disdain and suspicion, the result is...demeaning, even dehumanizing legal and bureaucratic practices. Or we can view them as equal human beings, people worthy of not just our sympathy but our assistance and respect. We can check our judgments and question our assumptions. And perhaps most important, we can listen to their stories so that we can understand their experiences and perspectives. When we listen to others, they become human. They become part of ‘us,’ members of our society whom we cannot so easily brush aside or condemn.” (Sherry Linkon, Center for Working Class Studies)

REFLECTION

- What does it mean to be created in the image of God?
- What are the ways in which you have misunderstood, undervalued, or mistreated people who are different? How can we overcome the stigma of the other?
- What keeps us from serving like revolutionaries?



“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.”

C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

DAY 6 | Service Changes Everything

As you deal with one another, think and act like Jesus did. In his very nature he was God. Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn't take advantage of that fact. Instead, he made himself nothing. He did this by taking on the nature of a servant. He was made just like human beings. He appeared as a man. He was humble and obeyed God completely.
Philippians 2:5-8 NIRV

We often think of service as for someone else, and it's true, our service has value in the way it helps others. But consider this:

God longs for us to serve because it is in that position of humility that He works our transformation...It is a sobering moment to realize that, from God's perspective, the ultimate reason for our acts of service is for our benefit. In this context we begin to realize how much we are in need of relationship with others.
—David Collins, *Reflections on Holiness and Wholeness*

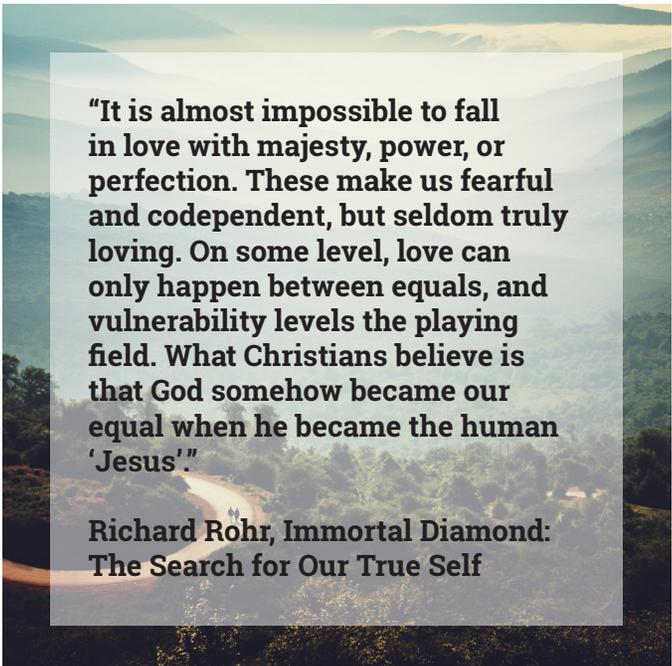
We're not talking about "selfish service" – only doing something if it makes you feel good or because you will benefit – but rather about our attitude towards service. So often we approach helping others with a "fix it" attitude – "I see a need and I will fix it." But people don't want to be seen as projects to be fixed! They want to be valued.

If our attitude is humility and our motivation is love, God uses our acts of helping others to transform our hearts and lives, as well. Humility awakens us to our corporate call as citizens of the world. Our individual lives have impact. From our consumption habits to our driving habits, our daily decisions impact those around us. Our lives are not without effect. While it may be difficult to see how our actions shape culture, commerce, and children in remote African villages, we must recognize that with every dollar we spend, we are voting for the kind of future world we want to have.

The call to community and to care for others transforms us, and those we serve, into what God originally had in mind for us and the world.

REFLECTION

- Have you ever had someone seek to help you with a "fix it" attitude? How did it make you feel?
- What would be one or two words that describe the way in which you want to serve?
- If our God is a God who serves, what does this reveal to us about His nature?



"It is almost impossible to fall in love with majesty, power, or perfection. These make us fearful and codependent, but seldom truly loving. On some level, love can only happen between equals, and vulnerability levels the playing field. What Christians believe is that God somehow became our equal when he became the human 'Jesus'."

**Richard Rohr, Immortal Diamond:
The Search for Our True Self**

DAY 7 | Resting in God

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

With so many things vying for our time and attention each day, it is easy to be overwhelmed – even more so if you are committed to service and helping others. Focusing on the needs around you can be down-right draining; yet we are still called to be people of service. So how do we balance this calling with our deep need for rest?

While it is important to take the time to physically rest, I'm more and more convinced that rest has more to do with the state of our heart than whether or not we are sitting still. The type of rest I'm talking about is not a passive activity – it is a constant leaning in towards God. It is a posture of listening and learning.

If we are always reacting to the needs around us, we will become overwhelmed, discouraged, and burnt out. But if we learn to recognize and respond to the voice of God in our lives, we will be invited into what He is doing – purposeful action that is part of a greater plan of hope. As we become more attuned to the voice and actions of God in our lives and the world around us, we will be more able to recognize when He is prompting us to get moving and also when He is asking us to sit still.

No matter how much effort we make, transformation cannot happen just by trying harder. Our transformation is not up to us; it is something that God does. All we have to do is move towards Him one step at a time as He leads us.

Take your time to meditate on God's love; reflect on what He is teaching you each and every day. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you and to change you. Ask Him to help you by showing you where you could be part of the work that He is doing. It doesn't have to be a big thing...in fact a small change that is sustainable is a great start.

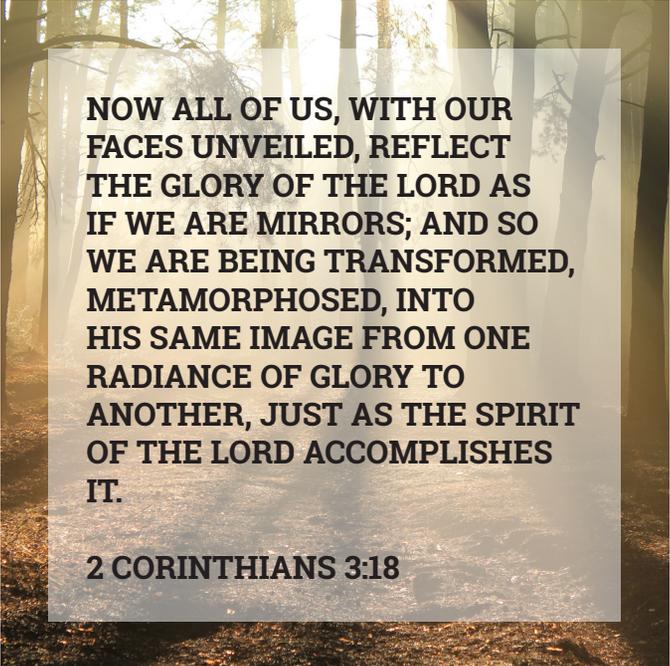
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

May God surprise you with his abundant grace and everlasting love.

REFLECTION

- Think about a time of physical stillness that was restful, and a time of physical stillness that wasn't restful. What was the difference?
- Have you ever been a part of something that was physically draining or difficult in some way, but left you feeling energized or excited?
- In your own life, how do you find balance and rest?



**NOW ALL OF US, WITH OUR
FACES UNVEILED, REFLECT
THE GLORY OF THE LORD AS
IF WE ARE MIRRORS; AND SO
WE ARE BEING TRANSFORMED,
METAMORPHOSED, INTO
HIS SAME IMAGE FROM ONE
RADIANCE OF GLORY TO
ANOTHER, JUST AS THE SPIRIT
OF THE LORD ACCOMPLISHES
IT.**

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Thank you for journeying with us through this devotional guide! We hope you feel inspired and encouraged by what God has revealed to you about His heart for the world and how you can join in His work of the restoration and transformation of all creation.

For more information and resources, and to follow along with our blog, visit our website at www.thereisjustus.com

