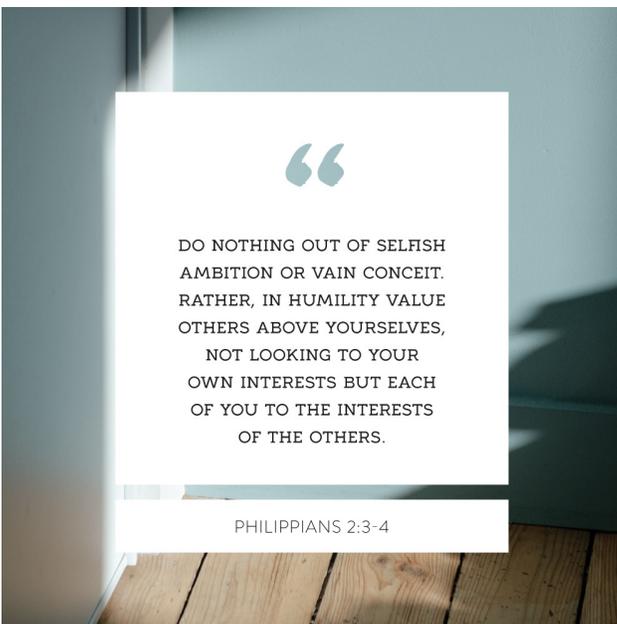


DAY 1

Do you have anyone in your life who rubs you the wrong way so badly that, when you walk away from that person, you feel like you're going to explode? It's as if that person is always saying something rude, unkind, impolite, or even derogatory every time you're with him or her. Nearly all of us have a person or two in our lives who is like this! And if you're tired of getting upset, being irritated, or unsuccessfully trying to correct these kinds of people, perhaps it's time for a different approach. "Negotiating" with a difficult person is not always possible. That's why sometimes the best option simply is doing whatever is necessary to live at peace with them. Now, living at peace doesn't mean you have to condone or agree with everything that person does or compromise on your beliefs. It simply means you choose not to enter into the fray with that person any longer. This isn't always easy! It takes strength, courage, and self-control to do this. If you're struggling to live "at peace" with someone in your

life, start by asking God to guide you through your next interaction with that person. Ask Him to give you the ability to stay calm and be unmoved by the difficult person. You won't always "win" an argument with this approach, but you will walk away with more peace in the relationship than you've likely ever had in the past.



DAY 2

Valuing humility in today's world is a bit counter-cultural. We're told by endless advertising campaigns that we should treat ourselves to the things we desire because we deserve it—even if we have to step over others to get them. In many ways, humility can even be viewed as a weakness. After all, if you're not assertive about what you want, prideful about your own achievements, and a little arrogant about your own abilities, then you must be weak, right? Thankfully, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it takes more courage and strength to be humble than it does to be prideful—and Jesus exemplified this truth perfectly. Though the strongest human in the world, Jesus became the weakest—and in the process, turned the wisdom of the world on its head. In today's passage, Paul is encouraging the church at Philippi to stop bickering and acting selfishly, and to be humble with their interactions with one another instead. As followers of Jesus, we need to do the same. Though winning an argument or asserting our

thoughts and ideas on others seems like the "strong" thing to do, just the opposite is true. When we approach others, considering their thoughts, ideas, and needs before our own, we're exemplifying true strength—strength God can use to care for and serve others, and open up our eyes and our hearts along the way.



DAY 3

God created us as relational beings to live in community. It's certainly true that we can have a personal relationship with God. But it's easy for us to forget that we can also have a "corporate" relationship with God, too. In other words, when we gather together in worship, we aren't just a bunch of separate individuals; we are a community called by God to be His people in this place at this time. We are all one body of believers working together and interacting with one another, in unity, for God. (Or, at least, we should be!) This isn't just true on Sunday mornings or in a church building, either. This is true at all times. We interact with other believers on a daily basis—in our jobs, in our schools, around town, and in our neighborhoods. God wants us—and designed us—to love others as ourselves, think of others' needs, and to consider what others may be going through. And when we do these things, however simple they

may seem, it's a picture of unity among the people of God. What's one way you can foster unity among your faith community this week? It could be offering help to someone who needs it, initiating a service project with your small group, or simply offering to help set up chairs at your church's next event. Small steps toward unity today can pave the way to relational gains for your church, your community, and your relationship with God down the road.

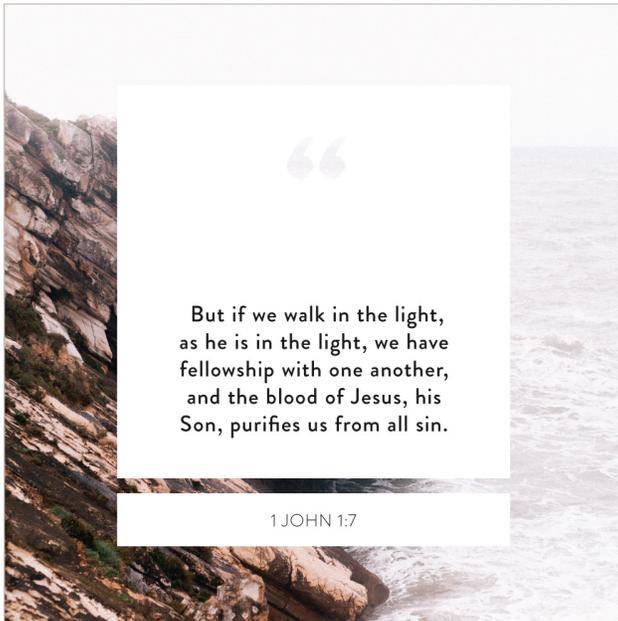


DAY 4

It is sometimes hard to imagine what an honor it is to be in relationship with the Creator of the universe. But when we truly begin to grasp and understand the love that God has for us, it allows us to more easily extend that same kind of love toward others. If we're being honest though, most of us would admit that we have a tough time fully understanding the love that God has for us. But the truth is, even our limited understanding of God's unconditional love is something worth sharing—because that's how His love is from the conditional love the world offers! Today, ask God to help you understand and experience His unconditional love in your life more than you ever have before. Then, ask Him to help you see others today the way He sees you—worthy of unconditional love—and respond to their needs accordingly so that they too may begin to see how much their heavenly Father loves them.



DAY 5



In this verse, “walking in the light” is a metaphor. Walking in the light is the opposite of walking in darkness, of course. And it means being motivated by desires that are in step or in sync with God. This verse has an unexpected promise, though. “If we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship with one another.” In other words, following Jesus and living a life that reflects Him leads to community with others. Sometimes we try so hard to be a “good” person—a nicer person, kinder person, more forgiving person—and there’s nothing wrong with that. We should all strive to be this kind of person. But what if there’s more to it than just “trying harder”? John, the writer of this verse, seems to think there is! You see, as we walk in step with God, we’re naturally become more like Him along the way. And that, it turns out, can lead to stronger fellowship, relationships, and friendships

with the people around us in the process. Today, instead of asking yourself, “How can I be a good person?” try asking yourself, “How can I spend more time with God?”

NOTES, PRAYERS, AND THOUGHTS FOR THIS WEEK. . . .

