

## North Weekly Devotional

by Jo Grey

**Song:** *Amazing Grace*

**Prayer:** We worship You, God our Father, because You alone are worthy of our highest devotion. We owe our lives to You. We depend on Your grace—undeserved favor—to live above the demands of our selfish flesh. Teach us to listen to Your Word and apply it to our family life.

**Text:** 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

“For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should *no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again.*”

### **Explanation:**

Reconciliation is a contemporary buzz word, but reconciliation is not a new idea. Two thousand years ago Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about God reconciling mankind to Himself. In Jesus, God gave us a Savior who became sin for us and died for us so that He wouldn’t have to count our sins against us. First God reconciled us to Himself, then He gave us the message and ministry of reconciliation.

Is true reconciliation possible if we live primarily for ourselves—making our own happiness our gauge and goal? Back in verse 9 Paul says our aim is to please God. Can we please God if we’re focused on ourselves? Instead, a wholehearted embrace of God’s Good News frees us from the me-first mentality. Adoration and love for the One who died our death inspires us to follow His command to love our neighbors.

**Point:** *Anyone who trusts Christ’s reconciling work on the cross is subsequently free from the bondage of Self, and therefore free to live for Christ instead of Self.*

### **Application:**

Who are our closest neighbors? The people we live with—in a stew pot of personality, expectations, habits, beliefs, abilities, and backgrounds. Many couples know firsthand that “opposites attract.” They savor the differences that draw them to one another, like a savory blend of vegetables and beef. Left untended, however, delightful differences turn into a mush of troubling traits, boiling over into conflict. The mess exposes our own sins of self-righteousness, selfishness, impatience, lack of love, and pride. How will we respond? Will we stick with our simmering self-centered life on the my-way highway, or trust God’s recipe for a godly marriage through repentance and love?

A new book by Paul Miller, [\*J Curve\*](#), reminds us that Christians “go down to come up.” The author exhorts us to not run from the “customized dying God permits.” A husband and wife share meals, laughs, tears, children, toothpaste, a checkbook, and a bed, but that’s not all. We share an abundance of customized opportunities to die to Self. Think of it as pursuing God through marriage.

### **Pre-K & Elementary Age:**

Do you see family life as a school of faith? Children first learn about marriage in non-verbal ways by how they are loved and cared for by their parents, and next as they observe how Mom and Dad care for each other.

Attitudes about marriage are surely “caught” as well as “taught,” so setting godly examples for our children is essential. Teaching children to serve and consider others in the family is a great place to start. Parents who train their children to obey are preparing them to submit to God’s design for marriage.

### **Middle & High School Students:**

Adolescents and teens are forming ideas about marriage—positive and negative—as they observe parents and other adults. They’ve certainly been exposed to the larger culture’s messages about love and marriage which at best is confusing, and at worst, totally misleading.

An article from Focus on the Family, “[4 Truths in a Culture of Lies](#),” offers anchor points for right now. These truths are essential for life in general and for gaining understanding of God’s plan for marriage:

1. Absolute truth does exist. (Look to Scripture. Pay attention to Pastor Jonathan’s sermons.)
2. Rules are designed to protect us. (This means from yourself and the foolishness of others. Keep in mind God’s Big Ten, especially #5. Also refer to God’s instructions about how to treat one another. Check out the book of Proverbs, Romans 12, I Corinthians 13, I Peter 3:8-18.)
3. Perseverance and commitment are essentials in life. (No relationship survives on feelings alone for long.)
4. Wisdom comes from God. (The Father knows best. Always.)

### **Young Adult:**

Take it from someone who’s been there—movies and celebrities are not great sources of information. Longing to “live happily ever after” is a godly longing, but fulfillment won’t come in this life. Here and now, through the realities of life on planet Earth, we learn about God’s love, our sin, and our need for a Savior. He blesses abundantly, but He must sanctify you in the long, slow process. If you’re considering marriage, or longing for a lasting relationship, practice serving others in everyday ways. Practice submitting to parents, employers, and to God’s

commands. Consider whether you're willing to enter marriage to become more like Christ? Or are you merely seeking your own happiness? Godly marriage is a beautiful thing, but to quote someone I know very well, "It ain't easy." Even so, GO FOR IT! As part of your life with Christ, it is the adventure of a lifetime!

**Adult (all ages and stages):**

To the never-married, divorced, married, separated, or widowed, God is at work in you and your circumstances for your good and His glory. If you desire a change of status, make sure you're not seeking escape or looking for the fulfillment of a perfect dream. Instead, resolve to first accept where you are, and learn to pursue a closer relationship with God through His Son, Jesus.

Because my husband and I are close to marking 46 years of marriage, we can say there's no such thing as a perfect marriage. Are you surprised? We're **still learning** to lay down expectations, be quiet or speak up, to pray for one another, confess our sins and forgive one another, to serve one another, to give, to receive, and probably a million other things. Years ago, when Steve was tempted to despair about his job, the Lord impressed on him this thought, "I made you for the long haul." That assurance has prompted both of us to hang in there on days when the going was rough, believing that God's still at work in us and our marriage.

Husbands and wives: do you still wrestle over roles or hanker for equality? Try this: ask God to give you an "***equality of commitment to know God and to obey His voice.***" This shared desire brings unity, deep joy, and real peace as you walk together with Christ through your marriage, mirroring the mystery of Christ and His bride, the Church.

**Song:** [\*Be Thou My Vision\*](#),

**Prayer:** Lord God, You are ruler of all things. Every moment, every mile, every molecule. We want to live for Jesus and not for ourselves. Be first in our hearts because You are our treasure in this life and the life to come.

Resources:

Focusonthefamily.com

Books: *J-Curve: Dying and rising with Jesus in Everyday Life*, by Paul E. Miller; *Sacred Marriage, What If God Designed Marriage to make us Holy More than to make Us Happy*, by Gary Thomas

Above quote from Barbara Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Woman* (Wheaton, Illinois; Crossway, 2001), p. 155.